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The Single Working Mother's Experience of Listening to New Age Music for Stress Relief

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Walden University

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Walden University

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

The Single Working Mother's Experience of Listening to New Age Music for Stress
Relief

by

Estella M. Castillo

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
General Psychology

Walden University

May 2018

Abstract

Many single working mothers are challenged with the task of balancing work and home demands. Prolonged exposure to stress can threaten individuals' physical and emotional health and well-being. Listening to music is one commonly used positive coping mechanism for stress management and relief. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of single working mothers who regularly listen to New Age music for stress relief. Participants were single working mothers, 30–45 years old, with self-reported stress, who were employed at least part time and who had at least 1 child under 18 years of age in the home. Participants were interviewed on their experiences with home and work-related stress, motherhood, and listening to New Age music for stress relief. This inquiry was guided by feminist theory, and data was analyzed using Moustakas' modification of Van Kaam's method of data analysis. The responses from these interviews identified the stress factors experienced by these single working mothers, which included finances, workplace stress, childcare, transportation, and working mother stereotypes. Participants also described the calming effects of New Age music on self-reported symptoms of physical and emotional stress. These reported effects include the promotion of mental focus and an immediate physical and emotional release from stress. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by highlighting the benefits of listening to New Age music as an alternate means of stress management and relief; this implication could indirectly save employers considerable expense in stress-related health care and missed work. These findings may serve as a basis for future quantitative research into the use of music for stress relief.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated with love to my children – Sonya, Nia, Emily, and Daniel.

“I’ll love you forever, I’ll like you for always, as long as I’m living my baby you’ll be.”
(Robert Munsch)

Acknowledgments

To the Creator, for the ultimate gift of life, I thank you. To the Spirit Nation that guides me through the ups and downs of life, who walks by my side and lights the way, I thank you.

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To my parents, Jesus and Rosalie, thank you for always believing in me. To my friends and family, your love and support over the years has kept me going - with all my heart, I thank you.

To the women who participated in this study, thank you for trusting me with your experiences, your voices will be heard. “Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.” (Maya Angelou)

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The number of social, personal, and environmental stressors associated with the lifestyle of a working mother is considerable. The level of stress perceived by a working mother, whether in the home or on the job, directly affects her physical and emotional well-being (Hibel, Mercado, & Trumbell, 2012). Stress management and stress minimization are critical in maintaining a much needed balance in a person's emotional and physical well-being (Robinson, Magee, & Caputi, 2016). One commonly used method of managing stress is listening to music. According to Bonde (2011), the music listening experience affords individuals the ability to administer a self-help treatment that develops identity, meaning, empowerment, health, and healing through a psychoacoustical environment. This study explored the listening experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief.

In this chapter I review specific components of the study. The background includes a summary of the literature review related to stress, working mothers, and New Age music, a description of the gap in knowledge of these topics as they relate to each other, and an explanation on the significance of this study and why it is needed. The section on the problem statement includes a description of the key issues identified in this study, which are the various roles of working mother, stress factors, perceived levels of stress, the physical and emotional effects of stress, and the physical and emotional influences of music on stress. In the next section I address the research problem and

provide evidence that this problem is current, relevant, and significant to psychological studies on stress and the working mother.

In subsequent sections I address the purpose of the study, research questions, the conceptual framework, the nature of the study, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. This chapter also includes a section on definitions of key concepts and constructs.

Background

This section provides a brief background on stress, the working mother, and New Age music. An extensive review is presented in Chapter 2.

Stress

Biological or emotional stress is how an individual responds to an environmental condition (McVicar, Ravalier, & Greenwood, 2013). A stressful event can generate a “fight or flight response,” causing a surge of hormones such as cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine, to run through the body (McVicar et al., 2013). Cortisol regulates blood sugar levels, blood pressure, and metabolic and immune responses (Lowrance, Ionadi, McKay, Douglas, & Johnson, 2016). Epinephrine, also called adrenaline, is a hormone released in response to various stimuli, including stress; once released, epinephrine stimulates the sympathetic nervous system, which increases cardiac output (Vohr, 2005). Norepinephrine is also a stress hormone and a neurotransmitter; when released from the adrenal glands in response to stress, it prepares the brain and body for action. (Lowrance et al., 2016). There are different types of stress, each with their own characteristics and

effects on the body. In this section I will briefly review acute stress and chronic stress; a more extended discussion is presented in Chapter 2.

Acute stress is the most common type of stress experienced by individuals (Vrshek-Schallhorn et al., 2015). Acute stress arises in response to the experience of an immediate threat, or a terrifying event, and is relatively brief (McVicar et al., 2013). The rush of adrenaline some individuals experience with the sudden blare of a fire alarm going off in the building, when involved in a minor car accident, or with the disruption of sleep by a loud or abrupt noise are all examples of responses to acute stress. Emotionally, an individual may become excited, agitated, and anxious; physically, the individual may experience muscular tension, gastrological disturbances, rapid heart rate, dizziness, and respiratory distress (Thoma, Scholz, Ehlert, & Nater, 2012). Chronic stress is released by the body in response to stimuli that may be physical or psychological in nature and has been linked to hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and depression (Lowrance et al., 2016). Chronic stress is the type of stress that was addressed throughout the literature review.

Working Mothers

Balancing the demands of work and motherhood is a task experienced by many single working mothers. The level of stress perceived by the working mother affects all facets of her personal and professional activities (Becker, 2010). Some factors that weigh heavily on either side of the pendulum include the household size and composition, marital status, the number of children in the home, the ages of the children, socioeconomic factors, and income, education, and employment levels (Holmes,

Erickson, & Hill, 2012). The availability or lack of financial, social, physical, or emotional support for either a single parent (never married, divorced, or widowed) or a two-parent household, (marriage or partnerships) will also influence the parenting stress experienced by the working mother (Holmes, et al., 2012). Custody issues and split households for children of separated or divorced parents generate their own challenges that can also affect the working mother's level of perceived stress (Holmes et al., 2012). An attempted balance of these burdens, coupled with the frequent need to interchange roles between being a mother and a workforce member, can take a toll not only on the working mother, but also on her family and on her job (Terrill, Garofalo, Soliday, & Craft, 2012).

The multiple roles carried by the working mother and the conflicting demands of these roles can result in chronic stress that leads to increased cortisol levels and an attack on the immune system (Terrill et al., 2012). The need to minimize the effects of chronic stress is critical to the biological health and psychological well-being of the working mother. All people experience stress to some degree, and many people who experience chronic stress do listen to music for stress relief. However, this study could not examine the entire range of persons experiencing chronic stress, or the entire range of musical genres that people might listen to for stress relief. Single working mothers are an easily defined subgroup of those persons who need stress relief and who might listen to music for stress relief. The wide variety of methods available for stress reduction include but are not limited to, clinical environments and nonclinical resources such as cycling, yoga, reiki, mobile phone applications, web-based stress management programs, hobbies, and

exercise. Each of these methods are unique and provides a specific value, but no one method will be received the same way by all individuals, nor will all individuals who engage in the same activity respond in the same manner. This study did not seek to address all the methods that a working mother will use to reduce the symptoms of stress; this study focused on one of those methods: listening to music, specifically, New Age music. This study explored the lived experiences of single working mothers who regularly listen to New Age music for stress relief.

New Age Music

New Age music is a genre of music that is composed using an algorithm of synthesized sounds. This genre is also referred to as soundscapes, meditative music, or ambient; to maintain consistency, the term New Age music will be used throughout this review. The characteristics of New Age music include a combination of random, environmental sounds and melodies (Delgado, Fajardo, & Molina-Solana, 2008). New Age music incorporates specific characteristics of music and environmental sound and thereby elicits positive impressions on cognitive responses and functioning under stress (Dean, Bailes, & Schubert, 2011).

New Age music originated in Europe during the 1970s and spread rapidly through the continents, absorbing cultural influences along the way (Matviitseva, 2014). The meditative component of this genre varied in translation among cultures; for example, the Russian interpretation of mediation focuses on the state of deep concentration, whereas Oriental cultures concentrate on the spiritual aspect of meditation, the complete absence of thought while connecting with the purity of the divine world (Matviitseva, 2014).

Early artists who emerged with the development of this music genre include Erik Satie, John Cage, Morton Feldman, and Brian Eno. Over the years, New Age music continued to focus on mood and atmosphere through synthesized sound and included the use of beats, musical instruments and environmental sounds, increased tempos, and the development of advanced techniques for recording and production (Roquet, 2009). This study was needed to provide a foundation for future studies on single working mothers, stress, and the use of New Age music for stress reduction.

Gap in Literature

Although there are a multitude of studies that explore musical influences on emotion, very few studies have been conducted to identify the benefits of listening to New Age music, a type of music that is composed using alpha wave-inducing tones. Using key words such as either *New Age music* or *ambient* and *stress*, I could find only two studies with similar inquiries.

The first study, which utilized a randomized controlled design, was conducted by Reychler et al. (2015). In this study, the use of New Age music was used to examine perceived levels of exertion during a pulmonary rehabilitation session. Patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder listened to New Age music during treatments; results indicated no changes in levels of perceived exertion from listening to New Age music, however, a significant impact on the decrease of patient anxiety was noted (Reychler et al., 2015). In the second example, an experimental design was employed to measure the effects of ambient scent and New Age music and their combination on patient anxiety in a surgeon's waiting room (Fenko & Loock, 2014). The results of this

study identified a significant decrease in levels of anxiety with the independent use of New Age music and ambient scent; however, the combination of elements did not decrease anxiety (Fenko & Loock, 2014).

A recent literature search on *music, working mothers* and *stress* presented articles on music therapy assisted childbirth, mother-child relations, and a phenomenological study on mothers who are band directors; I found no studies that had been conducted specifically on the working mother's listening experience with New Age music for stress relief. This study required information on the latter, not the former.

There are many studies available on the effects of different kinds of music. For example, a literature review written by Zhiwen (2007) examines prior research on measurements of physiological changes in response to different types of music. Zhiwen (2007) identified inconsistencies in the results of both quantitative studies and in the accuracy of information reported by participants in qualitative studies; the author concluded the review by acknowledging that prior research has shown physiological changes occur in response to stress and music, but further exploration is required to affirm any specific music as an effective tool for stress management. In another literature review, Raglio and Oasi (2015) supported the position of the previously mentioned review, adding that music used as an intervention is only as successful as the characteristics of its approach.

Limited information exists on the effects of New Age music on its listeners, but the information found suggests that New Age music might have stress relieving properties and attributes. In one quantitative study conducted Perez-Lloret et al. (2014),

the effects of exposure to different styles of relaxing music on heart rate variability were measured. The results of that study identified changes in heart rate variability to all stimuli, but a significantly higher response to New Age music was noted. In another quantitative study, the effects of ambient, or New Age, music on perceived exertion were investigated. The focus of that study was on pulmonary distress, and the results were inconclusive for that factor. However, a significant association was identified between changes in the symptoms of anxiety and New Age music (Reychler et al., 2015).

A variety of themes related to motherhood, employment, and music emerged during the extensive search for related literature. For example, the use of lullabies in infant care was investigated in one study conducted by Baker and Mackinlay (2006). An intervention was applied to explore the experiences of first-time mothers who sang lullabies to their newborn babies; this study examined the therapeutic effects of lullabies on infant sleep patterns and on the maternal bonding process (Mackinlay, 2006). The study conducted by Baker and Mackinlay (2006) provided relevant information on the application of sedative music as an intervention in infant care. One of the themes that emerged from this study referenced how New Age music affected the mother's ability to cope with home and family life; future quantitative inquiries may further explore how the experiences of purposeful music listening affects the working mother's relationship with her children. However, this present study focused on the experiences of the working mother who listens to New Age music specifically for stress relief.

In another example, a literature review written by Bruinsma (1995) explored the use of music therapy as an intervention to promote personal growth for mothers.

Bruinsma's (1995) work is dated earlier than most of the articles presented in the current literature review, but it is also a representation of the longitudinal concerns in feminist theory for what single working mothers face, such as the choice to become a mother, the choice to be a working mother or stay-at-home mother, and the self-image perceived by mothers based on these choices. A related study is a doctoral thesis authored by Graham (2009) that narrates the challenges faced by mothers attempting to balance career and family. These articles supported the use of feminist theory in this study and provided additional information on the therapeutic effects of music, but they did not contribute anything specific regarding the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief.

The implication for a study on music and stress in regard to social change suggested that it be more than a temporary fix to a long-term problem. The growing concern of the threat to health and wellness of single working mothers stems from the increasing demand on their multiple roles (Becker, 2010). Long-term increases in physical or mental exertions may trigger a chain reaction that includes the development of prolonged physical or mental ailments, unexpected medical expenses, time off work, and strain on relationships and family life. (Vair, 2013).

Problem Statement

The distinct challenges exclusive to the working mother, such as the balance and execution of multiple roles at home and at work, can increase her already daunting levels of stress (Becker, 2010). This is a problem because prolonged exposure to stress, regardless of the source, can adversely affect her physical and emotional well-being

(Probst, 2013). An additional concern is when prolonged, untreated stress becomes a part of the working mother's routine. Employers, health insurance companies, and the medical and psychological professions have shown increased interest in motherhood and stress, stress factors, and the effects of stress on behavior and biological health of the working mother, prompting a multitude of inquiries on these phenomena over the past decade. While Chapter 2 presents detailed information on the cost of living and socioeconomics as sources of stress for the working mother, two examples from the literature help illustrate the problem.

In one study, maternal psychological well-being was studied in mothers with young children; the mother-child relationship was evaluated in mothers who worked versus mothers who chose to stay home during the early childhood developmental years, believing that the separation would be harmful to the child's social development (Chang, 2013). Results of this study identified a higher level of parenting stress, yet a higher level of satisfaction for the stay-at-home mothers than in mothers who worked full time; however, working mothers presented with a higher level of psychological well-being than mothers who chose not to work. In another study, biological samples were collected from working mothers to identify patterns in increased levels of cortisol in relation to parenting stress (Hibel et al., 2012). Results of this study revealed that parenting stress was higher in the morning on workdays than on nonwork days. These findings were significant because they reflected the previously stated concern of how stress can become a part of the working mother's routine.

In a literature review written by Becker (2010), the multiple roles taken on by the working mother continue to be identified socially as mutually exclusive. Therefore, a workable resolution for the multitude of challenges faced by the working mothers cannot be achieved. Becker (2010) argued that the underlying issues, such as discrepancies in social and employment policies, make it nearly impossible for the working mother to achieve the balance that has been routinely prescribed in previous studies on stress and the working mother.

Fifty-seven percent of women participate in labor force; 70% of these women have children under the age of 18 in the home (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). The percentage of all people who regularly experience physical and psychological symptoms of stress is about 75% (Statistics Brain Research Institute, 2016). Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2016b), workers who must take time off because of stress or stress related disorders will be off the job for 20 days. The annual cost in stress related health care and missed work is \$300 billion (Statistics Brain Research Institute, 2016). The results of the current study could indirectly save employers considerable money . Also, because this study is exploratory in nature, the findings can serve as a beginning point for the design of subsequent quantitative research.

Presently, the working mother may be exposed to an overabundance of physical and emotional factors daily, which limits the recovery time from one traumatic event to another and increases the likelihood of developing stress and fatigue (Holmes et al., 2012). The need to explore practical methods to minimize or manage the effects of stress caused by these challenges is immediate and considerable. In this study I sought to

explore how a working mother experiences listening to New Age music as a stress reliever from those challenges. The results of this study will contribute to inquiries on stress and single working mothers and fill the gap in literature specific to the emotional, cognitive, and physical experiences reported by single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress reduction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to explore human response to music, specifically through the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress reduction. Music produces an emotional reaction and has been used throughout history in physical and psychological healing (Conrad, 2010). New Age music is a genre of music created to elicit a state of relaxation (Madison, Gouyon, Ullen, & Hornstrom, 2011). New Age music was chosen for use in this study because of this specific characteristic.

The research paradigm for this study was based on “health musicing.” Health musicing is a theoretical model that identifies the emotional experiences of listening to music (Bonde, 2011). Health musicing identifies the connection between music, meaning, health and well-being, and identity (Bonde, 2011). In this study, the term “purposeful music listening” will be used to encompass the concept of “health musicing.” Chapter 2 provides a more detailed discussion of this concept.

An individual’s behavior is influenced by the sounds heard and perceived (Bhatara, Tirovalas, Duan, Levy, & Levitin, 2011). For example, music has been used in movies to highlight specific events; individuals have been conditioned to identify

suspense, endearment, fear, erotica, and comedy in a film through music, and they generally respond accordingly. In these specific instances, emotions are being captured and controlled by the musical environment. When individuals listen to music with the purpose of relaxing or focusing, the purpose of music at that moment is to modify behavior (Bhatara et al., 2011). Music is everywhere. This study focused on one of the many uses of a common activity. My intent with this study was to explore the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief.

Research Question

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief?

SQ1. How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of listening to the music?

SQ2. How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of or reaction to stress during or after listening to New Age music?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was guided by feminist theory. The historical basis and present ideals of feminist theory were addressed in a theoretical perspective written by Hesford and Diedrich (2014). Feminist theory explores women's social roles and experiences with feminist politics (Hesford & Diedrich, 2014). The overlapping social identities of the working mother, on the job and in the home, may be a source of stress that affects her physical or emotional well-being. The focus of this study was to explore the human response to music; specifically, the response of the working

mother to a particular kind of music that may be stress relieving. The conceptual framework for this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

A phenomenological design was used to obtain the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief. A phenomenological design describes a lived experience of a phenomenon; this approach provided a comprehensive description of events that reflected the essence of that experience (Moustakas, 1994). A qualitative design was chosen after an extensive search for peer-reviewed relevant literature yielded very little information to support this topic. I felt that a simple exploration of personal experiences with New Age music would be an appropriate starting point for subsequent inquiries.

The sample for this study was single working mothers employed full time outside of the home, 30–45 years old, who have at least one child under the age of 18, who experience self-reported, self-defined stress from being a working mother, and who had access to internet and e-mail in the home. I selected women meeting these criteria using criterion sampling and snowball sampling. Initial recruitment for participants began from businesses within the City of Palmdale, CA. Additional recruitment efforts expanded into neighboring cities, and continued until saturation was achieved. Data was collected from telephone interviews and entered in NVivo, a qualitative data analysis tool. I was the only person who interviewed participants, transcribed interviews, and entered data in NVivo. In Chapter 3 I present the details of the research design.

Definitions

Acute Stress: A short-term, psychological condition experienced by an individual after a traumatic event. It is the most common form of stress (McVicar et al., 2013)

Binaural beats: The production of two separate tones with a specific frequency in each ear. The frequency range perceived by the ears produces a third tone that is identified by the mind (Wahbeh, Calabrese, & Zwickey, 2007)

Chronic Stress: Repeated, long-term stress that may cause the body to release stress hormones for prolonged periods of time, which has been linked to hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and depression (Lowrance et al., 2016).

Entrainment: The interaction and synchronization of two independent rhythmical systems; in musical entrainment, this specifies musical stimuli and biological response (Clayton, 2012). This term is explained in detail in Chapter 2.

Health musicing: The development of identity, meaning, empowerment, health, and healing through a psychoacoustical environment (Bonde, 2011).

Music-induced emotions: Emotional stimuli via music influencing the psychological relationship between music and cognitive empathy (Zentner, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2008)

Neuromusical research: Research that investigates the neural mechanisms of musical entrainment (Nozardan, Peretz, Missal, & Mouraux, 2011).

New Age music: Also known as ambient music, a genre of music that emphasizes tonal atmosphere and special structures over traditional music components such as melody and rhythm (Olszewska, 2010)

Working mother: A biological, foster, step, or adoptive female parent who is employed outside of the home.

Assumptions

There was one assumption with this study, that participants would be honest in stating their congruence with the participation requirements and in their responses during the telephone interview. Inaccurate answers mask truths; I assumed that participants presented an authentic account of their experiences so as not to skew results (Moustakas, 1994).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study included the lived experiences of the single working mothers who listened to New Age music for stress relief. The interview responses provided the data that assisted in identifying the meaning behind their experiences. The participants were initially recruited from Palmdale, CA. Palmdale was chosen because of convenience; I have lived and worked in this area for over 20 years.

I researched the reactions to only one genre of music. New Age music was selected for the rich, droning tones that induce a state of relaxation (Delgado et al., 2008). Music listening is a multisensory experience that affects an individual's physical and emotional state of being (Thoma et al., 2013). The listener's awareness of sound and music and the associations made with these sounds generate a response that can influence the individual's level of stress (Conrad, 2010). According to Thoma et al. (2013), the effects of music on the human stress response can be tested using biological variables to identify an individual's perception of sound, level of familiarity with the sound, and the

role of preference in sound processing. That type of inquiry is quantitative in nature and not an appropriate framework for the study. The goal of this study was not to measure sound perception or identify musical preferences, but to explore the lived experiences of individuals from listening to a specific type of music.

This study was delimited to female participants between the ages of 30–45 who work at least part time outside the home, had at least one minor child in the home, and who experienced self-reported, self-defined stress. This age range was chosen to include mothers of child-rearing age; women are waiting longer to give birth and a child born to a 30-year-old mother would only be 15 when the mother is 45 (Leung, Groes, & Santaaulalia-Llopis, 2016). This can also mean that the children might tend to be on the older side as well. For consistency and clarity in the sample for this study, I focused on single working mothers (not currently married or living with a partner). Participants had access to e-mail and internet in the home. Individuals who were not single working mothers, who were not between the ages of 30–45, who were not employed full time outside of the home, and who did not have at least one child under 18 years of age in the home were excluded from participation. Individuals who knew me or were acquainted with me were also excluded from participation. Because generalizability is not possible with qualitative studies, descriptive statistics were used to portray the final participant sample but were not used to statistically generalize results to other populations. The description of the lived experiences may be of interest to other comparable populations having like characteristics, thus providing qualitative transferability.

Limitations

This study was not a quantitative study; it used a small sample and thus the results were not generalizable to other populations. Demographic information gathered as part of the study was used only to create a clearer picture of the participants and was not applied to other populations. This sample was not a representative sample of all single working mothers in the City of Palmdale or elsewhere. This study was not meant to replace any current routines, or treatments, if applicable, for stress management, nor was it meant to diagnose or treat stress or stress related disorders. This study did not measure stress or stress relief via musical stimuli, nor was it designed to test the effects of New Age music. An initial consideration on participant limitations was a socioeconomic factor; specifically, the availability of internet access at home.

The study had potential for bias because I am also a single working mother, and I have used New Age music as a mood enhancer, particularly when under a great deal of stress. I kept a journal to document my thoughts and feelings throughout the course of the study so that these could be separated from the data. Chapter 3 provides details on my background and influences as the researcher.

Significance

The physical and mental health problems triggered by unresolved stress pose a threat to an individual's overall well-being, resulting in long-term and irremediable illness such as hypertension, heart disease, anxiety, and depression (Terrill et al., 2012). The stressors of the working mother have been identified throughout this chapter. The implications for an inquiry of this nature are that it would result in a contribution toward

women's studies, particularly for single working mothers. This study could also potentially draw additional attention to the therapeutic effects of New Age music. The low cost and portability of listening to New Age music, and the lack of significant side effects, as opposed to those associated with medication and negative coping responses, are significant aspects to be considered in subsequent studies. This study was not music therapy and was not an intervention, but the practice of listening to New Age music may be a form of self-administered music therapy.

Summary

The implications for chronic stress include health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, anxiety, and depression (Terrill et al., 2012). The need to identify the stressors is important in stress management (Probst, 2013), but this was beyond the scope of the present study. The underlying problem for many working mothers lies in the framework of social policy (Becker, 2010). It was also beyond the scope of the present study to anticipate that the findings would result in an immediate change in social policy. However, an individual's immediate need is to minimize the effects of stress; this is within the scope of a working mother's abilities; the experience of doing so with music was the focus of the study.

Music has many functions; to name a few examples, it is used for entertainment, to aide in learning, and to modify behavior (Conrad, 2010). The use of music to alleviate stress is a common act, and the type of music for this purpose used is often subjective. New Age music is a genre of music composed specifically to elicit a sense of space and relaxation. In this study I focused on the combination of stress, the working mother, and

New Age music; I explored the lived experiences of single working mothers who regularly listen to New Age music for stress relief.

In summary, this chapter provided a brief background on the issues faced by working mothers, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Also included in this chapter were the conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of this study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review on feminism, working mothers, stress, purposeful music listening, and New Age music. Chapter 2 will also include sections on the conceptual framework and methodology. Chapter 3 will present methodology and design.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 2 includes a review of the relevant literature on working mothers, stress, and the use of New Age music in the promotion of health and well-being. Aside from empirical studies, other types of articles used in this chapter include historical perspectives on *feminism*, *New Age music*; literature reviews on *feminism*, *music and physiological responses*, and *entrainment*; and theoretical articles on *stress*, *entrainment*, and *music and emotions*. Nonempirical journal articles were used to provide a background in their respective sections. The number of empirical research findings used throughout the literature review for this study was limited due to the lack studies with related or similar content on New Age music, stress, and motherhood.

In a literature review on feminism and the working mother, Becker (2010) noted that a working mother who is juggling multiple roles may be more likely to experience additional pressure associated with parenting and occupational stressors and less likely to find the balance needed to resolve daily stress. This is a problem because prolonged, elevated levels of stress may have an adverse effect on the physical and emotional health and well-being of the working mother. Stress creates neuropsychological responses that affect our mood, behavior, and physical and emotional well-being (Thoma et al., 2012). In a literature review, Becker (2010) identified this type of outcome as an adverse influence on other facets of the working mother's life, such as her family, social environment, and employment.

Music has the power to induce emotion and influence behavior (Thoma et al., 2013). New Age music incorporates specific characteristics of music and environmental sound that elicit positive impressions in cognitive responses and functioning under stress (Dean et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of the single working mothers who regularly listen to New Age music for stress reduction.

Chapter 2 provides a description of the literature search strategy used, followed by a description of the conceptual framework on which this study was based. This chapter will include a detailed review of current and relevant research on working mothers, associated stress, and the use of music as a means of stress relief, but will be focused specifically on the working mother's response to music as a potential stress reliever.

The literature review is organized to address significant components related to stress, motherhood, and the musical experience in the following subsections: Stress; the various roles of the working mother; the use of music as medicine, with an introduction to the basic elements of music; entrainment theory; musical emotions; physiological effects of music listening; the use of music to promote health and well-being; and detailed description of New Age music. The discussion of method is in a separate section to give this discussion its own focus, rather than having it overlooked or lost in the topical discussion. In the discussion of methods section I address the methods used or not used in the empirical studies most relevant to this study.

Literature Search Strategy

Information for this literature review was derived from electronic databases in Walden University's online library. An advanced search of EBSCOhost included the use of the following databases: Academic Search Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, PsycBOOKS, SocINDEX with Full Text, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Health and Psychosocial Instruments, and MEDLINE with Full Text. I also included a search in Google scholar to find journal articles pertinent to this study. The dates used for the literature search from all databases ranged from 1988 to 2016. Earlier dates helped to provide a foundation that supported certain constructs in this study.

The initial search for journal articles was launched in May 2013, using the key terms *music*, *music theory*, *ambient music* and *working mothers*. From May through December, 2013, additional search terms included *soundscapes*, *binaural beats*, *entrainment*, *brain waves*, and *music therapy*. From April, 2014, through the December, 2015, the following key terms were incorporated into the search: *health*, *stress*, *coping*, *maternal stress*, *maternal well-being*, *work-family balance*, *emotional models*, *working mothers*, *music-induced emotions*, *psychology of music*, and *biological effects of music*.

Beginning March, 2016, through the present, the above-mentioned key terms were reviewed for current journal articles. In addition, relevant categories including age, subject, gender, and methodology were incorporated to refine each search.

Accompanying terms for *working mothers* included *health and mental health services*, *social processes*, *social issues*, *sex roles*, *women's issues*, *income distribution*, and *social class*. Accompanying terms for *stress* included *stress theories*, *mental health*, *coping*

behavior, occupational stress, well-being, family, mothers, health, fatigue, treatment and prevention, marriage and family, health psychology, and medicine. Accompanying terms for *music* included *research, emotions, music therapy, music perception, and psychology.* A search using the combined terms *working mother* and *ambient music* yielded no results.

An additional search was conducted May, 2016, using the following key terms: *feminism, feminist theory, three waves of feminism, black feminists, and 19th century feminists.* In December, 2016, a search was conducted using the combination of key terms *motherhood, stress, and children.*

An ample number of articles were available for the general topics. That number decreased significantly when additional key words were incorporated into the search for specific inquiries. Google Scholar provided a greater number of articles than the Walden library; however, most of those articles were inaccessible. One interesting observation I made while conducting a search on Google Scholar was in reference to the dates used as search filters. My initial search on *ambient music* and *stress* yielded 3,920 articles with a range of time between 2015 -2016. When I changed the range to 2012–2015, the search yielded 2,600 results. This could be an indicator of the growing interest in this topic. I had a difficult time finding articles specific to ambient music. Many of the articles I found referred to the term ambient when describing environmental sound, as opposed to the genre of music used in this study. When I replaced “ambient music” with “meditation music,” the search yielded results for *meditation and music, yoga, spirituality, and shamanism.* I replaced the word “ambient” with “New Age” and found no relevant articles in relation to stress and motherhood. A similar problem took place when I used

the term *maternal stress*; most of these articles focused on pregnancy, neonatal concerns, and pediatric care. Table 1 presents the findings, or the lack thereof, in the search for information on the specific topics presented in this study.

Table 1

Summary of Search Results by Topic

Topic	Search term 2	Search term 3	Search term 4	Peer-reviewed articles
Music Theory	Emotions			102
		Ambient music		0
Music	Emotions			2964
		Health		313
			Women's health	2
		Stress		105
			Maternal stress	0
			Working Mothers	0
	Soundscapes			5
	Binaural beats			0
	Entrainment			8
	Maternal stress			7
	Stress			1732
		Working mothers		0
Ambient music				110
	Emotions			6
	Stress			1
	Working mothers			0
Working mothers				
	Stress			279
	Music			0
	Ambient music			0
	Well-being			149
		Stress		13
			Music	0
			Music therapy	0
			Ambient music	0
New Age	Stress	Motherhood		0
Motherhood	Stress	Children		112

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was guided by feminist theory, which involves the study of women's roles in society; this study is specific to the roles of the working mother. Stress, purposeful music listening, self-efficacy, and the promotion of well-being are themes that have been identified and are discussed later in this chapter. In this study, I explored the working mother's experiences with New Age music as a means of stress reduction.

In one literature review, Hesford and Diedrich (2014) noted that that feminism describes a range of political and social movements and ideologies that seek equal rights, interests, and opportunities for women. In another literature review, Offen (1988) asserted that feminist theories and the definition of feminism have been modified globally and culturally throughout the centuries. According to Offen (1988), historical evidence of feminist themes has been found in writings of Greek philosophers, as well as in other literary works all the way through the French Revolution. According to another literature review written by Vashisth and Kumar (2014), the Women's Movement evolved from preceding social movements advocating human rights, such as the Social Purity Movement and the Abolition of Slavery Movement. The historical impact on present and future campaigns for gender equality is explored in this section.

In another literature review, Kinser (2004) presented that the history of American feminism could be broken down into three waves. The first Women's Rights' Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. This event marked the beginning of the first of these three waves (Kinser, 2004). The first wave focused on gaining political power,

specifically with the right to vote, the right to own property, and the right of mothers to seek guardianship over their children (Kinser, 2004). In the United States, notable leaders of this movement include Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (Grube, 2003). At this point, the movement was limited to securing the rights of white women; activists such as Sojourner Truth and Maria W. Stewart were instrumental in advocating for the rights of black women (Kinser, 2004). The first wave of feminism ended with the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution granting women the right to vote in all states in 1920. (Brown, 1993).

The second wave, beginning shortly after World War II, was an expansion of the political platform initiated in the first wave, focusing on sexism and patriarchy, reproduction rights, equality, and an end to discrimination (Foster, 2015). Literary works by authors Betty Friedan (1963) and Simone de Beauvoir (1949) played a significant role in addressing contemporary themes in feminism. Notable black female activists in the Civil Rights movement during the mid-1900s included Maya Angelou (1969), Daisy Bates, Angela Davis (1983), and Gloria Jean Watkins. The National Organization for Women and the American National Black Feminist Organization were founded during this period.

The third wave of feminism began in the late 1980s because of perceived failure of the second wave and was powered by varying feministic outlooks (Kinser, 2004). The contemporary issues addressed in this movement included the definition of feminism, issues of sexuality, violence against women, race, gender roles, and differences between the sexes (Kinser, 2004). The Gender Equity in Education Act (1993) and The Violence

Against Women Act (1994) became laws in the United States because of third wave initiatives. The essay written by Kinser (2004) is particularly significant to this study; it explains the principle of the third wave as gender equality within a patriarchal society, intersectionality, and knowledge of true female autonomy. At this critical time in history, political protests and demonstrations supporting women's rights such as the Women's March in January 2017 define the values of the third wave of feminism.

The stance on feminism in this study follows an intersectional model.

Intersectional theory focuses on overlapping social identities and how they interact with each other simultaneously on several levels (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The need to identify individual experiences without categorizing them with universal claims can be best accomplished when all facets of identity are explored (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The study does not provide detailed accounts of the biological, social, or cultural differences between men and women; instead, I concentrated on understanding the issues and experiences exclusive to single working mothers, specifically in relation to stress and stress management with New Age music.

Stress

The following section briefly explains the physiological basis of stress to lay a foundation for understanding the role of stress in subsequent sections.

Learning to manage stress by understanding emotional boundaries, and being aware of when those boundaries are crossed, helps individuals to handle discomfort in a positive way, per the findings of an empirical study conducted by Aselton (2012). Some methods for stress reduction include talk therapy, journaling, physical activity, self-talk,

and deep breathing exercise (Aselton, 2012). People often resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as smoking, compulsive spending, emotional eating, and excessive consumption of alcohol under extremely stressful situations, as reported in the findings of an empirical study by Foster (2000). Negative coping mechanisms, although not discussed in this literature review, are added reasons to explore positive stress reduction alternatives. The effects of music on stress mechanisms will be discussed in the Music as Medicine section of this chapter.

Per a theoretical piece written by McVicar, Ravalier, and Greenwood (2013), acute stress is an abrupt increase of stress levels triggered by a surprising or threatening event. Acute stress triggers sympathetic neural activity, releasing epinephrine and norepinephrine, to prepare the individual for immediate response (McVicar et al., 2013). Cortisol is also released to aid in additional metabolic changes that will help the individual manage his or her situation (McVicar et al., 2013). Epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, is a hormone secreted in the adrenal glands in response to physical or mental stress, which affects heart rate, blood pressure, glucose regulation, metabolism, and cardiac output, per a medical reference text by Vohr (2005). Norepinephrine is a neurotransmitter and a hormone secreted by the adrenal medulla, and produces the same effects as epinephrine, except for the cardiac output (Vohr, 2005).

The amount of steroid hormone, cortisol, released correlates to the amount of stress perceived by the individual; extended periods of stress increase the production of cortisol released, as reported by findings of an empirical study by Hibel, Mercado, and Trumbell (2012). Increased and consistent production of cortisol results in weight gain,

irritability, lethargy, and loss of focus. The hypothalamus, which controls the production of cortisol, is the link between the central nervous system (CNS) and the endocrine system. The function of the hypothalamus is to regulate the release of hormones that stimulates physiological responses, such as hunger, thirst, sleep, body temperature, and circadian rhythms.

The results of a quantitative study conducted by McVicar et al., (2013) identified that Acute Stress Syndrome occurs when the event has a longer effect past the initial stressor. In a related empirical study conducted by Vrshek-Schallhorn et al. (2015), findings demonstrated that constant, repetitive occurrences of acute stress result in episodic stress. According to empirical research findings presented by Lowrance, Ionadi, Mc Kay, Douglas, and Johnson (2016), episodic stress becomes chronic when the physiological effects wear the individual down physically or mentally. Chronic stress is long term or repeated stress felt in particular circumstances and in response to emotional pressure (McVicar et al., 2013). The sympathetic nervous system releases epinephrine and norepinephrine to assist with an immediate response to the stress, but if the hormones remain in the body they will distress cardiovascular output and suppress the immune system (Lowrance et al., 2016). The daily hassles which contribute to chronic stress are the most commonly experienced among working mothers, per empirical research findings by Holmes et al. (2012).

Effects of Stress on Health and Well-Being

Stress is a response to a change that seems unmanageable (McVicar et al., 2013). Because life is constantly changing, stress is a part of life. An acute response to stress

may provide a burst of energy that will assist the individual through the moment, however, repeated episodes of stress may take a toll on the individuals' health and well-being (McVicar et al., 2013).

Long term stress can produce adverse responses within the autonomic nervous system and central nervous system. These responses, if left untreated, may result in elevated health risks that include cardiovascular complications, respiratory distress, and disorders that affect emotional well-being, such as anxiety and depression, according to a theoretical piece written by Ellis and Thayer (2010). In a literature review written by Terrill, Garofalo, Soliday, and Craft (2012), the ramifications of chronic stress in coronary heart disease were addressed. In a clinical setting, stress levels were measured using a variety of tests and instruments. Blood pressure, heart rate, skin temperature, brain wave activity, and respiration were evaluated for changes before, during, and after exposure to a stressor (Terrill et al., 2012). Emotional stress, such as anxiety, fear, and oppression, resulting from poor morale, intolerable working conditions, and environmental hazards, for example may increase heart rate and blood pressure to levels of concern, even acutely (Terrill et al., 2012).

Employment and nonemployment sources of stress, biological factors, caregiving concerns, multiple roles, gender differences, role perception, and lone versus partnered mothers are variables that were recognized as factors that contributed to chronic stress (Terrill et al, 2012). Physical stress such as muscle strain, whether a result of heavy lifting or chronic tension, and headaches and fatigue from daily life afflict many working mothers and may result in a long-term condition that will require an indefinite amount of

medical attention (Terrill et al., 2012). The following section addresses some of the types of stress experienced by the working mother.

Working Mothers and Stress

Stress and motherhood may seem synonymous to many single working mothers. The multitude of variables that may account for stress in single working mothers is considerable, as is the degree to which these stressors can be measured. Remedies available for acute and episodic stress management and prevention, such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness based stress therapy, for example, may or may not be effective, depending on the mother's ability to incorporate these methods into her life, per a literature review written by Becker (2010).

The perception of stress is as subjective as the individual's experience of a situation. An individual appraises events as stressful and non-stressful, and this perception of the situational factors affects the level of the stress experienced, per a theoretical piece written by Wondra and Ellsworth (2015).

There are different forms of stress; life and work stress are two specific forms. Death, health, relationships, crime, abuse, changes affecting family, job, location, or school, sexual problems, and finances are identified as some of the factors that can that trigger acute stress and account for chronic stress in individuals (Probst, 2013). Work demands, lack of support, poor morale, relationships with colleagues, changes, and poor leadership are factors that can contribute to stress in the workplace (Probst, 2013). The following section will review literature relevant to factors that are often associated with

chronic stress and single working mothers, including workplace stress, socioeconomic factors, and childhood development.

Workplace Stress

Labor force participation by mothers (single, married, or other) has increased significantly over the past 50 years; currently, mothers are the sole or primary income provider in 40% of households today compared with 11% of families in 1960 (US Department of Labor, 2015). Per the United States Department of Labor (2015), 57% of women (Black, Hispanic, White, Asian) participate in the labor force; 74% of those women are mothers between the ages of 35-44. Job satisfaction and job stress are determined by the rewards and benefits, or lack of, provided by the workplace, the position carried, the workload and responsibilities, and the individuals' decision to retain employment with any given entity, per Becker's literature review (2010). Whether a single mother is a skilled worker or a professional who works part-time, full-time, or overtime, an employment commitment adds additional activity to a perpetual balance of priorities and responsibilities (Vair, 2013).

The level of satisfaction a working mother has with her employment environment is directly related to how she can respond to some of the daily stressors she faces at home and on the job. In a survey research study conducted by Holmes et al. (2012), a correlation was identified between maternal well-being and preferred and actual work environments. Holmes et al. (2012) concluded that the gap between the mother's desired working environment and the actual working environment was significant to her well-

being; mothers are more likely to commit to organizations when workplace flexibility is available (Holmes et al., 2012).

According to a literature review written by Vair (2013), stress spillover is another concern that affects workplace productivity and parental duties. Negotiating the work-home balance is a task that affects maternal well-being. The findings of a qualitative study conducted by von Borell de Araujo, Tureta, and von Borell de Araujo (2015) identified that merging work and home stress factors adds to the complexity of the role of the working mother. Finding a balance between what needs to be done and what can be done often leads to feelings of conflict and guilt (Vair, 2013). The endless cycle of physically trying to catch up with one facet of life or another, and the repetitive stress involved in this process leads to burnout (von Borell de Araujo et al., 2015). Burnout is described as a loss of energy, enthusiasm, perspective, and purpose, resulting from prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion, per the findings of an empirical study conducted by Missler, Stroebe, and van der Laan (2013). In a correlational study conducted by Robinson et al. (2016), the researchers found that working mothers are at greater risk for burnout because of the constant demands of the multiple roles they hold. Per the results of a quantitative research study conducted by Missler et al. (2013), burnout can have a negative effect on behavior and performance, both on the job and in the home, affecting productivity and family welfare. Depression is another concern in individuals who experience long term, repetitive stress. In a correlational study conducted by Holmes et al. (2012), threats of risk to maternal well-being and symptoms of depression were identified with the mother's perceptions of her employment experiences.

Income Inequality

The lack of sufficient income is a potential source of stress for many single working mothers. Per the 2015 United States Census, there has been a steady increase in the number of single mother households between 1950 and 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Structural changes in family composition have influenced the income distribution, per Kollmeyer's empirical research findings (2013). Per Kollmeyer (2013), the two specific changes are the growing number of single mothers as head of household, and the gradual increase in number of women in the workplace. Increased female employment decreases income inequality, however increases in single mother households increase income inequality (Kollmeyer, 2013). Increases in female employment include all women, not just mothers. Family dynamics and household income weigh significantly as variables when measuring income and cost of living, as reported in a literature review written by Korpi, Ferrarini, and Englund (2013). According to the 2015 Consumer's Expenditure Report released by the United States Department of Labor, a married couple with children spends 13.1% of their annual income on food, 31.2% on housing, 17.6% on transportation, 6.8% on healthcare, and 13.3% on personal insurance and pensions. From the same report, a single parent with at least one child under the age of 18 spends 13.4% of her annual income on food, 36.8% on housing, 17.5% on transportation, 5.2% on healthcare, and 8.9% on personal insurance and pensions (US Department of Labor, 2015). These statistics do not account for childcare costs. A single mother may net the same amount as her male colleague; however, her income measures against half of that of a dual-income household, and childcare expenses would offset any income gains.

The household finances may be a burden with which many families are afflicted (Holmes et al., 2012). Whether the working mother is working to supplement the income of a two-parent household if her paycheck is the sole source of income, the challenges of maintaining a positive balance sheet represent another potential factor of stress for the working mother (Vair, 2013).

In relation to self-care and resources, the availability of disposable income for stress-reduction activities may be scarce for an already-stretched family budget. Listening to music for stress reduction, as described in this study, is an activity that the working mother can participate in without adding strain to the household finances. There are no income restrictions or parameters involved in the selection of participants for this study, although other requirements may skew the sample's income upward.

Family Policies and Social Policies

Family policies, such as the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 and Family Medical Leave Act of 1993, have emerged to accommodate the needs of the family and the working mothers. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act is an amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, which identifies discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions as unlawful (U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, 2008). The Family Medical Leave Act is a federal law that requires covered employers to allow employees to take extended time off work to tend to family or medical matters (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). These laws protect the working mothers' job; she will be able to take time off work for pregnancy, childbirth, or family medical issues, without penalty. Family policy does not accommodate allowances

or resources during the leave. The loss of income can be an added strain on household finances, even with the available resources afforded through human services. Social policies favor women of different classes (Korpi, Ferrarini, & Englund, 2013). Home care allowances, child care resources, and tax credits are available to families, but are income-based and limited in availability (Korpi et al., 2013). The influence of family policy on women's ability to accomplish career goals is directly related to socioeconomic class, education, and capabilities (Korpi et al., 2013). Social policies that address health care and human services dictate the extent to which family policies are available to families, such as public day care services and either cash or tax credit subsidies (Korpi et al., 2013).

Working Mothers and Stereotypes

Negative perceptions that stereotype single working mothers are influential in the decisions that affect employment, benefits, and leave; this is another potential source of stress for the working mother. According to an empirical study conducted by Okimoto and Heilman (2012), working mothers are at a higher risk for discrimination and limits on occupational advancements if employers believe that work careers will be interrupted due to motherhood obligations, even though such discrimination is illegal. Socially, working mothers are seen as less effective parents than nonworking mothers when working in a male type occupation, when job success is imminent, and when working is a personal choice (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). In addition, working mothers are presumed to lack commitment, as family obligations supposedly reduce commitment to the job, and work obligations are assumed to reduce commitment to the family. The *bad parent* stereotype

does not discriminate; it is applied to both the single mother and the married or partnered mother. In an opinion piece written by Akass (2012), the author found the media to be influential in the promotion of this perception. Attention has been focused on the rivalry and mothering styles between single mothers, mothers employed outside of the home, and stay-at-home mothers (Akass, 2012). Stereotypes would apply to all samples in this study.

Marital Status

The nature of the working mother's marital status is relevant in this discussion as this element sets the stage for the type of home environment she is managing. "Married," "divorced," "single," "widowed," "in a relationship," and "it's complicated" are more than simple attributes on social media sites, they are markers that pervade the working mother's identity. The multifaceted dimensions of motherhood resonate with this identity.

In reference to managing daily household activities and parenting responsibilities, the emotional and tangible support that is likely provided in an equitable, cohesive marriage or partnership can lessen the burdens generated by the lack of time, resources and energy; whereas the single mother will manage these same burdens without assistance, according to the findings of a quantitative study conducted by Caputo and Simon (2013). Concerning the management of multiple roles and relationships, a single mother will assume the sole role of primary caregiver in the lives of her children; a divorced mother may have to consider co-parenting and step-parenting in her family relationships (Caputo & Simon, 2013). Child custody issues can also add strain to the mother's external relationships. In both the positive and negative of any of the above-

mentioned environments, the nature of the working mother's personal relationships directly influences her stress levels and mental health (Caputo & Simon, 2013). The working mother's perception of stress is based on her experiences with these situations. The participant pool in this study is limited to the single working mother.

Child Care

Adequate child care is a monumental concern for the working mother. Family leave generally allows up to 8 weeks post-partum, however a parent may take up to one year off work under the Family Medical Leave Act to stay home with the new child (U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, 2008). This leave is unpaid, but the individual's job is protected for the duration of the leave. Some employers offer dependent care reimbursement accounts and workplace funded childcare to help offset the staggering costs that would otherwise exhaust family finances. Whenever the working mother returns to work, the need to secure quality childcare is a high priority (Missler, Stroebe, & van der Laan, 2013). Trusted friends or family members may not be available, and the working mother will need to consider outside resources. The cost of childcare, whether it is provided in a licensed facility or in the parent's home, can be a significant strain on the family finances. In California, low-income families may qualify for federal assistance with child care costs, including free or subsidized services; those families who do not qualify for that type of assistance will pay the full amount of child care expenses (California Department of Social Services, 2007). Center-based infant care for a two-parent household is 15% of the couples' income, for a single-parent household, it is 50%; child care costs for two children in a two-parent household is 25% of their income, for a

single parent household, child care for two children is 84% (Childcare Aware of America, 2016). Financial burden is one of the biggest challenges that adds to the working mother's level of stress. All participants in this study have child care obligations for at least one child.

Stages of Childhood Development and Stress

Children go through physical, intellectual, and social changes, as they grow from infancy to adulthood. In a quantitative, survey research conducted by Luthar and Ciciolla (2015), one of the findings identified that the type of stress associated with motherhood varies throughout the child's developmental stages, and is dependent on her perception of how she is adjusting to these developments.

The physical and intellectual development of infants and babies (0-2) is rapid within the first years of life; developmental milestones during this period are indicated by how they play, learn, speak, act, and move (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Parents begin to discover who their child is and interact with the child through feedings, play time, and sleep schedules. The physical demands of parents are greatest at this stage (Luthar & Ciciolla, 2015).

The Toddler or Preschool stage presents additional physical and intellectual growth, now introducing the development of fine motor skill and gross motor skills, which includes language development and emotional expression (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). During this stage, the child is subject to the development of emotion regulation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). The

challenges of dealing with toddler tantrums can be an added stressor for the working mother.

Middle childhood presents additional developments in learned behavior and social acceptance (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). At this stage, children are learning how to make good decisions and exercise self-discipline. The Adolescent or Teenage years' present physical changes brought on by puberty, stronger social ties and romantic relationships (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). At this stage, children are starting to pull away from their parents in search of their own identity. The potential strain on the parent-child relationship because of these developments identifies as a different type of stress than what the parent had been exposed to in the past.

The family size and structure of potential participants in this study were diverse, and included one child and multiple children of distinct ages, childcare concern. This section briefly described some factors within the family infrastructure that can contribute to the working mother's stress.

When discussing stress and working mothers, the aforementioned issues are some of the factors that contribute to chronic stress. The multiple roles held by working mothers, coupled with conflicting demands of those roles are additional contributors to daily stress (Holmes et al., 2012). The following section will show how music affects these stress mechanisms.

Music as Medicine

Physiological Effects of Music

To understand the working mother's potential responses to New Age music, it is important to first understand how and why individuals respond to music in general. According to a theoretical article presented by Phillips-Silver, Aktipis, and Bryant (2010), the body as a biological system will respond physiologically and psychologically to these stimuli, in relation to music. Under this premise, we are musical beings (Clayton, 2012). Phillips-Silver et al. stated the conditions needed to establish response to sound and pulse: (a) the capacity for detection of rhythmic signals, (b) the ability to produce rhythmic information, and (c) the ability to merge the signals with this information. The following section contains the role of neurological processes of sound perception and entrainment, in emotional response to music.

Neurological response. According to Habibi and Damasio (2014), music affects neurological processes that trigger a wide range of emotions. For example, the lull of a piano sonata creates a state of wakeful relaxation, white noise quiets the chatter of an overactive mind, the sharp, piercing sounds of an electric guitar can stimulate aggression and physical activity, and the cadence of a marching band will cause one to fall into step with the beat. Dean et al. (2011) described the phenomena of arousal, musical emotions, and musical perception in an experimental study that measured arousal with the manipulation of sound intensity. Dean et al. (2011) indicated a change in listener emotional response with a change in intensity.

The physical, physiological, and emotional responses produced while listening to specific sounds and music will vary, depending on the situation surrounding the listening experience, as well as the individual's present perception of the sound (Koelsch, 2009). Past experiences and preferences may also influence this reaction, and the association placed on a tune that may or may not have been favorable at the time it was initially heard, may carry a significant meaning just because of the events surrounding the listening experience (Koelsch, 2009).

Neuromusical researchers study the relationship between the brain and music. The following section outlines several studies that demonstrate the effects of music on emotions. This information is relevant to my inquiry, the exploration of lived experiences of listening to New Age music. According to the results of the studies described in this section, these experiences include emotional responses. In a study conducted by Holler et al., (2012), researchers examined the common effects of listening to music based on listener preferences, concluding that listener response patterns vary even with similarities in subjective emotions, such as relaxation and activation. Relaxation and activation is relevant to my study; even if the participants preferred to listen to another type of music for stress reduction, they still likely feel relaxed by New Age music, based on this information.

Neuroscience research identified the relationship between behavior and musical harmony. Bidelman and Krishnan (2011) explored the relationship between music preference and pitch, studying brain frequency response to pitch salience. Bidelman and Krishnan (2011) found a significant connection between perception and preferences of

musical harmony; these findings are relevant to my study because New Age music is not a popular genre of music, however it is one that is typically used in relaxed settings, such as day spas and meditation circles because of its calming effects. In an experimental study conducted by Zentner, Grandjean, and Sherer (2008) responses were measured to identify the emotions experienced with various music genres; the emotional rewards achieved by the listeners were based on felt and perceived emotions. Results of this study identified a link between music and emotions in categories identified in the study – wonder, transcendence, tenderness, nostalgia, peacefulness, power, joyful activation, tension, and sadness (Zentner et al., 2008).

The emotional attachments we have with music and sound relates to the various responses within the human body (Alluri et al., 2012). In this present study, participants described their physical and emotional experiences after listening to New Age music.

Entrainment. Entrainment refers to the interaction and synchronization of two independent rhythmical systems; in musical entrainment, this specifies musical stimuli and biological response (Clayton, 2012). This process was initially recognized by Dutch physicist Christiann Huygens in 1665, with the invention of the pendulum clock (Clayton, 2012). The applied mechanics of timekeeping, particularly the synchronization observed in oscillation of dual pendulums swinging together, shaped the theory of entrainment (Clayton, 2012).

Entrainment incorporates perceptual, cognitive, and emotional processes that direct the physiological response to music (Nesic et al., 2012). The changes in physiological functions, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and regularity of respiration,

are attributed to acoustical cues and the perceptual range of sound processing (Nesic et al., 2012). Acoustical cues are used to communicate specific emotions and responses. For example, a slow, melodic tempo with a low sound level and vibrato, and dull timbre resonate with sadness, and will likely produce changes in heart rate, blood pressure, skin conductance, and temperature; fast tempo sounds, with a high sound level, sharp tonal attacks and a large vibrato communicate fear, influencing rate and amplitude of blood flow; fast tempo, high sound levels, bright timbre, and fast tonal attacks will reflect happiness in a song and produce changes in respiration (Nesic et al., 2012).

Entrainment is not limited to a single process. Rather, it is exemplified in multiple physical and biological systems (Clayton, Sager, & Will, 2005). Examples of rhythmic concurrence to music include marching in cadence, and foot tapping or head bobbing to the beat of a song, actions that directly correspond to the precise speed and energy of the musical piece. This experience is not unique, and reflects a phenomenon that occurs regularly for many individuals.

Self-entrainment is a process in which two or more of the body's fluctuating systems are synchronized (Clayton et al., 2005). An example of this process is the increase in heart rate and respiration with increased physical activity, or the coordination and synchronization of a runner's arms and legs during a race. The degree of synchronization between physical or psychological response to sound in each of these examples demonstrates entrainment.

Music research explores the association between acoustical stimulation and brainwave entrainment (Goswami, 2012), as demonstrated in the production of binaural

beats. Brainwave entrainment applies acoustical cues, such as rhythm, timbre, pitch, loudness, vibration, and frequency, to physiological or physical response (Goswami, 2012). Binaural beats technology is a neurological process that analyzes these structures and identifies a sound that promotes relaxation, creativity, and other mental states of well-being, according to the findings of an experimental study conducted by Wahbeh et al. (2007). The awareness of binaural beats originates in the brain stem at the superior olivary nucleus (Wabah et al., 2007). In the human auditory system, sound is interpreted in frequencies; the difference in frequencies, identified between each ear is referred to as binaural beats (Wahbeh et al., 2007). The frequencies must be between 90-1000 Hz, with a difference of no less than 40 Hz to be heard (Wahbeh et al., 2007). A song heard at a frequency of 300-Hz in one ear and 310 Hz in the other, produces a third perceived sound, the binaural beat, with the 10 Hz difference.

Combination of brain waves and sound frequency ranges will result in varied states of mental being. Beta waves, which respond to sound frequencies between 12-38Hz are associated with a state of waking consciousness (Wahbeh et al., 2007). During this state of alertness, individuals are prone to creative processing and concentration, per the findings of an experimental study conducted by Lavallee, Koren, and Persinger (2011). Alpha waves, identifying with frequencies of 8-12Hz, induce a relaxed and meditative mental state (Lavallee et al., 2011). Brain waves, neural activity, and associated sound frequencies are measured by electroencephalogram (EEG) patterns (Wahbeh et al., 2007).

The association of binaural beats in entrainment is a significant component in music research. The type of music used, music preference, levels of cognition, sound perception, and the degree of physical or psychological conditions present are some of the many variables that may determine and influence an individual's response to music.

Music and Emotion

Personal preferences and experiences, familiarity, auditory influences, personality, mood, culture, social cues, and acoustical stimuli are some variables that may influence how people hear a certain song or type of music, and how the music will make them feel, according to findings in an experimental study conducted by Bidelman and Krishnan (2011).

Music is filled with expression and meaning, encompassing the emotions and artistry of the musician. A musical composition is a carefully structured equation of raw sound, art and science. The synchronicity of rhythm, melody, timbre, texture, and harmony produces a voice for the composer. This voice resonates with the passion behind the art, and the expression that fuels creativity (Conrad, 2010).

Individuals become emotionally involved in music when they can empathize with the sounds they hear (Vieillard, Peretz, Gosselin, & Khalfa, 2008). According to Vieillard et al. (2008), the degree of involvement is based on the listeners' understanding and perception of the sound they are hearing. Chapin, Jantzen, Kelso, Steinberg, and Large (2010) explored the relationship between music production, perception, experience, and emotion in an experimental study. Chapin et al. (2010), concluded that music does evoke emotion through empathy and expectancy, and the context in which a certain piece of

music is played, along with the relationship between sound perception and memory, will cue a specific association.

According to the findings of an empirical study conducted by Olsen and Stevens (2013) the magnitude of emotion perceived may be measured by the positive or negative valence conveyed by the piece. These results resonate with survey research finding by Hunter, Schellenberg, and Schimmack (2010), that low, calm tones versus high, energetic levels of arousal set the tone for the type of emotions that can be expected from the song.

The Use of Music in the Promotion of Health and Well-Being

The use of music as a tool for adjusting or influencing emotion and behavior is not a novel concept (Cervellin & Lippi, 2011). Whether music is administered or created in a clinician's office as a therapeutic treatment or by an individual who puts on earbuds and raises the volume as a distraction and to drown out the noise of world, music is being used as a means of influencing emotion and behavior (Christenson, 2011). This experience is multifaceted and is not limited to the act of recalling memories and emotion upon hearing a familiar tune; it also includes the cognitive processing of these musical components (Evans, 2007).

In other roles, music may be used to stimulate creativity and focus. The act of listening to classical music while studying to enhance focus, or to listen to hip hop during a workout because it promotes rhythm and vitality, or to lullabies and New Age sound to aid in relaxation, represent some examples of how music is applied as a function in daily activities. Individuals seek to relate to music in this capacity to achieve a positive psychological emotion.

New Age Music

New Age, Meditative, Spa, Ambient, and Soundscape are just a few names used to identify a single type of music. To maintain continuity in this study, the term New Age music will be used to identify this specific genre of music.

New Age music refers to a random selection of environmental sounds and melody, applied to a system that is both pleasant to listen to and attention-grabbing (Delgado et al., 2008). Musician Brian Eno was a key innovator in the introduction of New Age music in the 1970's (Roquet, 2009). Eno applied experimental musical styles into the composition of the New Age sound (Roquet, 2009). These methods have since evolved to include the use of digital audio workstations and outboard effects. Some of the units employed in this process include analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog converters, musical instrument digital interfaces (MIDIs), equalizers (EQs), and dynamic and time-based effect units (Delgado et al., 2008). Theoretically, the use of computer-aided equipment may produce a colorless and synthetic sound. However, it is the creative processing applied by the composer that brings the sound to life and gives it emotion. The application of environmentally altered sound, for example, produces the perception of space, texture, and patterns that generate the sense of emotion (Delgado et al., 2008).

The qualities presented in New Age music often reflect the dimensions of time and space, as interpreted by the acoustical artist (Ford, 2010). This time-space continuum gives way to the infinite realities within the realm of the unconscious. Ford (2010) explains the association between music and the unconscious experience as dependent on the listeners' familiarity with the music.

New Age music is composed specifically to induce a state of relaxation (Madison et al., 2011). New Age music incorporates specific characteristics of music and environmental sound that elicit positive impressions on cognitive responses and auditory imagery (Dean et al., 2011). These characteristics include raw, imperfect sounds, carrying splashes of random notes, and both low and high underlying tones.

The particular sound of New Age music carries more of a sonic texture than the rhythmic composition of traditional sounds, such as classical music, jazz, and pop (Delgado et al., 2008). The term sonic, in New age music, refers to an audiovisual experience, created by a collection of vibrations and tones, which induces a sense of contemplative space (Olszewska, 2010). The distinct themes of New Age music employ specific measures of timbre, pitch, tone, vibration, and loudness; the random and differing ranges of sound trigger emotional responses, eliciting the attention and response that induces a state of relaxation (Delgado et al., 2008).

Discussion of Method

In the search for relevant journal articles, many studies found were specific to the individual topics within the literature review, such as stress, motherhood, musical emotions, and New Age music. These articles provided supporting evidence for the relevance of the topics addressed in this study. The articles focused on *stress* and *working mothers*, or *musical emotions* and *stress*, or *ambient music* and *stress*. However, as demonstrated in Table 1, I was unable to locate articles that incorporated all these topics in a single study.

After identifying the assorted variables, instruments, methods of data collection and analysis used in the collected works referenced throughout this literature review, I was unable to find any other phenomenological studies that had already been done on my precise topic. The unique nature of each human situation provides an understanding of an experience at the individual level (Patton, 2002). Phenomenology is a worthwhile research direction for this specific subject because there is no scholarly information available on the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress reduction. Such an approach may also provide a starting point for the subsequent design of quantitative studies.

For this study, method is defined as an established way of doing research that has been developed and refined by experts in research design, and methodology is the way a chosen method is applied to collect data for a specific, individual study. The following section addresses the different research methods identified in the various journal articles used in this literature review, and is separate from the rest of the literature review to give this discussion its own focus; the purpose of this is to justify the use of a qualitative approach.

Mixed Methods

Mixed method employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research in a single study, which enhances construct validity (Creswell, 2009). Of the journal articles gathered for the literature review in this study, were no works that presented a mixed method approach about single working mothers and stress, or single working mothers and New Age music.

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative research uses scientific methods to test theories and relationships between variables (Creswell, 2008). Common instruments used in quantitative research include experiments, correlations and regressions analysis methods, and close-ended questionnaires. The following section identify quantitative studies on music and emotions, stress, and motherhood, respectively.

Correlational studies. Correlational studies identify a relationship between two variables (Creswell, 2008). An example of a correlational study specific to stress and motherhood was found in an inquiry conducted by Robinson et al. (2016), which addressed the medical complications resulting from burnout and stress in working mothers. In another correlational study, the home-work interface was identified as a stressor for working mothers (Missler et al., 2013). In another study, Hibel et al. (2012) associated higher levels of stress in working mothers with the chaos and hurry of weekday morning routines. These studies provided the scientific background on the development and influences of stress and the working mother. However, the purpose of this study was not to correlate stressors and motherhood, but to explore a specific lived experience.

Experimental studies. An experimental design is a method of research in which a controlled experimental factor is assigned to different treatments (Creswell, 2008). Experimental studies related to stress and the working mother could not be found. However, there were experimental studies on music and emotion. In one study, Thoma et al. (2013) focused on changes in the human response system after listening to music.

These findings provide evidence relevant to several elements within the present study, a) stress causes changes that affect physiobiological systems, and b) music alleviates that stress. The closest match to my search for literature on New Age music and stress was a study conducted by Reychler et al (2015). This study explored the effects of New Age music during pulmonary rehabilitation, with a comparison of other physiological and emotional reactions, including anxiety. The study determined that there was no significant effect on exertion during a pulmonary rehabilitation session, but there was a positive effect on anxiety. In one other experimental study, which was conducted by Okimoto and Heilman (2012), four hypotheses were tested to identify attitudes toward working mothers in various environments. In general, these four experiments presented a consensus that working mothers employed in male-typed occupations were seen as worse mothers than nonworking mothers (Okimoto & Heliman, 2012). The direction of future research is to determine whether these attitudes and biases are an additional stress on the emotional well-being of the working mother (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012).

A quantitative research method would provide statistical data on emotions, musical responses, stress perception, and stress factors associated with motherhood and employment, but this method would not accommodate the need to explore individual experiences of listening to New Age music for stress relief, and might even be premature until the themes and findings based on such experiences were available.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research is exploratory research, geared at gaining an understanding of a specific problem from the perspective of the population involved through the use of

descriptive narrations and detail-rich experiences (Creswell, 2009). The journal articles presented in the literature review represent a variety of qualitative strategies, including a case study, and phenomenological and ethnographic studies.

A case study explores issues experienced by one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). Page (2013) presented a case study on one woman's experience with work, education, child care, and motherhood. This study presents a detailed account of every facet of the subject's life, as seen through her eyes. Ethnographic studies on motherhood and stress were conducted by von Borell de Araujo, et al. (2015) and Vair (2013), and employed semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews, von Borell de Araujo et al., (2015) interviewed working mothers on their perspective of the work-home conflict and found that mid-career working mothers adopted boundary work tactics to help them manage the home-work interface. Vair (2013) also interviewed working mothers on their perspective of the work-home balance, and found that the balance reported identifies more with coping and managing by whatever means necessary. The limitation of this study is the significant homogeneity of the study group; there was no variation in marital status, income, social status, or the number of children in the family.

A phenomenological study on feminism, conducted by Foster (2000), employed the use of one-on-one, in-person telephone interviews. These interviews provided rich and detailed information on how veteran feminist activist viewed the current state and future direction of the feminist movement, and identified a sense of disappointment with the ideals and behaviors of younger generations of feminist activists. Another phenomenological study that employed the use of interviews in data collection was

conducted by Aselton (2012), in which stress and coping mechanisms in American college students suffering from depression were examined. One of the activities many of the male students participated in was listening to music to help calm them down during moments of stress. In these situations, music was used as either a sedative or a distraction (Aselton, 2012). Aselton (2012) engaged in online interviews, specifically in e-mail exchanges to open-ended questions. An internet –based approach was used to provide a comfortable and convenient environment for participants to openly express themselves. The population in Aselton’s (2012) study was college students, and the findings reported identified preferred methods of managing stress; although the population sampled in Aselton’s (2012) study is different from the population in this present study, the method used is best suited to accommodate the working mothers busy schedule.

In a qualitative study conducted by Delgado, Fajardo, and Molina-Solana (2008) on New Age music, participants were given samples of music generated by a music processing system to evaluate as a musical experience. The sonic textures of New Age music elicit an extended a sense of space and time, resulting in a relaxed or meditative state (Delgado et al., 2008).

There were no phenomenological studies found on the combined topics of single working mothers, stress, and music. Qualitative research is generally used for exploratory purposes, and as there are no studies on single working mothers, stress relief, and the use of music, this is evidence that the use of a qualitative approach would be a good starting point, the findings of which could later be used to design quantitative research. The qualitative research collected for this literature review describes specific phenomena in

rich detail, and provides an understanding of individual meaning and experiences. What is missing from the literature is the lived experience of single working mothers who listen to music, New Age music specifically, for stress relief. This study meets the gap in the literature.

Summary

Inquiries into musical emotions, stress relief, and stress and the working mother, in relation to New Age music were limited to specific areas of study, such as psychology of music, women's studies, and stress. Inquiries on physical and physiological effects of New Age music were minimal. The lack of information on the organic response to New Age music, a type of music composed specifically to induce a state of relaxation, is what this study hoped to augment. This information would be beneficial not only to the single working mothers or the subfield of music therapy, but for anyone who is battling the effects of unresolved stress in their lives.

The implication for a study on music and stress in reference to social change suggests more than a temporary fix to a potentially chronic problem. The growing concern of the threat to health and wellness of single working mothers stems from the growing demand on their multiple roles (Becker, 2010). Long-term increases in physical or mental exertions may trigger a chain reaction that includes the development of prolonged physical or mental ailments, unexpected medical expenses, time off work, strain on relationships and family life (Vair, 2013).

Although stress is subjective, and reported levels of stress vary from person to person, the urgency to alleviate this physical or mental pressure in a working mother's

life has escalated from the need for a day trip to the spa or a girl's night out, to an essential change in lifestyle, and ultimately, in organizational policy (Becker, 2010). The physical and mental health problems triggered by unresolved stress may pose a threat to an individuals' overall well-being, resulting in long-term and irremediable illness, such as hypertension, heart disease, anxiety, and depression (Terrill et al., 2012). Music is a staple factor in people's lives, and the use of music as a means of stress relief is a routine already practiced by many individuals. This study did not measure stress or stress relief via musical stimuli, nor was it designed to test the effects of New Age music. This phenomenological study provides a descriptive account of individual experiences of listening to New Age music in a non-clinical setting.

The preceding literature described various issues faced by the working mother in broad terms but it is not an exhaustive review. This chapter was a review of existing literature relevant to the research topic, beginning with a description of the literature search strategy, followed by a description of the conceptual framework for the study. Subsequent sections examined the general topic of stress, stress and the working mother, the use of music as medicine, and a discussion of method used in prior related research, as well as the research design for this study. Chapter three will include a description of the research design and rationale, research questions, role of the researcher, and methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of single working mothers who regularly listen to New Age music for stress relief. In this chapter, I address the method that I used to carry out a thorough exploration of participant responses. The research question served as the foundation for this exploration. This chapter includes discussions of research traditions and my rationale for the selection of method, the role of the researcher, procedures for recruitment and participation, plans for data collection and analysis, and ethical procedures.

Research Design

In this qualitative study, I used a descriptive phenomenological research method. Researchers use phenomenology to study first-hand, conscious experiences by individuals. Phenomenological methods proceed from the premise that how a person perceives, processes, and experiences an event will influence memories, emotions, the structure of conscious thought and behavior, and how the person identifies objective and subjective beliefs and conclusions (Patton, 2002). Researchers use this method to encourage detail-rich self-expression by the participants for the purpose of identifying the meaning of the experience (Patton, 2002).

Rationale

I chose to undertake a qualitative study because I wanted to explore and describe the specific details of the music-listening experiences of single working mothers. Researchers use qualitative approaches for in-depth examination in which they focus on

the meaning that thoughts, experiences, and behaviors have for the participants (Creswell, 2009). A qualitative design is used when the researcher wants to analyze subjective data (Creswell, 2009). These characteristics presented an optimal approach for this study.

Researchers use quantitative approaches to predict or control phenomena, and test hypotheses through the collection of standardized, numerical data (Creswell, 2009). A quantitative approach was not suitable for my goals in this study because music is such a subjective area of interest, both aesthetically and therapeutically, and subjectivity cannot be easily quantified. Thus, a qualitative approach was more appropriate for my goals. Given that one important function of qualitative research is exploration and there have been no other studies like this, qualitative methodology provided me the tools necessary to investigate a heretofore unexplored topic. I used it to document and analyze participants' experiences and look for common themes that may present topics for future studies.

Creswell (2007) has noted that there are several different research designs available to qualitative researchers, and has identified the five most commonly used methods as narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology. The type of information the researcher is attempting to gather determines the approach needed to obtain that information (Patton, 2002).

Narrative researchers explore the lives of individuals using a process of gathering information to tell the participant's story and analyzing the individual's experiences (Creswell, 2007). The narrative researcher will use field notes, letters, journals, portfolios, personal narratives, and family stories to establish and interpret how the

individual sees the world (Patton, 2002). This method is used to capture the detailed stories of an individual or a small number of individuals (Creswell, 2007). Because the goal of this study was to examine the lived experiences of the participants in relation to New Age music, I was not seeking to tell their life stories. Thus, narrative design was not suitable for my needs.

Researchers use grounded theory methods to generate a theory through constant, comparative data analysis using a large number of participants (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory is used when there is not an appropriate theory to explain a process (Creswell, 2007). Given that I did not intend to create a theory, but rather to explore the lived experiences of single working mothers as they listen to New Age music for stress relief, grounded theory was not an appropriate design for this study.

Ethnographers focus on the culture of a group of people, describing their shared behavior and patterns (Patton, 2002). I recruited the participants for this study from the population of single working mothers in a large city that includes any number of cultures and subcultures. Thus, participants did not share the same behaviors and thought patterns, and may not have had the same cultural backgrounds. Because my goal was not to examine one culture or subculture's shared patterns, but rather to examine the lived experiences of single working mothers in relation to New Age music and stress relief, ethnography was not an appropriate design.

A case study is an in-depth review and assessment of one or more cases specific to the boundaries set up for a particular study (Creswell, 2007). A definitive probe into every facet of activity provides extensive data for case study analysis (Patton, 2002). The

need to set boundaries in a case study, whether for an individual case or multiple cases, limited the suitability of this approach for this study. The participants did not share the same boundaries of time or space, and thus did not constitute a case. Given that my goal was to explore the experiences of single working mothers in relation to New Age music, not to examine the use of New Age music in a specific case, a case study design was an inappropriate choice.

Phenomenology focuses on the meaning and structure of the individual's lived experiences and interpretations of the world (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology was developed by German philosopher Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938) as a philosophical method for studying experiences from the perspective of the individual. (Patton, 2002). Husserl's basic assumption was that the essence is not found in the nature of the event, but in the interpretation of events as experienced by the individual (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological researchers take one of two approaches: hermeneutic phenomenology, or transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). Hermeneutic phenomenologists focus on individual interpretive processes, while transcendental phenomenologists use bracketing and collect data from several individuals who have a shared experience of a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The latter provided an appropriate framework for this inquiry, the goal of which was to explore the lived experience of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief.

The working mother's perceived level of stress affects her work, family, social, and personal environments and creates a complex matrix of very specific yet dynamic perceptions about her employer, family life, personal goals, personality type, and current

state of physical and emotional well-being (Becker, 2010). In sum, I used the phenomenological approach to capture the essence of the individual experience with New Age music.

Research Question

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief?

SQ1. How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of listening to the music?

SQ2. How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of or reaction to stress during or after listening to New Age music?

Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher, I recruited, selected, and interviewed participants for this study. I did not disclose my role as a working mother to participants; I conducted a professional and task-oriented interview. The inclusion of my personal experiences, as they pertain to this inquiry, would have presented a potential bias that may have influenced responses and interpretation. Measures taken to limit researcher bias are described in a later section. I personally gathered data, transcribed interviews, and entered all notes into NVivo qualitative analysis software.

My Personal Identity

I am a third generation, American-born, Mexican American woman. I am a working mother with four children, two of whom are in high school and two of whom are

in college. My passion and call to service lies in the fields of musicology and women's studies.

My Identity as a Researcher

I hold a master's degree in psychology. I am currently employed as a social worker with Los Angeles County, and I serve elderly and disabled populations. I am assigned a specialized caseload, assessing in-home care needs for individuals with mental illness. Many of the caretakers who I interview during these assessments are working mothers, and I have observed a variety of stress-related concerns within this population over the years. However, the scope of my job limits my ability to engage in intervention. My professional background in interviewing affords me the ability to approach study participants with experience and sensitivity.

My Influence on the Research

As a working mother, I can relate to most of the stressors I have identified in the literature review. I have been employed with the County of Los Angeles for 17 years; I went on maternity leave twice, raised four children, withstood divorce, and went back to school during that time span. I managed household finances, which included childcare costs. I was a soccer mom and a stage mom, and I became quite experienced with setting and maintaining schedules for my household. However, this balancing act came with significant consequences. During this time, I was treated for depression, anxiety, hypertension, and duodenal ulcers. I often suffered from back pain and migraine headaches. My interest in listening to music for stress relief stemmed from these

experiences and prompted the present inquiry. I kept a reflective journal of related thoughts, observations, and experiences throughout the course of the study.

In the past, I have applied different genres of music to different circumstances. For example, I listened to heavy metal or punk music while working out at the gym, salsa music while cooking, and classical music while reading. I found that the accompanying music enhanced whichever task I had chosen to alleviate stress, but neither the task nor the music itself remedied the stress. I was introduced to New Age music by an individual who composes music in this genre. I was immediately drawn to the low, droning, hypnotic sounds that invoked for me a sense of relaxation as no other type of music did. My curiosity about how individuals perceived New Age music was heightened after attending a small concert performed by local New Age artists. I was lulled by the vibe created by the droning sounds and intrigued with the process used to create the sounds, while my companion was touched and nearly brought to tears by the beauty of what he heard.

These two distinct experiences exemplify variations in sound perception and emotional associations. Moustakas (1994) identified Husserlian concepts of noema and noesis, external and internal perception. My companion and I experienced (noesis) the music (noema) in different ways. This perception was a significant factor to consider when identifying the variances of experiences described by participants.

Methodology

Study Sample

To aid in quality assurance, I used two different sampling strategies in recruitment. One strategy was criterion sampling. According to Patton (2002), criterion sampling is used to identify and select cases reflecting predetermined indicators. Snowball sampling was also used. In this method, potential candidates are identified as information-rich cases and referred for participation by other people (Creswell, 2007). Participants were single working mothers (not currently married or living with a partner), ages 30-45, who had self-reported stress, who self-reported listening to New Age music, who were employed full time and had at least one minor child in the home. They had access to a computer or electronic device and e-mail at home, so that they were able correspond with the researcher when needed. Income levels and marital status were noted for reporting the demographics of the sample selected, but were not qualifying or disqualifying factors for participation. The age range was selected to represent women of child-rearing age, not so young as to still be developing their professional identity, and not so old as to be caring for an aging parent. Also, the data provided by the United States Census Bureau (2015) identified the largest population of individuals, as married, cohabitating, or single parent households, with children under the age of 18 to be in the age range of 30-45 years (US Census, 2015).

This sample was not meant to represent all working mothers, nor was it mean to represent a specific sample of age, marital status, family size, or socioeconomic status for the purpose of statistical generalization. In a theoretical piece written by McVicar et al.

(2013), the individual's perception of a situation directly affects stress response. For example, the factors that could be identified as stressors to the single mother, the mother of a special needs child, the mother of one child versus the mother of four children, mothers of adolescents, mothers of toddlers, and divorced or separated mothers, for example, will vary significantly based on what each perceives to be a stressful situation. This study could address all potential facets of the working mother's stress.

The objective of qualitative research is to collect information on the subject's experiences until the point of data saturation has been reached; data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study, and when no new information has been seen or heard (Creswell, 2007). There are no similar studies on this subject that I could use for a comparable gauge on sample size. This study had a sample of 10 working mothers.

Participant Recruitment

I recruited participants using flyers (Appendix A) to advertise the study. My contact information was on the flyers; individuals who were interested in participation were able to call or e-mail me to initiate the enrollment process and ask additional questions about the study. A telephone script was used during the initial contact with potential participants (Appendix C). I sought permission from business owners and human resource departments to place flyers in various local businesses. Except for allowing me to keep the flyers in the building, businesses were involved with solicitation, recruitment or selection of participants. I reached out not to only places of business where single working mothers were employed, but also to businesses that accommodate the

needs of working mothers, which included day care centers, coffee shops, nail salons, fast food restaurants, gyms, dance and yoga studios, and a karate dojo.

Snowball sampling was also employed as a method of recruitment. Individuals who were selected for participation were asked to identify other potential participants from among their acquaintances, specifically their coworkers. A few of the selected participants sent information about the study to individuals they thought might be interested. This method produced half of the participants in the study.

The flyers alone did not yield an adequate number of participants; a Facebook page was created to solicit participants, containing the same information as the flyers. This method did not produce any inquiries. Participants received a small token of appreciation for their time; a \$10 Starbucks electronic gift card was mailed out at the end of participation.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected using the criteria sample previously described. Participants had access to a computer or electronic device and e-mail at home. Recruits who contact me about participation were screened for these essential determinants (Appendix C). Experiencing self-reported stress was one of the selection criteria. Whether the women initiated contact by telephone or e-mail, I responded to them accordingly; using the script in Appendix C I asked five questions: (a) Are you between the ages of 30-45? (b) are you employed at least part time outside of the home? (c) do you have at least one child in the home under the age of 18? (d) do you have access to a computer or electronic device, such as a smart phone, tablet, or iPad, and e-mail access at

home? (e) do you experience stress that you feel arises from your role as a working mother? (f) do you listen to New Age music for stress relief? Consent forms were e-mailed to participants once it was established that they had met the basic criteria. Consent was obtained electronically; participants responded to the e-mail, using their chosen pseudonym to sign consent forms.

In-person interviews are desirable, but in consideration of the working mother's time and energy, telephone interviews are practical and convenient. The immediate concern with conducting telephone interviews, in comparison to face-to-face interviews, is the quality of data collected. In a qualitative study conducted by Sturges and Hanrahan (2004), the responses from telephone and in-person interviews were compared; the findings showed that there was no significant difference in the quality of data collected from either method. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) noted the discussion of sensitive topics and the accessibility of hard-to-reach target groups as reasons for conducting telephone interviews. In another study, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted to examine interviewees attitudes toward participating in telephone interviews; the overall experience was positive, and addressed themes of convenience, the focus on the voice instead of the face, and not feeling judged (Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015). The primary benefit for conducting telephone interviews in this study was to accommodate the busy schedule of the working mother. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) discussed participant responses for favoring telephone interviews, noting time constraints, lack of transportation, childcare considerations, and work schedules. In my professional experience with conducting scheduled interviews, the one-on-one contact affords an empathetic environment; this

environment can positively influence the individual's level of comfort and the quality of information gathered. However, it has also been my professional experience that scheduled interviews are often rescheduled or cancelled due to inconvenient or conflicting agendas. To avoid withdrawal from participation because of inconvenience, I conducted telephone interviews. I was initially concerned about interviewing participants who were recruited from Facebook, considering that they may live out of state, or live too far for me to visit in person. As Facebook did not yield any potential participants, this concern was irrelevant. However, due to the demonstrated time constraints of the current sample, a face-to-face visit would have been impossible; a telephone interview was an appropriate method of communication.

Context of the Study

I contacted participants to schedule and conduct a telephone interview. A telephone interview accommodated the working mother's busy schedule. These appointments were often rescheduled multiple times due to time constraints or changes in the participants' plans. I requested that participants be in a private, quiet location during the interview and focus only on our conversation. However, often, the participants were engaging in other activities during the interview, and fit me into a small slot of time during or in-between those activities.

Data Collection

Interviews were recorded using a voice tracer audio recorder. To maintain consistency, semi-structured interview questions were asked (Appendix B). Interviews included an inquiry on stressors, stress management techniques, family dynamics, and the

music listening experience, as it relates to reported self-awareness, physical and mental responses to the music, and changes in levels of stress (Appendix B). Follow up questions were used within the interview to elicit a full, complete, descriptive response. At the end of the interview, I thanked participants for their time and cooperation and ensured they have my contact information. I followed up with participants soon after the interviews. I sent participants a copy of their interview via e-mail, and schedule a second telephone interview so they could respond to the textural-structural descriptions resulting from their initial telephone interviews. None of the mothers were able to accommodate a second interview, they all opted to respond to their transcripts via e-mail. A \$10 electronic gift card was e-mailed to them at the completion of their participation.

Anonymity and confidentiality protects identities of the participants, as described in the Consent Form (Appendix A). I was the only source of contact for these participants. I did not use participants' real names or any other identifying information, such as the location of the study, or place of employment. Participants selected their own pseudonym, and used it to sign consent forms. Personal information was not used for any purpose outside of this research project. I had sole access to all data. To prevent unauthorized access of any e-mail correspondence and interview transcripts, my computer remains password-protected and maintained under a secured Wi-Fi connection. No one else has the log-in information to the Walden e-mail system. I was the only person who transcribed the interview recordings. Transcripts have been saved on a flash drive, which is kept in a locked file. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were used in data analysis. This evidence assisted in answering both research questions. The following describes Moustakas' modification of Van Kaam's method of data analysis:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping of relevant experiences.
2. Reduction and elimination to determine the invariant constituent. Invariant constituents are non-overlapping or non-repetitive components clustered into themes (Moustakas, 1994).
3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents
4. Final identification and validation of the invariant constituents
5. Construction of individual textural description of experience for each co-researcher. In this context, a *co-researcher* is a participant in the study, and *textural description* refers to what was experienced by the co-researcher (Moustakas, 1994)
6. Construction of individual structural description of experience for each co-researcher. *Structural description* refers to how the phenomena was experienced by the co-researcher (Moustakas, 1994)
7. Construction of textural-structural description of meanings and essences of the experiences for each research participant (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120-121).

The events described in the interview transcripts identified the listening experience and music-induced emotions. Themes, in reference to stress factors, self-awareness and the musical experience were isolated and categorized. NVivo software

was used to code data collected, using both a priori and emergent coding. Data was organized and analyzed to facilitate development of individual descriptions, meanings, and essences (Moustakas, 1994)

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of a research study is important in addressing credibility. Criteria for judging qualitative research addresses credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), credibility is establishing that results are believable; transferability is the extent to which the results can be applied to other situations; dependability is the ability for results to be repeated, and conformability is the degree to which results can be confirmed by others. Strategies used in this study to establish trustworthiness include triangulation, member checking, thick description, and reflexive journaling.

Triangulation

Data triangulation is collecting data from multiple sources to cross check information and obtain a full understanding of participant experiences (Patton, 2002). In this study, the use of telephone interviews served as checkpoints for accuracy.

Member Checking

Member checking is a technique used in qualitative research to improve accuracy and validity of a study; the researcher seeks feedback from participants on the credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2007). Applying Moustakas (1994) method, participants read and responded to the textual-structural description resulting from their telephone interviews.

Thick Description

Thick description is a full-bodied description of participant experiences; this description evokes emotions, it authenticates and enlivens the essence of the experience (Patton, 2002). Thick description helps to establish meaning, and makes it possible for the researcher to identify and categorize patterns and relationships (Patton, 2002).

Reflexive Journaling

Creswell (2007) refers to the researcher's experiences, self-awareness, and perspective in a study as reflexivity. Reflexivity prompts the researcher to be mindful of his or her own ideologies while seeking to understand the ideologies of the individuals being studied (Creswell, 2007). Reflexive journaling considers researcher bias (Hill, 2012). According to Hill (2012), the researcher needs to be aware of his or her own biases to be able to differentiate between what participants are describing and what the researcher perceives they are describing. My own thoughts and observations were noted in a journal throughout the study. Drawing upon the contents of this journal provided an inside view of the participant responses, and researcher reactions.

Ethical Protection of Participants

Ethical challenges in qualitative research include anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, and researcher influence on the study (Patton, 2002). To address the matters of anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent, a description of these components is detailed in the consent form. Pseudonyms, in lieu of participants' real names and any other personal identifiers, were used in the study. Contact information provided by the participants was not and will not be used for any purpose outside of the

research project. Data was accessed and kept secured solely by the researcher. Safeguards were set in place to ensure to prevent internet security breaches. An IRB-required Consent Form for Adults was made available to all participants, prior to initial contact and data collections. The study did not begin until IRB approval was obtained.

An ethical concern related to data collection and interview activities is the presence of psychological distresses (Patton, 2002). There was minimal risk to participants for experiencing psychological distress during the interview process. There were no reported or observed signs of distress by the participants.

Other ethical concerns address language barriers, the appropriate explanation of the purpose, reciprocity, and data collection boundaries (Patton, 2002). I do not speak any languages other than English, therefore all written and verbal communication was solely in English. Participation was not forced at any time during the process; participants were not mandated to complete the interviews, nor were they pushed into answering interview questions beyond an initial level of inquiry. A 1-2 page summary of the results, written in everyday language, will be sent to the participants via e-mail upon URR approval of the dissertation.

Summary

A phenomenological approach provided an optimal method of investigation into this inquiry. The subjectivity of stress, self-awareness, sound and music perception, and the meaning associated with these factors have been examined through the eyes of the participants through verbal communication. I explored how New Age music was perceived by participants and what this music meant to them, what makes this type of

music effective for them, whether it increases or changes self-awareness, and how they felt it affected their level of stress and well-being. Chapter 4 will present the findings of this exploration.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief. This inquiry was guided by feminist theory; participant responses satisfied the research questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief?

SQ1: How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of listening to the music?

SQ2: How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of or reaction to stress during or after listening to New Age music?

In this chapter, I discuss the setting, participant demographics, data collection and management, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and themes that emerged from participant responses.

Settings

I collected data via telephone interviews with single working mothers. Prior to each phone conference, I informed the participants of their right to exit the interview at any time, and without explanation. I provided participants with a telephone number to the local public mental health office to call in the event they became upset during or after their participation in this study. To my knowledge, none of the mothers became distressed because of their participation. It is unknown if any of the participants utilized

the public mental health services. No personal or organizational conditions occurred that could have influenced participant response at the time of the study.

Participant Demographics

All potential participants were screened and selected based on the required criteria: (a) single working mothers, (b) 30-45 years old, (c) employed full time outside of the home, (d) have at least one child under the age of 18, (e) experience self-reported, self-defined stress related to being a single working mother, and (f) have access to internet and e-mail in the home. Participant names are pseudonyms that were chosen by the participants.

The sample of 10 participants reported having between one and four children in the home: one mother had one child, two mothers reported having two children, four mothers reported having three children, and three mothers reported having four children. Five of the mothers also reported having adult children living in the home. One mother reported having a baby, and one mother reported being a grandmother who also provided care for her toddler grandson (Table 2).

The types of employment ranged from line staff to upper management. The number of hours worked per week ranged from thirty-five to fifty. Two mothers reported working two jobs, two of the mothers were self-employed, and five mothers reported working both paid and nonpaid overtime on a regular basis. The reported household income ranged between \$30,000 and \$75,000 (Table 3). Two of the mothers indicated additional income from undisclosed resources.

Table 2

Participant Demographics: Household Composition

Name	Number of children in household	Ages of children
Annie	2	17, 17
Betty	3	23, 11, 9
Jacqueline	4	23, 11, 18, 9
Jane	3	16, 8, 5
Katy	2	17, 10
Kelly	1	8
Leticia	3	25, 22, 15
Mary	3	15, 13, 5, 1
Rebekah	3	23, 19, 17
Valerie	4	26, 19, 17, 7

Table 3

Participant Demographics: Employment and Income

Name	Type of work	No. hours/week	Annual income
Annie	Account management – healthcare industry/driver	40-48	\$46,000- \$65,000
Betty	Customer service – food service industry	35	\$30,000- \$45,000
Jacqueline	Civil servant – local government	40+	\$75,000+
Jane	Audits – healthcare industry	40	\$46,000- \$65,000
Katy	Management - retail	40+	\$30,000- \$45,000
Kelly	Real Estate	40+	\$75,000+
Leticia	Civil servant, mgr. – local government	40-55	\$75,000+
Mary	Behavioral therapy aide	40	\$46,000- \$65,000
Rebekah	Real estate/home inspections	40-50	\$46,000- \$65,000
Valerie	Civil service, mgr. – local government	40+	\$66,000- \$75,000

Participant Profiles

Applying Moustakas's (1994) approach, I prepared textural-structural narratives from each interview (Appendix D). These narratives include participant profiles and a summary of the experiences described with stress, motherhood, and the use of New Age music for stress relief. A few of the mothers interchanged the use of the third and first-person voice when describing or listing stress factors, as if speaking on another's behalf, using her own experiences as a reference point. To differentiate between the essence of the individual's personal experience, and possible personal opinions, the narratives reflect the individual's personal experiences only.

My experiences with the transcribing process are also noted in Additional Findings. During transcription, I identified certain details in the recorded conversations that were not part of the text, including a noted rise in pitch, a crack in voice or lighthearted laughter when someone described a stressful situation, or a pause in narration, presumably to collect their composure, while sharing a personal moment. This information is relevant because it contributes to the essence of their disclosed experiences.

Data Collection and Management

I conducted 10 individual, semistructured interviews (Appendix D) via telephone. Telephone conversations were recorded for transcribing purposes using a Sony™ Digital Voice Recorder. Interviews lasted between 12 minutes and half an hour, depending on how much information the participants chose to disclose. Interviews were set up to accommodate the participants' busy schedules, and were often conducted while they were

driving home, running an errand, or waiting on the conclusion of a child's activity.

Interviews were conducted over a period of three months (from July 24, 2017, through October 30, 2017). I was the sole transcriber, and all recordings were manually transcribed using a Microsoft Word© program. Due to the quality of some of the recordings (possible poor cell reception or wind noise), all recordings were played back multiple times to ensure that the participants' words were accurately identified.

Participants were asked to review transcripts for accuracy. All transcripts were saved in a password-protected laptop, and copied to a password-protected flash drive, both of which are kept in a locked cabinet. When not in use, the voice recorder was also kept in the same locked cabinet.

Data Analysis

I analyzed data using Moustakas' modification of Van Kaam's methodology (1994). NVivo© qualitative data analysis software was used to code the transcripts and identify themes and subthemes (Appendix E). The Word© documents were imported into NVivo© and a coding structure was created. The following themes were identified: (a) stress, which yielded the subthemes of crossover stress, workplace stress, overtime, finances, time management, household management, childcare, transportation issues, and emergencies; (b) the reported effects of stress on the relationship with the family; (c) perceived stereotypes of a working mother; (d) the expectations and duties of mothers; (e) mental chatter; (f) music as medicine, which yielded subthemes of the experiences with New Age music, comparisons in experiences, and the logistics of music listening;

(g) advocacy for mother's health and well-being; and (h) acoustical preferences for music listening.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness was verified using a variety of strategies. Credibility was achieved with triangulation (the use of audio recordings for each telephone interview), member checking (participants read and responded to the textual-structural description resulting from their telephone interviews), reflexive journaling (my own thoughts, which were documented in a journal throughout this process—additional information on my insights will be discussed in Chapter 5), thick description (full-bodied descriptions of participant experiences), and quality checks by the dissertation chairperson. The variables of stress identified in this inquiry are exclusive to the responses provided by this small sample, which limits the scope of transferability. However, the descriptions of the lived experiences of listening to music for stress relief may be of interest to other comparable populations.

The simple design of this inquiry suggests dependability. This inquiry can be replicated by using the design methods for the participant recruitment and selection process, the steps taken to record and transcribe interviews, and for NVivo© qualitative data analysis software use. Confirmability was achieved through triangulation and member checking and through a quality check of transcripts and narratives by a researcher who has 16 years of experience in analyzing qualitative data and subject expertise in the psychology of the arts and creativity.

Results

This study was an exploration into the lived experiences of single working mothers who listened to New Age music for stress relief. The interview questions were developed to obtain a general response of the type of stress each mother faced at home and on the job, and for a specific response to the music-listening experience. Participant responses provided insight into the physical and mental demands of the multiple roles that these women carried. The results also identified the emotional and physical responses to New Age music, how New Age music was utilized for stress relief, and why New Age music was more effective than any other activity used to help relieve stress. The following review of themes includes direct quotes from participants, where appropriate, which were collected during the interviews. Themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
1. Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work related stress • Finances • Time and household management • Childcare, transportation, and emergencies
2. Single mother stress and the effects on relationships with family	
3. Single working mothers and stereotypes	
4. Mental chatter	
5. Music as medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences with New Age music • Comparison in effects of experiences
6. Advocacy	
7. Acoustical preferences	
8. Additional findings	

Theme 1: Stress

Each participant was asked to describe the type of stressed she experienced as a working mother. This was an open-ended question which yielded a variety of responses on stress at home and on the job, many of which were shared by two or more of the mothers.

Subtheme 1: Work-related stress. The types of employment reported by the participants varied. Each profession carried its' own source of stress.

- “My job is demanding because I’m serving people every day, we get all kinds of dispositions, it’s just uh, you work through it.” (Betty)
- “It’s very high. My line of work is very stressful. There are timelines we have to meet, compliance, so there’s a high level of stress.” (Jacqueline)
- “The hardest thing is having to switch around my schedule at work because someone called out, or corporate wants to show up at the last minute, and I have to figure out a way to pick up my son from school.” (Katy)
- “Being a manager is very difficult, especially because I am dealing with about 100 employees, and also with the public, so I am not only responsible for the employees, I am responsible for the safety of the customers coming in, and to make sure Customer Service is out there handling all the people coming in, making sure the reception area is fully staffed, umm, employees in the back are servicing their participants timely, it’s a lot of stress.” (Leticia)
- “Working with special needs children, it definitely can be stressful because I have to maintain a . . . it’s not like your own kids, when you say like ‘ok go to

your room' [laughs] if there's behaviors occurring, you have to be 100% all the time. And that can be stress, because if I'm having an off day, or if my patience is already thin, I have to get it together and go in there at 100%."

(Mary)

The number of hours worked per week also contributed to stress. Some of the mothers reported working overtime, both paid and non-paid time.

- "There's just days, like last Thursday and Friday, after the meetings I had to go to the hotel and I had to finish up my work, so it's like, I had been working from like 7:00 in the morning until like 10:00 at night." (Annie)
- "I can't work overtime, but um, I stay later, especially if I have to cover for someone. There isn't too much I can bring home, except for working on everyone's schedules for the next week." (Katy)

Another stress factor that was identified is cross-over stress. The variables that each participant identified as stressors are carried around from one aspect of her life to another.

- "I try not to take my home problems to work, I try to leave them at the door you know, come to work with a fresh start, but it's not always easy. At work I try to forget about it, but it's still hard, because I can't concentrate, you know, if there's something going on at home." (Leticia)
- "Because if it is a rough day, you know, I just had a full day of tantrums and behaviors, I come home, and I don't always end it there. You know, I should probably do that, but I don't." (Mary)

- “[W]hen you bring that stress home from work, and then you come into your home and you have children yelling, ‘Mommy, Mommy this! Mommy, Mommy that!’ It’s like, you haven’t even had a chance to take your work clothes off or use the restroom, and you’re frustrated.” (Valerie)

Subtheme 2: Finances. The lack of adequate income is a great source of stress for most of the mothers interviewed; there is a shared fear of not being able to provide the essentials for their families.

- “Money . . . you want to provide umm, a better life for your kids, but mainly it’s more like putting a roof over their heads and food on the table.” (Annie)
- “But just being a single mom, and just having to not only care for myself, but to be there to serve and to make sure that everyone else is fed, and everyone else’s needs are met.” (Betty)
- “Sometimes at work, our hours can be cut [voice trembles]. When the hours are cut, that means the income is cut, it does not, but it does not uh, help [laughs] when you see all the bills coming, then when your income isn’t what you need it to be, then you have to work around trying to figure out what portion of this bill is getting paid, or what takes precedent over the other [laughs], so it can add some stress.” (Betty)
- “I’ve gotta work, so these things that are normally fun and exciting for a kid during the summer go by the wayside, and because I’m not making a lot of money right now, camp is very expensive, and I can’t afford it. There’s expectations in the real estate business – you’re exerting all of this energy and

all of this time, but you're initially not bringing in a lot of money. Or, you know, in some cases, in my case right now, it's zero. And because I'm a really brand-new agent, and that's very stressful to expect that your kid will spend all this time away from you, but I work for myself, so it's or famine, and right now it's famine." (Kelly)

Subtheme 3: Time and household management. The multiple roles and responsibilities described by participants are identified as stressful due in part, to a reported lack of time.

- "Not having enough time, there is never enough time to do everything. At home, making sure that I'm there for the kids, giving them whatever they need, getting them to bed on time. In school, it's the deadlines, getting assignments in on time, especially if I don't understand the assignment, then it takes longer, I have to take the time to research it." (Jane)
- "I feel that my biggest stressor is time. I work around my kids' schedule, I'm kinda a full-time mom as well as working, so it stress with picking everybody up, dropping them with the babysitter, rushing over to work, being 100% on my game working with children, and then rushing back home, picking everybody up, doing practice drop offs, I think the driving and the time constraints of my day are the most stressful, managing not only my time, but four other people's times. I have three kids in three different schools, three different sports, um, you know three different social lives, it's just not enough." (Mary)

In addition to fulfilling responsibilities on the job, the management of household chores, meal preparation, errands, and homework help have been identified as some of the stressors that await participants when they come home from work.

- “My stress comes from just the routine of everyday – getting the kids dressed, get them fed, getting them out the door on time. Then the kids will have their homework and their you know, whatever happens to them throughout the day, their emotional breakdowns, so I have to try to stay kinda even so I can hear them. If I fall apart, God, we are all a mess [laughs].” (Betty)
- “It’s a juggling act. It’s definitely a juggling act, with school activities, school appointments, doctor appointments, working full time, finances, [unintelligible] and child care.” (Jacqueline)
- “It’s very, very stressful. Umm, now that they’ve gotten a little bit older it’s gotten a little bit easier, but you have to make sure the school, who’s going to pick them up from school, and breakfast, lunch and dinner; sometimes I don’t get off until 6:00 so I have to make sure I wake up early and um, either the night before cook for the next day or wake up early and make something so that when they get home from school they can eat, while they’re waiting for me to get home.” (Leticia)
- “[P]icking everybody up, dropping them with the babysitter, rushing over to work, being 100% on my game working with children, and then rushing back home, picking everybody up, doing practice drop offs, I think the driving and the time constraints of my day are the most stressful.” (Mary)

- “I’m only down to one last kid, thank God but there’s also Emilio so I’m still right there with that. I am a grandma to a four-year old, and I help with him a lot. On top of cleaning, cooking, that’s about it.” (Rebekah)

The battle cry of the working mother “you do what you have to do” is echoed multiple times throughout many of the interviews. After describing unusual dilemmas and routine challenges, participants pledged allegiance to their roles as working mothers.

- “[B]ut mainly it’s more like putting a roof over their heads and food on the table, that’s pretty much it. But aside from that, I think all single moms, just, deal with day to day life.” (Annie)
- “Even though I have to work, when one of the kids gets sick, or they have to get picked up early, then I leave work. So, there’s just always, always something going on. But that’s what you’ve gotta do as a mom, you’ve gotta work through it.” (Betty)
- “I think the number one stressor is the responsibility to provide and to be a mother all at once...and you still have everything else to do in your world, you know, whether it’s laundry, dishes, you know cleaning, keeping a home, keeping it maintained, and running your guys’ life.” (Kelly)
- “We still don’t feel like it’s ok to be able to talk to somebody and say ‘these are my issues that I’m having’ because you are expected to be the mother, you’re expected to do this. And there’s no way for you to say no I can’t, or no I’m tired. That “no” just doesn’t exist in our vocabulary, it’s just get it done. But we’re managing. And even though we put ourselves last, and our needs

are last, first it's our children and then it's our jobs, and then on your free time, if you have any, you focus on yourself." (Valerie)

Subtheme 4: Childcare, transportation, and emergencies. One common concern shared by a few of the mothers was arranging for practical, appropriate and routine transportation and childcare.

- "Their dad travels so he's not always readily available to keep them, so umm, and I have to try and work my schedule around, or try to find other moms who are in a position to pick them up or drop them off. So, it can be a challenge." (Betty)
- "It's a juggling act . . . with childcare, definitely after school, holidays, vacation, winter vacation, spring vacation." (Jacqueline)

There was a reported concern about leaving work during the day to pick up an ill child from school; for some of these mothers, this task resulted in lost wages, if no other suitable accommodations could be made.

- "[W]hen one of the kids gets sick, or they have to get picked up early, then I leave work." (Betty)
- "[Y]ou worry about who is going to pick up your child from school if they get sick while you are at work." (Valerie)

Theme 2: Single Mother Stress and the Effects on the Relationship with Family

Several of the mothers identified how the work-related stress that is brought home affects the relationships they have with their children.

- “I put my headphones on and they know, don’t interrupt this, this is good for me, this is good for me, so it’s therapy [laughs]. My kids know, okay I’m going to go into my “me time” and they know, ‘please don’t knock on the door, let me do my soaking, and let me do my unwinding, I will be a better person, you will like me better if I’m relaxed [laughs]’. So, they know, they allow me to have whatever period of time it is, if it’s 20 minutes or whatever, I just need that time, that time-out just to decompress.” (Betty)
- “It comes to a point of like, you know, you’re just freaking out on your kids because their socks are on the floor. I come home and I’m like ‘look, I had a bad day [laughs], everybody better watch out [laughs]. I just spent three hours on the floor with tantrums, and now I don’t want to hear anybody, everybody better have all their stuff done.” (Mary)
- “You’re frustrated, and all that stress from the day starts to come out in your interaction with your children. So, just walking away, just 5 minutes, close the door. You feel the difference. And you just come out of it more energized, you’re relaxed, it’s like you have that emotional ability to be able to handle, you know, the children and give them what they need and pay attention to them.” (Valerie)

Theme 3: Single Working Mothers and Stereotypes

Guilt and judgment are two concerns that have been voiced repeatedly by participants -the guilt experienced for leaving their children behind to make a living, the

guilt of not being able to provide more, and the judgment received from others for subjecting their children to this lifestyle.

- “I think third stressor is the stigma that you deal with, with being a working mother, and have other people judge you for being a working mother, it’s such a double-edged sword. Because you have to work to put a roof over your kids’ head but at the same time you’re judged as a woman for working, that you don’t care or that you’re less of a mother.” (Kelly)
- “And even if the other parent steps in to assist, you still have that guilt and that remorse because somehow you feel ‘I should have done that, I should have been there. And you what? It’s ok. It’s ok if the other parent, or the grandparent steps in to assist, it doesn’t make us any less of a mother.” (Valerie)

Theme 4: Mental Chatter

The constant stream of thoughts that flowed through the participants’ minds, whether they were based on a mental checklists or routine worry, was also identified as a source of stress.

- “I have too much on my mind, too much in my head... as a single mom your mind is going one million miles per hour.” (Annie)
- “[T]he mental fatigue, physical and emotional fatigue...just to not think about some of the things I experience in the day.” (Betty)
- “It helps clear my mind. I don’t think about the outer stressors in my life—work, family life.” (Jane)

- “[I]t makes my brain shut off.” (Katy)
- “[V]ersus actually thinking . . . it shut out a lot of noise in my brain.” (Kelly)
- “[B]ecause I use to have a really hard time sleeping thinking of things.
“(Rebekah)
- “[W]e pretty much know our child is safe, but I guess it’s just one of those
mother things, you’re just going to worry no matter what.” (Valerie)

Theme 5: Music as Medicine

The participants described their experiences with listening to New Age music for stress relief. The alternate term, meditative music, was also used during the interviews. The number of themes that were derived from this section were considerably less than those listed under stress. However, the musical experiences that were documented were rich in detail and very similar. Saturation had been achieved early on, with this small group because of this.

Subtheme 1: Experience with New Age music. Participants described the physical and emotional effects experienced during and after listening to New Age music.

Effect on mental chatter. The ability to “quiet” the overwhelming thoughts that occupied the minds of the participants was a welcomed response to New Age music.

- “I feel relaxed, and that helps me kind of not think, just relax, and imagine myself, especially with the drive; sometimes I put it (New Age music) on when I have too much on my mind, too much in my head and I kind of need to go away for a minute.” (Annie)

- “I just kind of, just relax and not think about some of the things I experience in the day and I am able to elevate my mind above, you know, what my current experience is and what my body is experiencing as a result of the stress. So, it helps me to be in a whole different place. Your sensory is taken to a different level and you’re able to kinda relax, and I love that. The one thing about the meditative music is that it has a way of stimulating your mind. It’s calling me to calm down, and it’s not calling me to have to do any kind of work, it just has its’ own way of relaxing me, you know where everything else is just calling me to work.” (Betty)
- “It just relaxes me, you know. It puts me in a different place, I don’t feel as stressed, and I don’t think about the outer stressors in my life – work, family life, so it really puts me at ease. Emotionally, I feel relaxed, I feel at ease, I don’t feel as stressed, I feel more, um, I feel a little happier, you know?
(Jacqueline)
- It helps clear my mind. If I can get a mental break for just a few minutes, I feel recharged, umm, and it helps me get through the rest of the day, or that time from when I get home until I can get the kids into bed. Sometimes, I just need to take a mental break, just like long enough to regroup, ‘cause that’s all I really have time for.” (Jane)
- “If I really listen to it, it makes my brain shut off. Like, it gives it a power nap. And by the time it’s time to wake up, I feel mentally recharged. Like, my

brain rebooted. If it's on my speaker, it makes me relaxed but not sleepy.

(Katy)

- It felt like it was very calming and centering, and it really did, like, bring me full center. It gives me something to listen to, because I wasn't allowed a lot of room for thought that wasn't constructive, it shut out a lot of noise in my brain, and allowed me to focus on what I had to do. Also, I think it's a form of mediation, it's not full meditation, but I need to be in a meditative state to be productive, especially with the analytical reports, I need to stay focused. It takes you to a different space. And really, it does something to your brain. It makes things work more effectively for me, it just does." (Kelly)
- "So that's really relaxing, it helps me go to sleep and clear my mind, because I use to have a really hard time sleeping thinking of things that I don't want to forget the next day." (Rebekah)
- "[A]nd you're not really thinking about anything, you're not listening to lyrics, it's just very soothing, as opposed to if you're listening, let's stay the radio, you play that meditative music and it takes you away from your desk, from your personal life, from anything that's going on, and all you do is sit there and it just guides you on how to breathe and how to just pay attention to yourself." (Valerie)

Physical release. In addition to the mental effects of New Age music, participants also described the physical responses they experienced.

- “You know when you’re stressed, like your body’s stressed, it slows like, little by little, it kinda like lets go. It’s not completely let go, it’s the timeframe that it goes by slowly, very slowly, with the music, with the flow, you kinda like let go a little bit, in a way.” (Annie)
- “And when I’m somewhere mentally, that’s relaxing, then the whole overall person is just not in such a tense state.” (Betty)
- “And then it felt like I was in a trance. I think I fell asleep too. It makes me feel light, relaxed, less tense. If I’m using my headphones, I fall into a trance and then I fall asleep. I know that it’s something I can turn to when I really need to tune out, but be alert at the same time.” (Katy)
- “I just remember it feeling very settling, very calming, and um, just very peaceful, when I might have felt anxious, or worried, or kind of um, jittery, and it just allowed me to center myself focus while I listen to the music. It would really kinda lower my heart rate and my blood pressure, I could feel, being very calm, and I think I just felt more at peace. My shoulders weren’t hunched, I didn’t have palpations. It’s pretty intense in a very positive way.” (Kelly)
- “It relaxes me, or even at times, um, puts me in a different place And I feel like my breathing starts changing, also. I feel like I’m breathing, you know, a little bit deeper and I’m slowing down, and it seems like whatever has happened throughout the day has, not that its gone away. I feel like I am able to deal with it a lot better, and with a cooler mind.” (Leticia)

- “I think that the music itself helps, um because you kind of have a few moments to sit there and listen and, you know, without any activity. I could relax, I feel my body loosen up, it’s pretty instant.” (Mary)
- “Actually, it is very calming because I listen to it when I do yoga, and I do it at the end of the night, versus the morning, so I can relax, so I’ll listen to the chanting, or the whale songs.” (Rebekah)
- “Listening to meditative music works because its’ like a sense of, it calms the stress, it calms the anxiety, the tension. Um, you get to, you know, really pay attention, get in tune with your body and breathing.” (Valerie)

Subtheme 2: Comparison in effect of experiences. The participants were asked about other stress relief methods. They were also asked how the experience from these activities differed from listening to New Age music.

Annie meditates and listens to New Age music regularly, but will make the time to listen to it during especially stressful situations, and she likens the effects of meditation with those achieved from listening to New Age music.

If it’s a stressful situation at the moment, I already know the by heart my New Age channel, I go to it if something is really stressful, it’s my go-to place, and sometimes I download certain music to my phone, so if I need to like, completely focus, turn off, and like be in a get-away mood, I do that. (Annie)

Betty uses her elliptical, soaks in the bathtub, walks, and listens to gospel music, in addition to listening to New Age music for stress relief. When asked to compare these

activities to the music listening experience, she stated that those activities were physical, and listening to the music was mentally stimulating.

The one thing about the meditative music is that it has a way of stimulating your mind. You know, and then it just has an effect on your whole person. It just has a way of just putting me in a different place, mentally. And when I'm somewhere mentally, that's relaxing, then the whole overall person is just not in such a tense state. (Betty)

Jacqueline engages in yoga, in addition to listening to music to help with stress relief. "Yoga is more physical, so I can feel it, you know? And then listening is more emotional."

In addition to listening to New Age music to help with stress relief, Jane exercises regularly. She admits that she does not have the opportunity to listen to the music as often as she would like, but if her stress is significant, she will make the time. "The difference is that the music is mindful, and the workout is physical." (Jane)

Katy indulges in sleeping, when she can, and compared this experience to that of listening to New Age music:

My mind and body literally shuts down and rests, for the whole time I'm out, and I don't think about anything. Listening to new age kinda gives the same results, except that I'm still awake while it's happening, and I'm relaxed, but alert enough to appreciate it. (Katy)

When asked about other activities she engages in that may help with stress relief, Kelly answered:

Sex [laughs]. No really, sex is the number one thing for me, to be real honest, its' a form of exercise. Umm, swimming, I love swimming, I play tennis with my son, but I don't do it enough, though. Umm, dancing is a huge one for me.

When asked about the differences in experiences on stress relief, Kelly indicated that the music has mentally therapeutic properties that could not be duplicated in the physical activities.

Leticia practices yoga when time permits. She not only compared the experiences between activities, she also likened the effects of listening to New Age music to those experienced while meditating.

It's a different type of relief, I'm going to say that yoga, that after I'm done with it, I'm tired, then I just kind of sleep. But with meditative music, I can actually analyze what happened during the day and see ok, can I have done it a different way, should I have responded in a different way? With the music it actually helps me calmed down and it helps me, um think things through, or just analyze the situation. (Leticia)

In addition to listening to New Age music, Mary exercises in the morning and enjoys a glass of wine in the evening. She likens the effects of the alcohol to those produced from listening to new Age music.

I think that listening to the music and having a glass of wine pretty much have the same effect for me. Working out is never relaxing, as much as listening to that music, for me. It's just a different type of stress relief. (Mary)

Rebecca meditates and practices yoga regularly, in addition to routinely listening to New Age music for stress relief. She stated that the music helps her stay focused, and she relies on the music to help get her through her meditation or yoga routines.

In addition to listening to New Age music, Valerie enjoys going on solo hikes, when she needs time for herself. She pointed out not only the benefits, but also the convenience of listening to New Age music for stress relief, compared to other activities:

You know, I think the easiest thing with meditative music is that now, with all of us having cellphone and smart phones and all these other devices at the tip of your fingers, it's quick, it's easy, as opposed to going to the gym, you know some people like going to the gym, they work out, or hikes, or reading or thing like that, this is something that is so easily accessible, and it is so positive for your body.

Theme 6: Advocacy

Many of the mothers expressed concerns about their own health and well-being, as an adverse reaction to stress. In addition, they also communicated the importance of stress management, in any form, for other mothers,

- “I definitely want to say that the New Age is very helpful, exercise, any type, whether it's yoga, whether it's taking a brisk walk, I've done that as well and it's very, very helpful, as a stress reliever, and that's something that mothers definitely want to look into for a relaxing method, a stress-free method.

(Jacqueline)

- I am really excited that you are taking the time to look at this and evaluate this, because it's really something that I don't think a lot of moms that work ever kind of, would think to add into their stress relief routine." (Mary)
- "And I think it may have to do with you know, some of us were still raised where the women stayed home, and your job is to be home and raise your children. And you know, we may be second generation females who are out in the workforce, and are working full time jobs and are still trying to be parents. Sometimes I want someone to just listen to me and kind of guide me. And so, I know that I am not alone, that I'm not the only mother going through this. There's more of us out there." (Valerie)

Theme 7: Acoustical Preferences

The devices used to listen to the music were mentioned in some interviews. Annie and Valerie had applications on their electronic devices that allowed them to easily access the music. Annie kept the channel programmed in her car and at home as well, and often played New Age music during her commute home.

- "I have Sirius XM. I have it in my house, I have it in my car, I even have it on my phone . . . I automatically already know the channel for it, that I put at night, like I go to it if something is really stressful, but yes, it's my go-to place, and sometimes I download certain music to my phone." (Annie)
- "[T]he easiest thing with meditative music is that now, with all of us having cellphone and smart phones and all these other devices at the tip of your fingers." (Valerie)

Kelly and Katy stated that best results were achieved when they listened to the music using earbuds or headphones.

- “It’s very important to use earbuds, or headphone. I don’t want to listen to this thing in a room, or that’s on a loudspeaker, I don’t listen to this music like that because it’s not effective, it has to be in my ears, so I can shut out the world. So, just putting it on, like a Bose speaker, does not work for me. It has to be in my earbuds or it does not work.” (Kelly)
- “If I have it on as background music, it doesn’t have the same effect, it might even be annoying. And I’m not sure why, but I could probably guess, but I totally noticed a difference when I listen to it on my (Dre) Beats than if it was just on a speaker.” (Katy)

Additional Findings

Additional information was gathered from these interviews that did not develop into individual themes, but were worth noting.

One note is on stress factors. One stressor that was identified by only one mother, was with her own mortality, and how it might affect her children. “What scares me is if something were to happen to me, if I pass away, my fear is -who will take care of my kids? As a singles mom. That is one of my biggest fears. I can go through hell, I am living here to be with them.” (Annie).

Another note refers to adult children in the home. Several mothers identified a few adult children living in the home. There had been no additional inquiry on the status

of these adult children, however, there was little to no mention of their physical or financial contributions to the needs of the household.

Third, in regard to finances, two of the mothers stated that they have two jobs, and two of the mothers who reported that their annual household income was in excess of \$75,000, also indicated that there had been additional income, but they did not disclose the source of that income.

Fourth, as I reviewed my journal entries, I made an observation – this study was based on my own experiences with stress and the use of New Age music for stress relief. However, by the time I reached the interviewing stage, circumstances in my life had changed, as had the stress factors, and the effects of the music. It is possible that several years from now, the responses from these participants would also change. The potential for future studies on the long-term effects of stress in single working mothers is discussed in chapter 5.

Finally, the study presented an unexpected outcome. Although the research and interview questions were weighted more toward New Age music than stress, the largest part of the findings deal with stress, not music. This factor confirms that my sample was the one I was seeking: single working mothers who were clearly dealing with stress and were listening to New Age music for stress relief.

Composite Description

The themes that emerged from these interviews provided answers to the research questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief?

SQ1: How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of listening to the music?

SQ2: How do single working mothers who listen to New Age music describe their experiences of or reaction to stress during or after listening to New Age music?

For these working mothers, stress exists in almost every facet of their lives. Job-related stress often intersects with household-related stress and dynamics, which accentuates the already-taxing physical or mental pressures experienced by a working mother. The ability or inability of a working mother to adequately recuperate from her workday stress, before taking on the challenges at home, affects how she responds to a situation and how she interacts with her children. The stress factors identified include extended work hours, finances, time management, household management, child care and well-being, and handling emergencies.

The single working mothers who were interviewed engage in some type of stress-reducing activity aside from listening to New Age music. Some of the mothers try to incorporate self-care activities regularly, others will do so as time permits. The need to be proactive with self-care, taking a mental or physical break, is recognized as critical, but continues to be a challenge for these mothers. Ideally, any activity that provides optimal benefits with the greatest convenience is desired, but the opportunities to undertake in such is not always feasible.

The exploration into the use of New Age music for stress relief yielded results that identified positive physical and mental experiences. The common phrases used to describe an experience was “relaxed,” “an escape,” “helps quiet the mind,” “helps with focus.” Whether the experiences express a physical release, an emotional release, or both, the effects described are like those characteristics also found in meditation. The desired outcome is to reach a state of composure; it is during this state that the mother can mentally or physically regroup, which gives her the renewed energy that is needed to help her get through the rest of her day.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I described the findings of the phenomenological study of the working mother’s experiences with listening to New Age music for stress relief. After analyzing the transcribed interviews, the following themes emerged (a) stress, (b) the effects of the mother’s stress on the relationship with the family, (c) working mother stereotypes, (d) mental chatter, (e) music as medicine, (f) advocacy, and (g) acoustical preferences. Appendix E provides a detailed list of themes and subthemes. The following chapter will provide an interpretation of findings.

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and summarize the findings presented in Chapter 4 on the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief. In Chapter 2, the research literature presented ample data on stress, motherhood, and the physiological and emotional effects of music on stress. However, there is a significant gap in literature on the lived experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief. I conducted 10 telephone interviews with single working mothers to obtain specific, first-hand accounts of their experiences with work and home-related stress and with the use of New Age music to help alleviate their reported symptoms of stress. These interviews yielded textural-structural descriptions of those experiences (Appendix D) using Moustakas' phenomenological approach. This study provides an understanding of the various types of stress some single working mothers experience, as well as an account of how and why New Age music helps these mothers through those stressful moments.

I used criterion sampling to recruit the participants (Appendix A). I collected data using an interview guide that I created, which was validated by a panel of Walden University faculty who are qualitative experts (Appendix B). Data analysis revealed seven themes: (a) stress, (b) the effects of stress on family relationships, (c) stereotypes, (d) mental chatter, (e) music as medicine, (f) advocacy, and (g) acoustical preferences (Appendix E). In these seven themes, six subthemes were uncovered. Appendix E provides a full list of the themes and subthemes that emerged from data analysis.

The remainder of this chapter presents the interpretation of findings by the major themes and subthemes, the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for social change, and conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

The textural-structural descriptions of the 10 participants provides a glimpse into the lives of single working mothers; this glimpse highlights multiple stress factors, the effects of stress on their overall well-being, and how the use of New Age music helps manage that stress. The following seven themes were identified: (a) stress, (b) effects of stress on relationship with family, (c) stereotypes, (d) mental chatter, (e) music as medicine, (f) advocacy, and (g) acoustical preferences. Within these seven themes, six subthemes emerged (Appendix E). The following interpretation of findings presents the themes and subthemes that were identified through the conceptual framework, which is guided by feminist theory.

Theme 1: Stress

The stress factors discussed during the interviews were limited to those associated with employment and managing a household. The verbal accounts yielded responses that addressed specific concerns: stress that crossed over from the job to home or vice versa, physical and emotional job stress including working overtime, financial stress, time management, household management, childcare and transportation issues, and handling emergencies. These responses reflect similar experiences identified in previous studies that have explored the daily balancing act carried out by working mothers and how

reoccurring stress related to these experiences have led to burnout (e.g. Vair, 2013; von Borell de Araujo et al., 2015)

Subtheme 1: Work-related stress. I had some preconceived notions about what I expected to hear in reference to workplace stress, especially given recent public allegations made by a number of women on sexual harassment in the workplace. I also expected to hear about income inequality, job satisfaction, rapport with colleagues, and discrimination. Instead, the responses to job-related stress were specific to the individual roles and responsibilities carried by these women.

Betty works in customer service; her job-related stress is associated with demanding clients with bad dispositions. Deadlines and reports contribute to Jacqueline's job-related stress. A fluctuation in work schedules is a primary stressor for Katy. The demands of managing an office while administrating customer service yields a high volume of stress for both Leticia and Valerie. Working with the unpredictable and very emotional behaviors of special needs children causes Mary a great deal of stress.

Job descriptions were documented for each participant. However, I did not explore other factors related to employment, such as background and education levels or job satisfaction. These factors may add to the participants' stress. The information provided during the interviews reflects the concerns identified in studies on job stress and burnout (Missler et al., 2013; Sabbath, Mejia-Guevara, Noelke, & Berkman, 2015, Terrill et al., 2012). In a quantitative study on mortality and the working mother, Sabbath et al. (2015) specifically identified single working mothers as the highest mortality risk based on their experiences with job and family stress.

The number of hours worked per week varied between the participants. In Betty's case, not working enough hours contributed to her stress; for others, working overtime, or the case of two of the mothers, working two jobs, is a necessity, but also stressful. Rebekah and Annie have both taken on a second job to supplement their household income. Both women have older children who are not as dependent on them for their daily needs, and who are able to prepare their own meals and help with household chores; this frees up time the time and energy for these mothers to work their second jobs.

Overtime, in this context refers to more than 40 paid hours of employment per week. However, the reality of these participants' circumstances identifies that motherhood itself is a full-time occupation; based on this premise, these women are juggling at least two full time jobs. The ability to find balance is critical to the single working mother's physical and emotional well-being; balance, under these circumstances, is maintaining equilibrium while navigating through the ebb and flow of fluctuating daily activities (Vair, 2013).

Letty, Valerie, and Jacqueline stated that they routinely worked paid and unpaid overtime; in addition, they also brought their work home. The benefits and disadvantages of working from home are discussed in a literature review prepared by Tavares (2017). Some of the benefits include a reduction in commute time, increased ability to balance home and work responsibilities, and increased flexibility and productivity; some of the disadvantages include working extended hours, lack of adequate equipment and resources, and intersecting boundaries between work and home time. (Tavares 2017)

The impact of the work domain on the home, and home-related stressors at work, affects not only the working mother's productivity and ability to focus, but it also affects her mood. The mothers described how the transfer of stress from work to the home affected their interaction with their children. The mothers who brought their work home provided a mixture of experiences; the opportunity to work from home afforded them the ability to multitask and be at two places at once; they had the flexibility and availability that was needed to complete work tasks while managing household chores. However, the additional work increased their reported stress levels at home, and decreased the amount of quality time they would normally be able to give to themselves or their families. Long term exposure to the combined stressors increases risks of poor health (Sabbath et al., 2015). The degree of fatigue experienced from work directly affects all other facets of the working mother's life (Robinson et al., 2016). The need to minimize this risk is critical to the working mother's physical and emotional well-being, and it encompasses more activity than seeking a balance between work and home, it requires consistent, hands-on help at home and at work.

Subtheme 2: Finances. The lack of money and resources is a considerable stressor for these working mothers. Katy and Betty are dependent on hourly wages. Kelly and Rebekah are both real estate agents. Their income fluctuates, which makes it difficult to maintain a steady household budget. Annie and Rebekah are both dependent on a second job to assist with the household finances. The ability to meet the financial needs of the household is a great concern for many of the mothers; the inability to manage any unexpected expenses was an expressed fear. Three of the mothers did not express

financial concerns; these women also indicated the availability of nonemployment income. I did not pursue this inquiry, but I assumed that child support, alimony, income from the adult children in the home, or any combination thereof, may be a contributing factor. Whitehead and Bergeman (2017) conducted a quantitative study which evaluated how perceived stress and negative occurrences with subjective financial experiences was related to individuals' physical health. The mothers who discussed financial concerns identify with frequent negative occurrences; as a result, they are susceptible to increased levels of stress. Long term exposure to stress, in this case over finances, can have an adverse effect on the physical health of a working mother (Sabbath et al., 2015)

Subtheme 3: Time and household management. Many of the participants expressed their frustration with the lack of time available to complete routine tasks. Kelly and Rebekah's concerns with time are exclusive to their field of work. As real estate agents, they spend a significant amount of time marketing themselves, researching properties, networking, and meeting with clients. In this line of work, the amount of time spent on the job is not indicative of how much of an income they can anticipate; often, family time is sacrificed to the needs of the household. The other mothers who reported a conflict with time also expressed frustration with the task of maintaining the physical energy to keep up with continuous activity. Jacqueline, Jane, Leticia, Mary, Rebekah, and Valerie have elementary school aged children who engage in extracurricular activities; they described the tiresome, daily routines and schedules that revolved around these activities.

The lack of time available to multitask is an added stress for single working mothers. None of the participants stated that they were unable to keep up with their home and work demands, but they did describe the physical and emotional distress from having to do so. The strategies that are applied to time management may increase time efficiency, but they do not necessarily reduce the stress associated with this type of pressure (Rose, 2016). Time management is often made possible by establishing routines and assigning priorities (Zucchermaglio and Alby, 2013). Coordinating activities is an acquired skill, one that has been afforded to these women by their circumstances.

This theme encompassed all the “typical” factors a person would consider when identifying motherhood stress: homework help, preparing meals, supervising the morning rush and the evening wind-down, delegating or performing household chores, scheduling and attending school and medical appointments, and being present at sporting events and other extracurricular activities. Carrying multiple roles is not the same as multitasking.

The need to focus is critical; not only must the working mother be accountable for her own life, she has the lives and activities of her children to consider. I noticed a change in tone of voice in all my participants when they described various experiences. When discussing the multitude of tasks that they regularly manage, there was a sense of depletion, of physical and mental endurance. Resiliency, or the lack thereof, is an underlying factor that is often heard but not outwardly discussed in the interviews. Feelings of guilt, anxiety, and depression and feeling loved and comforted are some factors that may affect how the single mother responds to her situation; the amount or

availability of social, physical, or emotional support affects personal adjustments (Luthar & Ciciolla, 2016).

The multiple roles associated with motherhood are amplified when the responsibilities of those roles rest on the shoulders of a single parent. The participants described how they managed their responsibilities with the conviction of someone who was well acquainted with the ebbs and flows of life. “You do what you have to do,” “you manage,” and “it just gets done” are phrases that are echoed throughout each interview.

Burnout is an outcome related to long-term exposure to chronic stressors (Robinson et al., 2015). Long-term exposure to the type of stress that comes from habitually engaging in multiple roles can have an adverse effect on the working mother’s health (Hibel et al., 2012). The “long-term” factors in this present study were not explored, and are subjective to the individual’s personal history. How long has she been a single mother? How old was she when she started having children? How have the home and work roles and demands changed over the course of her maternal life? Additional factors that may be considered in that timeline include work history, socioeconomics, relationship with the absent parent, and possibly even custody and divorce issues.

Sabbath et al. (2015) explored the mortality risks of working mothers, identifying single mothers as the highest risk; these risks are based on long-term exposure to lifelong work stress and family circumstances. Annie expressed her fear of passing on and leaving her children without a mother. According to the findings of Sabbath et al, (2015), Annie presents a valid concern, not just for her own well-being but also for all mothers who share similar circumstances.

Subtheme 4: Childcare, transportation, and emergencies. Child care expenses were not discussed; instead, all the mothers reported a need for reliable and appropriate childcare. Coordinating transportation to and from school, practice, or other activities, and before and after school care requires preparation, precision, and more preparation. As one of the mom's stated, "sometimes I have to have a plan A, B, and C," in reference to the need for a child care contingency plan. The stress experienced when plans fall through with child care or transportation can be tremendous. During the school year, the primary need is after-school care. During school breaks, full time care is needed while the mothers are at work. Although child care expenses were not identified by any of the mothers as a stressor, socioeconomics plays a significant role in this factor. The mothers who expressed a concern with finances are ineligible for public assistance or subsidized child care because of their income; they make too much to qualify for assistance, but not enough to sustain a workable household budget. Limited income and resources may be the variable that minimizes the options and availability of reliable childcare and afterschool transportation resources (Luthar & Ciciolla, 2016).

Emergencies are another factor of concerns for these mothers. An emergency is not just a life-threatening situation; in this context, an emergency is any situation that requires the mother's immediate response. Aside from the angst experienced when a mother receives a call about her child from the school or daycare, she is also charged with the task of responding to the situation; this often requires her to halt all other activities. The single working mother's responsibilities to her job is compromised when she is faced with this situation; emergencies that occur during work hours result in higher

absenteeism and decreased productivity (Daly & Groes, 2017). An emergency may also invoke feelings of irritability and anxiety. In a phenomenological study conducted by Menashe, Possick, and Bichbinder (2014) on motherhood and stress, the authors identified that some of the working mothers inadvertently projected negative responses toward their children in the wake of an emergent situation. None of the mothers who participated in this present study identified with this type of experience.

Whether the mother is paid salary and has vacation time to claim for missed work, or if she is paid hourly and risks losing income to pick up a sick child from school, tackling the unexpected is a significant stressor that was reported by all the mothers.

Theme 2: Effects of Stress on Relationship with Family

As I listened to these mothers provide a detailed account of very personal moments in their lives, I acknowledged that they are not the only people in the home who is affected by stress. How do the children perceive their mothers? How do they see their mothers when they come home from work? What do their mother's actions teach them about parenting? What values are they learning from their mother's experiences? Ponnet (2014) uses the family stress model in his study to explore how problem behavior in adolescents is influenced by a parent's financial stress in low, middle, and high-income level households. Eleven of the children in my study are between the ages of 10-17 and fall into this category of concern. None of the mothers reported any behavioral problems with their children; however, this factor was not specifically addressed as part of this inquiry. The extent to which these children are psychologically affected by their mother's

stress is unknown, but according to a conceptual framework on family stress, it is expected that they are affected in some way.

Many of the mothers reported an awareness of how stress affected their lives, and they understand how stress affects their mood and behavior. They also acknowledged the need to alleviate stress to avoid spillover from one environment into another. Betty, Mary, and Valerie routinely take measures to reduce their stress levels before engaging with their children; all three of them describe similar activities for “me time,” which involves physically removing themselves from their environment to regroup. This removal from their immediate space is as simple as resting on the other side of a door. Chang (2013) discussed how physical and mental burnout affect the working mother’s patience and ability to cope with family dilemmas; when the mother is distressed and dissatisfied with her situation, she is not likely to be as sensitive to her child’s needs. It appears that Betty, Mary, and Valerie have identified this danger and are taking measures to be the best version of themselves for their children.

Theme 3: Stereotypes

Chapter 2 provided a discussion on how stereotypes and bias affect working mothers. Social perception plays a significant role on self-image, which may already be brimming with overwhelming guilt; this is an added stressor for some working mothers (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). Betty, Jacqueline, Kelly, Mary, and Valerie expressed strong sentiments of how they are affected by the guilt and stereotypes associated with being a working mother. In the workplace, these mothers feel that they are judged by others for not being available full time for their children; they also feel that they are

looked over for promotional opportunities because of a perception that being a mother will not afford them the required time or dedication to the job. These mothers reported feelings of judgment; others assume that working is a choice and not a necessity, and they are choosing to spend time away from their families. The number of studies referenced in Chapter 2 on the guilt and stereotypes associated with being a single working reflect the experiences of participants in this present study (Holmes et al., 2012; Hutchison, 2012; Luthar & Ciciolla, 2016; Okimoto & Heilman, 2012; Page, 2013).

The guilt expressed by these mothers appears to stem from the social judgment they receive. With the same breath that is used to defend their positions as working mother, they will also express grief for not being available to provide the full-time care that they feel their children need. Valerie suggested cultural influences on certain expectations: “And I think it may have to do with you know, some of us were still raised where the women stayed home, and your job is to be home and raise your children.”

Theme 4: Mental Chatter

The inner voice that analyzes everything about everything can be overwhelming and at times, debilitating; these obsessive thoughts are fear based, and are often associated with a negative event. Rumination, the act of frenetic reflection, is associated with depression and anxiety (García, Duque, & Cova, 2017). The fears and concerns identified by many of the mothers in this study exemplify some of the experience-based distress that is central to their internal monologue. Many of the mothers reported fears and concerns, primarily about their children’s welfare and household finances. Most of these fears and concerns are experienced-based situations that have occurred or are

occurring. Other concerns appear to be based on fear of the unknown. One mother provided a list of fears that she thinks about constantly, which included bullying and child predators, even though her children have never been subjected to either. Another mother expressed obsessive fears about who would take care of her children if anything happened to her, even though she does not have any impending health issues and she has a strong family support system. The extent of this type of fear is unknown. During the interviews, the mothers only stated hypothetical concerns that caused their distress, they did not identify a physical response to these stated fears. However, this response is symptomatic of anxiety. None of the mothers identified or disclosed any psychological disorders or treatments, and the purpose of this study was not to diagnose or treat any stress-related condition, but based on the participant responses, it appears that some of the mothers are experiencing anxiety and depression.

Theme 5: Music as Medicine

The use of music to enhance mood is a common coping strategy. Some of the mothers indicated listening preferences to induce specific emotions - listening to pop or dance music for energy, listening to gospel music to invoke a state of grace, and listening to New Age music for stress relief. The experiences with New Age music, as described by the participants, addressed their physical and emotional responses and the effects on the mental chatter. The participants also discussed comparisons between the effects of meditations and yoga as coping mechanisms. Meditation is the practice of focus and mindfulness, and is used to help relieve stress and anxiety (Singh, Sharma, & Talwa, 2012).

During the interviews, none of the mothers identified any physical afflictions that are often associated with stress, such as muscle tension, fatigue, headaches, heartburn, or gastrointestinal distress. However, they did describe a relief of some of these symptoms after listening to New Age music. More information about symptoms of stress may have been acquired if I had asked specifically about any physical distress they were experiencing before I asked them how the music makes them feel. I am concerned that the mothers may have become so immune to operating at an accelerated level of stress, that they do not immediately identify the physical toll it has taken on their bodies.

The acoustical properties of New Age music provide the listener with an experience unlike any other musical genre. As presented in Chapter 2, previous studies have shown how the low, droning, repetitive tones elicit a state of a wakeful relaxation; a state of consciousness like that experienced with meditation. For this group of mothers, the need to regroup their thoughts leads them to a way that does so; the music is helping them relax long enough to achieve that goal.

Brainwave entrainment was also discussed in Chapter 2, in relation to the neurological response to sound and music. In this setting, brainwaves align with the frequency of the New Age music, and the brain is stimulated into a state of relaxation. When the mothers described their experiences with New Age music, the common responses were “relaxed” and “focused.” Both answers identify a physical and a cognitive response. The entrainment process does not vary from person to person, but the response is dependent on sound perception and acoustical cues (Goswami, 2012).

Most of the mothers reported engaging in other activities that help stress relief; these activities are physical. Annie and Valerie enjoy hiking. Betty, Mary, and Valerie will indulge in bubble baths. Jane and Mary exercise regularly. Jacqueline, Leticia, and Rebekah practice yoga as often as possible. Annie and Kelly like to go out dancing with friends. Kelly specifies having sex as a stress reliever. The common response from the mothers about the difference in the type of stress relief experienced between these activities, and listening to New Age music is that these activities are physical, and listening to music is emotional; the music restores balance to their thoughts and quiets the mind.

Theme 6: Advocacy

Chapter 2 presented feminist theory as guide for this phenomenological study, and identified social and political inequality as potential factors of stress for working mothers. None of the mothers who were interviewed identified with either of these specific components; the potential for advocacy was limited to the communication of needs within their immediate environment, and with the ability to relate to other mothers in similar situations.

Each mother who was interviewed presented personal accounts of their daily struggles. In addition to their own experiences, some of the mothers spoke on behalf of other working mothers. Valerie explained, “Sometimes I want someone to just listen to me and kind of guide me, so I know that I am not alone, that I’m not the only mother going through this. There’s more of us out there.”

Mary and Rebekah expressed an appreciation for this type of exploration. They want others to know that there is more to their lives than a social perception. Annie, Jacqueline, Kelly, Leticia, Mary, Rebekah, and Valerie have acknowledged how work and job-related stress has affected their lives, and encourage other mothers to actively seek and engage in whatever activity that will help reduce stress.

Advocacy is a responsibility that will be upheld by this present study. The evolution of feminism has provided opportunities for voices, such as the participants in this study, to be heard. The identification of stressors and the need for stress reduction does not require additional inquiries; the need to find solutions to a problem that is resulting in serious, long-term health risks is the primary focus (Becker, 2010)

Theme 7: Acoustical Preferences

Auditory factors, such as pitch, performance, and volume play a significant role in sound perception (Bidelman & Krishnan, 2011). Some of the mothers specified their preferences for listening to New Age music and explained how adhering to these preferences optimized the desired results. Annie does not have a listening preference, she only ensures that all listening devices in her home and on her person, are programmed to her favorite New Age station. Kelly and Katy were specific about the use of earbuds or headphones when listening to New Age music. They both identified the ineffectiveness of the music, or Katy's case, the annoyance of it, if it is heard without these devices.

Chapter 2 discusses binaural beats - the discrepancy of sound between each ear creates a third sound, the binaural tone (Goswami, 2012). This effect is created while using a device, such as ear buds or headphones, that promotes an exclusive sound to each

ear. The binaural tones are interpreted by the listener, inducing a state of focus, as in the cases of Kelly and Katy.

Additional Findings

One of the mothers expressed a concern with her own mortality; she was afraid of what might become of her children upon her demise. This is a valid concern. A section of Chapter 2 was a discussion on maternal health and well-being. The literature review included studies that documented the long-term effects of stress, the increased health risks, and the mortality rate of single working mothers (e.g., Sabbath et al, 2015). Most of the mothers identified the need to alleviate stress, as a means of coping with their immediate situations; the responses resonate with the multitude of websites, support groups, and blogs on stress and motherhood. However, the insight provided by their responses is also an indicator that more focus needs to be placed on the long-term effects of stress in these same arenas.

A second variable, which was briefly addressed in subsequent sections was the number of adult children in the home. This detail that was not identified in any of the journal articles used for the literature review. How significant is this, in relation to the working mother's stress? Is this a socioeconomic factor? Chapter 2 limited the discussion on stress and family life to childhood development. Ironically, this specific component was not addressed by any of my participants; no comments made on "the terrible two's" or "t'weens," no references to prepubescent drama or moody teenagers. My participants limited the discussion of their children to extracurricular activities

A third variable, which was also previously addressed as a subtheme in Overtime and Finances, was the number of single working mothers who worked two jobs. The research literature in Chapter 2 supports statistics that identify a growing population of single working mothers, and how this change in family structure has affected income distribution (e.g., Kollmeyer, 2012).

Limitations of the Study

The contributions made to the understanding of how New Age music relieves symptoms of stress in single working mothers helps to fill the gap in literature, but this inquiry is not without its' limitations. One of the limitations in is in the sample size. The number of single working mothers who successfully completed the interview process is within the anticipated range of participation, and based on the responses to the effects of the music, saturation was achieved for this study. However, the number and types of stressors identified by participants reflect only those that have been experienced by this small group; the stressors are not representative of all working mothers, or even of those in a specific community. Contact was made with 16 working mothers, of which only 10 completed the interview process. One of the mothers halted communication after signing the consent form, 3 of the mothers were unable to keep their telephone appointments (I did not pursue another appointment after the second cancellation), and two of the mothers did not respond to the e-mail with the consent form, or to my follow up text asking them if they received that e-mail. I attribute the lack of participation to time constraints. The lack of personal time available for the interviews was an obstacle for the 10 participants;

it is assumed that this factor was a greater challenge for those who did not complete the process.

A second limitation is in reference to self-reporting; some of the information, such as age and marital status, could not be verified; I chose to specify single working mothers, as opposed to married mothers, to simplify the focus of the study. None of the participants identified relationship-related stress, but it is presumed that a relationship, or marriage may also be recognized as a stressor. In reference to age, it is difficult to determine if the mothers' age plays a significant part in these experiences; the age group for this study (30-45 years) was considered solely on statistics. Another concern I had with self-reporting was with the type of information some of the participants wanted on and off the record. A few of the mothers were uncomfortable with the idea that specific information about their jobs or family life would be included; these women were very comfortable sharing their experiences in private but asked that these events not be added into the narrative. I suspected that they feared losing anonymity.

A third, and significant limitation is that the relatively short conversation with each woman, although filled with rich details about her experiences, is only a snapshot of her life, a single moment in time. These interviews reflect their immediate situations, and the responses would likely change from one week to the next, not for any unreported discrepancies, but because of the presumed and declared dynamics of their lives. The questions and answers were specific to stress at home and on the job; it is presumed that there are other factors that may contribute to stress such as relationships, personal goals,

and community activities, but in order maintain focus on a specific element, these other factors were not explored.

Finally, the content available for analysis was limited by what the participants chose to share. I intended to have a lengthy discussion on music, but the participants wanted to talk about stress. The amount of information available on the participants' stress was significantly more than what was available on the musical experiences; the themes that emerged from their experiences with stress outweighed the music-related themes. Participants chose to share the more significant factors in their lives; the stress-related experiences were clearly in the forefront of their minds.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides a foundation for future studies on working mothers, stress, and the use of New Age music for stress relief. The experiences reported by participants reflect their immediate concerns and routines. However, motherhood is a lifelong occupation. The concerns and routines that contribute to stress will evolve throughout the stages of childhood development, and with life changes, in general, as will the methods used to cope with stress.

One factor that was identified, but not discussed as a stressor, was the number of adult children in the home. How often does this occur in single-parent households? Are the adult children able to assist with household responsibilities? To what extent does the presence of adult children in the home alleviate or contribute to the working mother's stress? A variation in household composition may also contribute the working mother's stress such as households where there is a significant age gap between the oldest and

youngest child, or where the grandchildren are also living in the home. This study may inspire future research specifically on stress resulting from the modified roles of some working mothers.

The information on stress and motherhood, which was provided by participants in this study, yielded context that was not previously addressed in the Chapter 2 literature review, such as crossover stress, time management, household management, and handling emergencies. These variables can be applied to individuals who provide any type of caregiving; caregiver stress is one concentration of future research that this study may support.

Advocacy is another area of interest for future studies. This study is based on feminist theory, and the literature review cites several references to income inequality and social policies (e.g., Becker, 2010; Foster, 2015; Grube, 2003; Hesford and Diedrich, 2014; Hutchinson, 2012; Kinsr, 2004; Koolmeyer, 2013; Korpi, Ferrarini, & Englund, 2013; Leung et al., 2016; Lombardi & Coley, 2014; and Vashisth & Kumar, 2014) but the type of advocacy addressed by the participants is more of an acknowledgement, a supportive voice from one mother to another, telling her that she is not alone, and that her health is important. Descriptive narratives from single working mothers of varying income levels, professions, and educational backgrounds would identify that stress and motherhood are the ties that bind one working mother to the other.

The consistent assertion of how New Age music “quiets the mind” suggests that there is an auditory element that induces a state of contemplative space. This is a phenomenon that has been previously identified in quantitative research, but whether this

state is created by the music itself or by the purposeful action of taking time out to “destress,” is another inquiry for future studies on the effects of New Age music on symptoms of stress.

The musical experience is highly subjective and difficult to articulate unless the individual is presently experiencing the phenomena; given the outcome of this study, future research with New Age music may include a quantitative design that investigates the immediate physical, and psychological responses to New Age music for stress relief.

Some of the mothers explained that New Age music helped with focus; the ability to regain concentration is likened to results achieved through meditation. This response aligns with the studied effects of New Age music on Alpha waves; a study that compared neural activity during meditation and while listening to New Age music is another area of interest for future research.

Finally, an inquiry into the physiological effects of New Age music is recommended for future studies. Some of the mothers reported noticeable changes in their breathing and heart rate after listening to New Age music. The physiological and emotional damage that can be caused by long-term stress has been cited throughout the Chapter 2 literature review; an inquiry into the use of New Age music as a treatment for chronic stress would provide a foundation for additional studies on the benefits of listening to New Age music for stress relief.

Dissemination of Findings

A summary of the findings of this study will be shared via e-mail with the participants; all the women who were interviewed expressed an interest in reading the

results. In addition, I plan to submit the findings and data for publication, to be presented at professional conferences at a later date. I will also attempt to share my findings with local women's advocacy groups. I would like to build on this research and further explore the therapeutic effects of New Age music on immediate and long-term stress and behavior.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study contribute to positive social change in several ways. First, this study provides insight into the experiences of single working mothers who listen to New Age music for stress relief. The findings provide a deeper understanding of the emotional and physical changes during the music-listening experience, as reported by participants.

Second, the findings in this study promote advocacy for the physical and emotional support of working mothers, expanding upon existing research on home and work-related stress, while promoting awareness of some of the issues faced by working mothers, the stress caused by these issues, and the effects of this stress on their own health and well-being.

Third, the findings of this study address the practical, and cost-effective advantages of listening to New Age music for stress relief. This is factor that would be beneficial specifically to groups or individuals who promote and support women's health.

Finally, this study could also be used to reach out to acoustical artists in the New Age community. It is unlikely that the artists who composed this music did so while being mindful of the therapeutic effects on working mothers; the musical experiences that

were provided by the participants, accompanied by the details of the stressors that attributed to the need for this specific type of medicine, would demonstrate to the musicians how their talents have had a positive impact, and are reported being used to improve the quality of life for working mothers.

This study examined the practical application of a conventional activity to alleviate the symptoms of reported stress. This activity does not purport to duplicate the results of the interventions administered by trained music therapists; however, each of the mothers identified a change in her perceived levels of stress because of this type of music. Multiple studies have been conducted on the health benefits of listening to various types of music for stress relief (e.g., Bond, 2011; Chapin, Jantzen, Kelso, Steinberg, & Large, 2010; Lindau, 2013; Raglio & Oasi, 2015; Thoma et al., 2013). As previously identified, there are very few studies that specify the use of New Age music for stress relief. The present study may provide a foundation for future explorations on the potential health benefits of this specific genre.

Conclusions

The multiple roles managed by the working mother carries the presumption that she is physically and emotionally equipped to successfully maintain the responsibilities associated with those roles; social expectations of how these roles should be handled often impact her own self-image and competency as a mother (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). A working mother feels the pressures of trying to balance her family's needs, the household operations, the demands of her job, and interpersonal relationships, in addition to any personal or professional conflicts she may encounter along the way, and usually

without regard to her own health and wellness (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). This pressure is identified as stress.

The stress factors identified in this study are examples of common threats to maternal well-being. An ideal means of stress relief would be to remove the threats from the maternal environment. As that is not feasible, proper measures are recommended to minimize the threats of emotional and physical harm that may arise from unresolved stress (Holmes et al, 2012). The goal of this study was to identify a specific experience; this goal was met in abundance. The results yielded a momentary yet powerful glimpse into the multifaceted lives of ten working mothers. Each story provided insight into the routine stress experienced by these women, and the positive effects that New Age music had on that reported stress. Whether it was solely the compositional characteristics of New Age music that caused relaxed activity in the brain, or in combination with the purposeful engagement in a stress-relieving activity, participants reported that listening to New Age music invoked a relaxed state of consciousness. The findings of this study have identified the benefits of listening to New Age music for the enhancement of individual well-being.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

IRB Approval # 06-16-17-0321565



Single Working Mothers Needed



for a study that explores the experiences of listening to New Age music for stress relief.

Looking for single working mothers who:

- Are between the ages of 30-45
- Have at least one child in the home under 18 years of age
- Are employed full time.
- Have access to a personal computer or other electronic device, and e-mail at home

Participation is completely voluntary and confidential.

You will be interviewed on your experiences of listening to New Age music for stress relief. You will also be asked questions about work, motherhood and stress.

Selected participants will receive a \$10 Starbucks electronic gift card upon completion of the interview.

Interested individuals can contact Estella Castillo at (661) 209-0474 or estella.castillo@waldenu.edu for more information.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The following questions will be used to guide the interview.

Household and Finances

1. How many children do you have? What are their ages?
2. What type of work do you do?
3. What is your work schedule?
4. What is your income level? (a) 30,000 – 45,000 (b) 46,000 – 65,000 (c) 66,000-75,000 (d) 75,000+

Personal Experience

1. What type of stress comes with being a mother who works?
2. Please tell me about your overall music listening experience with New Age music for stress relief. How does listening to New Age music work for you?
3. What was your emotional response to New Age music? What is your physical response to New Age music?
4. How is listening to New Age music different from other things you have tried to help with stress relief?
5. What do you experience when you listen to New Age music? What circumstances prompt you to listen to New Age music?

Note: Follow up questions will be asked as needed to elicit as full a description as possible.

Appendix C: Screening Script

The following questions will be asked to potential participants who call or e-mail in response to the study flyers:

Hello. Thank you for your interest in this study. Would you mind answering some questions for me so that I can determine whether you meet the criteria of the study?

1. Are you a single working mother between the ages of 30-45?
2. Are you employed full time?
3. Do you have at least one child in the home under the age of 18?
4. Do you experience stress in the home and on the job?
5. Do you listen to New Age music for stress relief?
6. Do you have access to a computer or electronic device, such as a smart phone, tablet, or iPad, and e-mail access at home?

Appendix D: Participant Textural-Structural Descriptions

Participant 1: Annie

Annie is a single working mother who has 2 children (twins) living in the home, 17 years old. She is an account manager for a health insurance company. She works Monday through Friday 8:00am - 4:30pm. She works overtime with this company, and she has also taken on a second job as an Uber driver, up to eight hours a week. Her reported annual income is between \$46,000 and \$65,000.

Annie's primary stressor is money, or the lack thereof. She expressed a concern about her ability to provide the essentials to her family. She also expressed her fear of dying, and leaving her children without a mother. Work-related stress includes the length of her daily commute, meeting deadlines, and handling after-hour emergencies.

Annie habitually listens to New Age music; she has a specific radio station that she listens to during her commute home; she stated that the commute is her time to decompress. She also listens to New Age music nightly, before she goes to sleep. She stated that New Age music relaxes her both physically and emotionally. Emotionally, this type of music puts her in a meditative state and reduces the emotional tension, which allows her body to relax. She stated that she engages in other activities that help reduce stress, but listening to New Age music is her first and most effective option.

Participant 2: Betty

Betty is a single working mother with 3 children in the home, ages 23, 11, and 9. She works in customer service at Starbucks, and her reported annual household income is between \$30,000 - \$45,000.

She described her experiences with stress as a single working mother; she continually struggles to get through her daily routine at home and on the job. At home, she is faced with the daily challenges of getting the children ready for school, managing household chores, and tending to her children's needs. She stated a significant stressor is her finances. She struggles to provide not only for her family's essential needs, but also for any unexpected situations that arose. Her shift hours are minimal, she works at least 35 hours a week; her greatest stress occurs when those hours are cut. This affects her income, her budget, and her ability to adequately manage her resources, "You just want to make sure that all of the necessities are being met and when you have that kind of stress where you don't know if you're going to get the number hours that you need to earn the rate of pay or whatever, the income that you need to meet your everyday needs, it becomes a little bit of concern, it can cause a little distress, but we seem to make it, pretty much every month, somehow [light-hearted laugh]."

She also stated that finding suitable child care or transportation to and from school can be a significant stressor; the children's father may not always be available to assist. Another source of stress for her is when she is unable to take off work when one of her children is sick, or when she is unable to find assistance with transportation when one of the children needs to be picked up early; she must take time off work, subsequently losing income, to pick up her child. She also described her experiences with stress on the job. She explained that she works in a loud, fast-paced environment and she serves people with various dispositions.

Betty stated a concern that she has about her own emotional health and well-being. She stated that she suffers from migraines, which are often induced by stress. She acknowledged the importance of maintaining positive physical and mental health, "I just think it's necessary, just to relax, you don't want to carry, you don't want it to have negative effects on your body, or negative effects on your health."

Betty engages in a variety of activities to help with stress reduction, including listening to New Age music. In describing her experience with New Age music specifically, she stated that the music puts in her a different place, emotionally, "I just kind of, just relax and not think about some of the things I experience in the day and I am able to elevate my mind above, you know, my current experience is and what my body is experiencing as a result of the stress." She further stated that when she listens to this type of music, she is listening to the sounds that are not typical of her day, such as the clatter of dishes, or the rattle of coffee grinding, so her senses are redirected; this is what helps her to relax. Other activities that she engages in to help reduce stress include exercise, warm baths, and prayer. The difference in the effects experienced between these activities, and listening to New Age music, is that the music alters her thoughts, which then produces a physical response, "The one thing about the meditative music is that it has a way of stimulating, umm, your mind. You know, and then it just has an effect on your whole person."

Participant 3: Jacqueline

Jacqueline is a single working mother with 4 children in the home, ages 23, 18, 15, and 6. She works 40 hours a week, Monday through Friday for a local government

agency. She sometimes brings her work home. Her annual reported income exceeds \$75,000. Jacqueline also identified additional income from an unidentified resource.

She described the stress that she experiences as a working mother as a “juggling act,” and listed many factors that contribute to that stress; managing school activities and appointments, doctor appointments, her full-time employment, finances, and finding suitable child care, especially during school breaks.

Jacqueline described her line of work as being very stressful. She stated that she sometimes brings work home, which negatively impacts her home life; aside from taking her away from being with her children, the stress from her work affects her mood and emotions.

Jacqueline routinely listens to various types of music to help her relax, including New Age music. She explained that this type of music has a physically and emotionally calming effect, “It just relaxes me, you know. It puts me in a different place, I don’t feel as stressed, and I don’t think about the outer stressors in my life – work, family life, so it really puts me at ease.” She further explained that listening to this type of music reduces the tension in her body. She listens to this type of music when she feels stressed, but she also tries to incorporate it into a self-care routine. In addition to listening to New Age music for stress relief, Jacqueline also practices yoga. She explained that the difference in the stress relief between the two activities is that yoga is a physical stress reliever, and listening to the music is an emotional one.

Participant 4: Jane

Jane is a single working mother who has 3 children in the home, ages 16, 8, and 5. She is an auditor in the healthcare industry. She works Monday through Friday, 9:30am to 6:15pm. Her reported annual household income is between \$46,000 and \$65,000. She is also a full-time student, she is taking online classes.

Jane's biggest stressor is not having enough time to do everything she needs to be able to take care of her household. This includes being physically present for her children, providing for their basic and sometimes extraordinary needs, and managing their time. She also described the stress that she experiences with her own education; she has regular deadlines to meet and on those occasions when she does not understand the material, she will have to research the topic first, which takes more time out of her day. At work, her primary stressor is being underpaid.

Jane listens to New Age music for stress relief, in addition to working out. When asked to describe her experience with listening to New Age music, she stated that it helps clear her mind. She stated that she does not have a self-care routine for stress relief, and she does what she can when she has the time, so she is unable to listen to New Age music regularly. She listens to it as needed, when all other attempts to reduce stress through other means have failed; during these moments, she sets up her own space and quiet time. She stated that it relaxes her, and her stress is momentarily gone, but that time is long enough for her to regroup, "If I can get a mental break for just a few minutes, I feel recharged, and it helps me get through the rest of the day, or that time from when I get home until I can get the kids into bed."

Participant 5: Katy

Katy is a working mother with 2 children in the home, ages 17, and 10. She is a manager at a retail store. She has a varied work schedule, which is influenced by the availability, or lack thereof, of her staff. She often works off-the-clock, either in the store, or at home. Her annual reported household income is between \$30,000 and \$45,000.

Katy's immediate stress is with work. She explained that in addition to training new staff, she has been having problems with attendance from her regular staff; this is affecting her work schedule and her availability at home. She stated she can call on her daughter and her mother to help with her younger son when needed, but she carries a heavy sense of guilt for doing so, "I hate doing that, hate not being there for my son, but I don't have a choice. I mean, I guess I do have the choice not to stick around at my job, but then I probably wouldn't have one if I did that."

Katy stated that her first experience with New Age music was filled with annoyance; she stated that she has never heard that type of music and it initially made her feel uncomfortable. She stated that despite her irritation with the music, there was something about it that kept her attention; eventually she resonated with the trance-like state that she fell in to while listening. She now listens to this music with a purpose, "If I really listen to it, it makes my brain shut off. Like, it gives it a power nap. And by the time it's time to wake up, I feel mentally recharged. Like, my brain rebooted. But if I have it on as background music, it doesn't have the same effect, it might even be annoying." She also stated, for best results she needs to use her headphones while

listening to this music. She further state that listening to New Age music is something that she turns to whenever she feels she needs “tune out, but be alert at the same time.”

Other activities that she engages in to help reduce stress is sleeping, and spending quality time with her son. She explained that the difference between the effects listening to New Age music, and sleeping is that “Listening to the music kinda gives the same results, except that I’m still awake while it’s happening, and I’m relaxed, but alert enough to appreciate it.”

Participant 6: Kelly

Kelly is a single mother who has one child in the home, age 8 ½. She is a real estate agent who keeps a regular schedule for marketing and prospecting, but often works more hours than she is compensated, due to the nature of her business. She stated in that in her previous job, she had a higher pay, but longer hours and more responsibilities. Her reported annual income is \$75,000.

She stated that her primary stressor is mentally balancing the responsibilities of being a provider and a mother. A second stressor is leaving her child behind, so that she can provide for her household, but feeling that what her son really needs is her. A third stressor is guilt and the judgment she feels from others, for being a working mother. Another stressor is the physical demand of maintaining a home, “whether it’s laundry, dishes, you know cleaning, keeping a home, keeping it maintained, and running your guys’ life.” She added that the lack of money is also a great stressor; she stated that because of the nature of her business, she is not currently bringing home a regular paycheck, this has caused a financial strain on the household budget. She described the

guilt of not being available for her son, of not being able to afford certain activities for her son, and the stress of trying to provide the essentials, “because I’m a really brand-new agent, and that’s very stressful to expect that your kid will spend all this time away from you, but I work for myself, so it’s feast or famine, and right now it’s famine.”

When asked to describe her experience with New Age music, she stated that she felt it was calming and it helped her focus. Kelly added that she also has ADD, and this music has helped her stay focused. She explained that she listens to various types of music to achieve specific results; she listens to New Age music when she needs to calm down and focus on a specific, work-related task. When asked to describe her physical and emotional response to this type of music, she stated “I might have felt anxious, or worried, or kind of um, jittery, and it just allowed me to center myself while I listen to the music. It shut out a lot of noise in my brain, and allowed me to focus on what I had to do, and it would really kinda lower my heart rate and my blood pressure, I could feel, being very calm.” She also stated that this music made her feel at peace, and she noticed that other changes in her body that had been affected by stress, such as neck and shoulder tension, and chest palpitations, were minimized.

Kelly added that the music is most effective when she can listen to it wearing earbuds or headphones; she does not like to listen to it when it is on a speaker, “it has to be in my ears so I can shut out the world. So, just putting it on, like a Bose speaker, does not work for me. It has to be in my earbuds or it does not work.”

Kelly listed the various activities that she engages in to help reduce stress, which includes sex, swimming, playing tennis, dancing, going out with friends. The difference

between these activities and listening to this genre of music is the mental effect that it has on her. “It takes you to a different space. And really, it does something to your brain. It makes things work more effectively for me, it just does. It’s pretty intense in a very positive way.”

Participant 7: Leticia

Leticia is a single working mother who has 3 children, ages 25, 22, and 15. She is a civil servant, she works 40 hours a week and has every other Monday off. She works up to six hours of paid overtime three Saturdays a month, but she stated she also works off-the-clock, up to an hour, daily. The reported annual income from her job alone is equal to or greater than \$75,000; she also receives additional income from a non-disclosed source.

Leticia described the type of stress she faces at home and at work. At home, she is faced with the daily tasks of arranging for after-school pick-ups, meal preparation, and other household chores. She stated that her domestic challenges have improved over the years, as the children have grown older and can assist with some of the household tasks, such as putting the dishes away, sweeping the floors, and vacuuming. At work, she explained that she is a manager who oversees approximately 100 employees who serve the public. She listed some of her daily responsibilities, which includes addressing personnel issues, overseeing front and back office operations, completing assignments, and meeting reporting deadlines.

When asked about her experience with listening to new Age music for stress relief, she stated that this type of music relaxes her and puts her in a different place. She also reported a notable change in her breathing, which helps her slow down “I feel like

I'm breathing, you know, a little bit deeper and I'm slowing down, and it seems like whatever has happened throughout the day has, not that its gone away, I feel like I am able to deal with it a lot better, and with a cooler mind."

Other activities that she regularly engages in to help reduce symptoms of stress include practicing yoga and the use of an oil diffuser before she goes to bed. When asked to describe the differences in experiences between all these activities, she explained "It's a different type of relief, I'm going to say that yoga, that after I'm done with it, I'm tired, then I just kind of sleep. And I'm so tired that I don't have time to think about my problems or my day. But with meditative music, I can actually analyze what happened during the day and see ok, can I have done it a different way, should I have responded in a different way? With the music it actually helps me calm down and it helps me, um think things through, or just analyze the situation."

I asked her if she ever had the opportunity to listen to New Age music at work. She explained that she is not in one place long enough to be able to do that, but as she said that, she sounded as if she gave herself an idea "[light-hearted laugh] I haven't done that (listen to music) at work, simply because um, I'm in and out of my office all day, I'm not in one place for more than 10 minutes, honestly I'm all over the place, so...you know, I haven't even tried that. I could do that, you know, just leave it on in my office, so when I come in my office it'll be playing."

Participant 8: Mary

Mary is a single, working mother who has 4 children in the home, ages 15, 13, 5, and 1. She is an Applied Behavioral Therapist (ABA), and she works varied hours. She

stated that she can sometimes work around her children's schedules; she does in-home sessions and her hours are somewhat flexible. Her reported annual income is between \$46,000 and \$65,000.

She stated that her biggest stressor is the lack of time, and the physical demands of keeping up with her household and job, "I'm kinda a full-time mom as well as working, so it's stress with picking everybody up, dropping them with the babysitter, rushing over to work, being 100% on my game working with children, and then rushing back home, picking everybody up, doing practice drop offs. I think the driving and the time constraints of my day are the most stressful." She stated that her job is very stressful; she works with special needs children who require behavior therapy. She stated that this type of job is physically and mentally draining, and she often takes home the stress of her day. She stated that her stress is heightened if she comes home to challenges with her own children, "If it is a rough day, I just had a full day of tantrums and behaviors, I come home, and I don't always end it there. You know, I should probably do that, but I don't. I come home and I'm like look, I had a bad day [light-hearted laugh], everybody better watch out [light-hearted laugh]."

When asked about her listening experience with New Age music, she stated that she does not have the opportunity to listen to it as often as she would like, and when she does it is always in conjunction with another activity, like receiving a massage, but when she does listen to it, she always found it to be physically relaxing. I asked her if the relaxation came from the massage or the music, she stated "I think that the music itself

helps, um because you kind of have a few moments to sit there and listen and, you know, without any activity.”

I asked her about other activities that she engages in to help reduce the symptoms of stress. She stated that she also drinks wine and works out. When asked about the stress-relieving experiences between these activities, she stated, “I think that listening to the music and having a glass of wine pretty much have the same effect for me. Working out is never relaxing, as much as listening to that music, for me. It’s just a different type of stress relief.”

Participant 9: Rebekah

Rebekah is a single working mother who has three children in the home, ages 23, 19, and 17. She is also a grandmother, and she helps to care for her four-year old grandson. She is employed as a real estate agent and she also does home inspections. She works between 4 and 7 days, up to 50 hours weekly. She works in the office, at home, and in the field. Her annual reported income is between \$46,000 and \$65,000.

She stated that her primary concern was money, specifically, having enough to pay the bills and provide for her family’s basic needs. She stated that arranging for transportation and attending appointments or events was very stressful. She also described her challenges with basic household management and taking care of her toddler grandson.

When asked about her experiences with New Age music, she first explained the type of New Age music that she listens to. She stated that she prefers music that incorporates whale songs, a recording and arrangement of whales singing, and

encouraged me to consider this for myself. She stated that physically, the tension in her body is released and she can relax. She stated that her mind is constantly flooded with overwhelming thoughts and this type of music serves as a distraction, and helps to clear her mind from all the thoughts of the day, which lets her sleep. In addition to listening to New Age music to help reduce symptoms of stress, she stated that she also drinks wine, practices yoga, and listens to other types of music. In comparing the effects of different genres on stress, she stated that listening to music with lyrics will induce more thoughts, while listening to New Age music quiets the thoughts.

Participant 10: Valerie

Valerie is a single working mother who has 4 children in the home, ages 26, 19, 17, and 7. She is a human services administrator and works 40 hours a week, Monday through Thursday. Her reported household income is between \$66,000 and \$75,000.

Valerie listed the various factors of stress in her life, specifying childcare, picking up a sick child from school while she was at work, managing her time between work, doctor's appointments, school activities, and any other unexpected situation that arose. Valerie also detailed the thoughts that caused her a great deal of distress, such as concerns about bullies at school, her son's safety, and the integrity of the people charged with his after-school care.

She also discussed the stigma associated with working mothers, and the guilt experienced from being a mother who works, "and even if the other parent steps in to assist, you still have that guilt and that remorse because somehow you feel I should have done that, I should have been there. And I think that's something that as women we tend

to carry with us and we still haven't figured out a way to deal with it. And you what? It's ok. It's ok if the other parent, or the grandparent steps in to assist, it doesn't make us any less of a mother. And I think that's what we have a very difficult time dealing with. It's that part of the parenting and being in the workforce.”

Valerie discussed the effects of cross-over stress - bringing her job-related stress home, and taking her home-related stress to the job. She first explained that she tries to leave her home life at the door when she walks into work. She stated that someone cannot be productive at work if that person is also dealing with home-life distraction. She stated she had to set boundaries for her older children, when they sent text messages while she was working. She stated that unless it was an emergency, their situation had to wait until she got home, especially if it was a situation that she felt was caused by irresponsibility on their part. However, any concern that came to her about her youngest child required her immediate attention. She stated that the stress at work has resulted in changes in her behavior at home. Her dilemma is bringing that work-related stress home and immediately changing roles, without having the opportunity to adjust her mood.

Valerie acknowledges the need for self-care. She explained that the few minutes that it takes to step away and clear her mind from the stress of the situation, can make all the difference in how she approached the rest of the day. She engages in a variety of activities to help her with stress reduction, including listening to New Age music. She describes her experience with New Age music as a release of anxiety and tension. “it takes you away from your desk, from your personal life, from anything that's going on, and all you do is sit there and it just guides you on how to breathe and how to just pay

attention to yourself.” She further stated that she also plays this type of music for her son when he has difficulty sleeping; she stated that she notices the changes in his breathing and how it calms him down, and lulls him to sleep.

Valerie identified the benefits, convenience, and accessibility of listening to New Age music for stress relief. “I think the easiest thing with meditative music is that now, with all of us having cell phones and smart phones and all these other devices at the tip of your fingers, it’s quick, it’s easy. I mean, just the energy and the vibes that you get. It’s a big difference as opposed to having to go for these four-hour hikes or an hour at the gym, I mean, it only takes like five, ten minutes of your day, you can be at home with your children, you don’t need to find a sitter or anything like that, you could do it while they’re in the home with you”

Appendix E: Themes and Subthemes

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Subthemes</u>	<u>Participant Pseudonyms</u>
Stress	Crossover Stress	Betty, Jacqueline, Leticia, Mary, Valerie
	Job Stress	Betty, Jacqueline, Katy, Leticia, Mary, Valerie
	Overtime	Annie, Jacqueline, Katy, Leticia, Valerie
	Finances	Annie, Betty, Jane, Kelly, Rebekah
	Time Management	Jane, Katy, Kelly, Mary, Rebekah, Valerie
	Household Management	Betty, Jacqueline, Leticia, Mary, Rebekah, Valerie
	Childcare/Transportation	Betty, Jacqueline, Jane, Katy, Leticia, Mary, Rebekah, Valerie
	Emergencies	Betty, Valerie
Single Working Mother's Stress and the Effects on Family Relationships		Betty, Mary, Valerie
Stereotypes		Kelly, Valerie

Mental Chatter		Annie, Betty, Jane, Katy, Kelly, Rebekah, Valerie
Music as Medicine	Experiences with New Age	Annie, Betty, Jacqueline, Jane, Katy, Kelly, Leticia, Mary, Rebekah, Valerie
	Effects on Mental Chatter	Annie, Betty, Jacqueline, Jane, Katy, Kelly, Rebekah, Valerie
	Physical Release	Annie, Betty, Katy, Kelly, Leticia, Mary, Rebekah, Valerie
	Comparison of Experiences	Annie, Betty, Jacqueline, Jane, Katy, Kelly, Leticia, Mary, Rebekah, Valerie
Advocacy		Jacqueline, Mary, Valerie
Acoustical Preferences		Annie, Katy, Kelly, Valerie
Additional Findings	Mortality	Annie
	Mother and a Grandmother	Rebekah
	Multiple Jobs	Annie, Rebekah