

**A Question of Sustainability:
A Survey of Waldorf Teacher' Self-Care Practices**

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Abstract

In 2010, an informal study was conducted at one Waldorf School, surveying eleven teachers on their perceptions of how Waldorf education had affected their lives. The findings showed that physical health had decreased in more than half of the participants since they began teaching.

Through a mixed method survey, the researcher sought to confirm or negate the aforementioned study with a larger sample population of 48 certified Waldorf teachers, pre-school through grade 12. The survey inquired how teaching had affected their self-care habits of exercise, sleep, nutrition and inner development. They were also asked if and how teaching had affected their home life and parenting, what they would like to change about their current self-care habits, what support they would need from family, colleagues, administration and teacher training to change their self-care, as well as perceived sustainability of their teaching career with current self-care practices.

Findings showed that all four components of self-care had changed since beginning teaching, both positively and negatively, and to varying degrees. Responses showed a polarity of participants either feeling very supported by all support groups, or needing more practical, organizational, and emotional support.. Teachers' responses showed they perceive lack of time, mostly from workload and hours of teaching, as well as money, to be the major factors that affect their self-care practices. Participants expressed that these factors may also affect the sustainability of their careers, though a large percentage of respondents reported they feel they will sustain a career as a Waldorf teacher.

Further directions for research pertaining to this topic suggested by the researcher include widening the sample population to a more realistic representation of teachers and from diverse regions of the United States; exploration of job satisfaction and stress and

action based research on mentoring initiatives; action based research at a Waldorf school where looping grades has been established.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Questions.....	1
Motivation for Research.....	2

Significance of Study.....	4
Researcher’s Biases.....	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Introduction.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	10
I. Self-Care and Well-Being: Why Self-Care is Important for Renewal.....	11
II. Teacher Stress: Causes and Manifestations.....	28
III. Effects of Long-Term Stress: Illness, Burnout, Attrition.....	33
IV. Coping with Stress: Self-Care as Positive Stress Management.....	39
Conclusion.....	42
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	44
Introduction.....	44
Procedure.....	44
Design of Instrumentation.....	46
Instrument Validity.....	47
Participants.....	48
Data Collection and Analysis.....	48
Ethics.....	49
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Characteristics of the Survey Population.....	51
Findings: Self-Care Practices of Exercise, Sleep, Nutrition & Inner Development	53
Findings: Desired Changes to Self-Care.....	58
Prioritizing the Four Self-Care Components.....	59
Findings: Effects Upon Home Life and Parenting.....	60
Findings: Support Needed for Self-Care.....	62
Findings: Sustainability of Career with Current Self-Care Practices.....	66
Summary.....	68
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	69
Introduction.....	69

Summary of Findings.....	69
Interpretations and Context of Findings.....	78
Limitations.....	87
Implications For Waldorf Teachers' Well-Being and Sustainability.....	88
Implications For Future Directions	90
REFERENCES.....	93
APPENDIX A: Letter of Consent	104
APPENDIX B: Survey Items: Waldorf Teachers' Self-Care.....	106
Table 1: Demographics of Sample Population.....	52
Table 2: . Percentage of Respondents Engaged in the Following Activities	53
Table 3: Frequency That Respondents Engaged in Activities	53
Table 4: Hours of Nightly Sleep	55
Table 5: Percentage of Respondents Nutrition Habits	56
Table 6: Percentage of Participants' Inner Development Habits	57
Table 7: Self-Care Likert Scale.....	59

Chapter I: Introduction

Research Question

How have the self-care practices of Waldorf teachers been enhanced, maintained, or neglected as a result of the nature of teaching? Do Waldorf teachers, over the course of their experience in teaching, neglect their self-care habits? If so, what are the long-term consequences of such a lifestyle where the health of the teacher is last in line to be nurtured? Where does the idealism of Steiner's educational philosophy – manifest within the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, 1919

– intersect with the reality of teaching in our modern society? How do Waldorf teachers balance the scales of Self and Other? With the emphasis on inner, spiritual striving, does the physical body become a vehicle for self-sacrifice?

This study is expounding upon the results of an informal research project conducted at one Waldorf School in 2010. The research found that the eleven Waldorf teachers surveyed, since their teaching careers began, had experienced an increase in their perceived emotional, spiritual and social lives, yet an imbalance in work-life and decreased self-care practices. This resulted in poor health. Before action-based research can be implemented, seeking ways to improve self-care among Waldorf teachers, further data needs to confirm the vastness and seriousness of self-care imbalance.

Through a mixed method survey, containing both qualitative and quantitative questions, this study asks specifics regarding the self-care habits of exercise, sleep, nutrition and inner development of Waldorf teachers. Self-care is assessed both before embarking on the path of teaching and currently in their teaching career. The participants include a group of pre-school through 12th grade Waldorf teachers, including specialty teachers, presently teaching at established independent Waldorf schools in the United States.

The findings of the sample population will aim to reveal how certified Waldorf teachers have found a balance between this vocation and their Self, or struggled to find balance. It will reveal what healthful habits they practice as well as deficits in their health. It will also ask what support they perceive is needed to achieve sufficient self-care practices. From the data of this small sampling, I hope to provide a generalized picture of well-being amongst Waldorf teachers. Thus, motivating action towards self-care both individually and through teacher training institutions and school communities.

Motivation for Research

When Dr. Robert Hickman presented his small study on the quality of life of a group of Waldorf teachers to my teacher training class, I knew instantly I wanted to further his research from 2010. In my years as an adult, I have thought much about and strived for a balance in my personal web of life: the dynamic dance between physical health, relationships, work and personal time for myself. Hickman's findings presented the quandary that began to fascinate me as I learned more and more about the life of a Waldorf teacher during my training. With all there is to 'do' as a teacher (which we enthusiastically sign-up for out of a deep freedom and love), how do we find balance in life and, more importantly, how can we make it a priority to take care of ourselves when we're devoting such intentional energy to everyone else? As a future Waldorf teacher, I was going to have to figure that out or perish like the lore of burned out teachers with 'Waldorf orphans' that hummed in the periphery of our teacher training center.

Fast-forward a year and I am now a certified Waldorf early childhood teacher, having completed a meager two years of teaching in Waldorf early childhood classrooms. Though my experience has been brief and limited, I felt the full force of a vocation that is both 'challenging, yet rewarding.' I experienced the physical and emotional exhaustion as well as the unconditional love for my students and the personal growth that came out of my transformative journey. It was a priceless opportunity to look deeply within myself, confront my weaknesses and personal dragons. With the lapse of time, I can now see that the experience also instilled a sense of resiliency. Yet, I am left wondering, is there a price we pay after the labor of love, after all that we have given and received via soul and spiritual capacities? Is it our own physical health? One cannot have the light without the dark, and teaching has extremes of both. I observe the most troubling circumstances to be when one has lost sight of how far down the spiral of selflessness they've gone for the service of all

those around them. While servitude and selflessness are not universally objective, health is. One may have their individual boundaries and threshold for giving, but our physical bodies will sound the alarm when boundaries are pushed. I guess the question becomes, Are we listening? Can we reflect enough to seek balance, or reevaluate our decisions?

During my first year of teaching, I coped with my stress on several occasions by binge eating unhealthy foods, exercising less than I ever have in my life, and getting much less sleep than my normal or desired hours. My favorite catharsis and form of artistic expression, dancing, I barely made time for. I watched my colleagues around me struggle with similar deficits in our personal boundaries and balance, regardless of experience in teaching. I observed others' self-care habits change and with that, guilt, fatigue and frustration occur. I taught at a small school, where teachers supported each other in striving for self-care. However, the climate of our struggling school necessitated teachers working extra hours with no breaks, squeezing in mentoring by the skin of our teeth, and fundraising many weekends. Teachers can lose their voice in expressing their personal needs when schools expect and rely upon them to give 110% of themselves 24/7. The reality is that more and more independent Waldorf schools are facing financial struggle. In the biography and phases of our schools, where does the health of the teachers weigh-in? Are we leaving it to the individual, in their self-development, to walk this path alone or are we providing collective support? Teachers, public and private, are passionate about their work, or they wouldn't be teaching. Waldorf teaching is a vocation that calls upon participation of your whole being: body, soul and spirit. I believe this is very health giving. However, I have seen it to be more nourishing to one's soul and spirit than to their body.

In the end, what student would want to be taught by a chronically stressed, tired, disgruntled, or ill teacher? What I see Waldorf education providing to the students via

curriculum – a therapeutic and harmonious nurturing of body, soul, and spirit – I want for myself and for other Waldorf teachers in their personal lives. Only this will sustain a Waldorf teacher to continue teaching with joy and enthusiasm. As much as we advocate for all children, we should be advocating for the health of all teachers so that life *after* teaching isn't burdened with illness and recuperation and life *during* teaching is health giving and more balanced.

Significance of Research

Waldorf teachers are given a path of inner development and a wealth of knowledge about human development through Rudolf Steiner and teacher training institutions. This wealth of spiritual knowledge supports their teaching inwardly and outwardly. Once in the classroom, and integrated into a school community, a Waldorf teacher is faced with balancing many things: meditative life, lesson plans, classroom management, curriculum, meetings, festivals, committees, parent education, conflicts and interpersonal relationships, and life at home (which includes for many spouses and children). Administrators, teachers and parents are all struggling with the same questions that the researcher is asking herself: Where does one find time for all of this equally important work? How does one cope with the amount of potential emotional, mental, and physical demands? How can all of the perceived needs of students, colleagues, school community, parents, family, and self be met? What are a Waldorf teacher's priorities and how do they find time for or make a priority of self-care? As the Waldorf teacher has a specific and profound task to bring the vision of social and educational renewal to the children in their class, it is imperative that the individual, especially in these times, feel strong in all aspects of their being. With time management and stress being major obstacles in the daily life of a teacher, I am interested in discovering how many have overcome those obstacles and by what means. How does the quality of life change after being a Waldorf

teacher – is there a trade-off of health that one agrees to for the service and joy of teaching, or for spiritual development?

It is an accepted belief within Waldorf education, and research shows, that teachers are the models for their students (Day, 2012; Steiner, 1919). Steiner spoke of *who* a teacher is to be of greater importance than what a teacher *does*. Is not how we respect our health fundamental to who we are? If teachers strive to stand before their students as examples of how to be upright, balanced human beings, with healthy boundaries, it would behoove them to reflect on the aspect of self-care in their lives.

There is scant research that has been conducted on self-care practices or balance of living with regards to the North American Waldorf teaching profession, albeit some prescriptive articles for recommendations based on Steiner's literature, personal and professional experience. Research abounds in the United States public school system and overseas on the topic of teacher stress, coping, burnout, attrition, and work-life balance. This study will add to the body of knowledge on teacher well-being, which is a living issue that has not been researched in the Waldorf movement. It will shed light, with data from the largest sample population of Waldorf teachers thus far, on the issue of self-care. I also hope it will give insight into ideas for self-care and support as a preventative measure for attrition and burnout. This will guide Waldorf administration and governance, as well as teacher training institutions to prepare students for work-life balance. I hope that through this study Waldorf schools' ethos can, even a little, shift towards new understandings of teacher care. A conversation may begin at schools, out of a truly social impulse that includes the individual's responsibility and the community's. This study will expound upon the one recent, informal research project, conducted at an independent pre-school through 8th grade Waldorf School,

with findings showing an imbalance in work-life and decreased self-care practices of Waldorf teachers.

Researcher's Biases

I am of the belief that most Waldorf teachers have very busy lives and find it difficult, especially in the later grades, to have time for all the preparation they feel is needed to teach. As result of this, they put most everyone (students, family, colleagues) in front of themselves, with their own physical needs usually last (exercise, sleep, nurturing and taking time for oneself). I also see the teaching profession as a whole to include more individuals with characteristics of self-sacrificing and with unhealthy boundaries between work and personal life, encouraged by the culture and nature of faculty-run schools. Waldorf teachers with families (especially female teachers with children or single parents) have an even harder task of balancing work, family life and self-care. I believe Waldorf teachers place inner work higher on the scale of importance than taking care of their physical health, yet I believe that inner development is an avenue for strengthening one's will to achieve greater balance and self-care. Lastly, I have a bias that schools do not address the topic of teacher health nor practical skills for time management, stress reduction, and group support enough. This is probably due to the fact that it is low on the long list of priorities of schools, be they large or small schools.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

In 2000, the *International Journal of Stress Management* publication reported that 67% of teachers surveyed described their jobs as "extremely stressful." With other statistics revealing twenty to thirty percent of public school teachers quitting within the first 5 years of teaching and the teaching profession having a 15.7% turnover rate in 2000/2001 (Ingersoll, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2003), it makes one wonder if Waldorf teaching professionals are

experiencing the same state of stress and if they are resilient enough to cope with the demands and stress of teaching, specifically by engaging in basic self-care practices.

Out of the objective necessity of our times, we must ask whether the well-being and self-care of Waldorf teachers has been evaluated since the inception of the first Free Waldorf School in 1919. The larger issue at hand is that a teaching lifestyle, and our society and culture as a whole, can easily become out of balance – with self, nature, work and family. A fragment of that larger puzzle, the one that this study seeks to explore, includes self-care practices, specifically attending to one's physical needs. Self-care enhances and directly affects well-being (Coster & Schwebel, 1997; Lustyk et al, 2004). With the large demands placed upon teachers, coupled with the numerous roles that teachers assume, a high level of stress is common. Teaching as a profession is progressively becoming a stressful occupation and has been one of the most stressful for more than twenty years (Hepburn & Brown, 2001; Cox & Brockley, 1984; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Nerell & Wahlund, 1981). It is important for teachers to tend to their well-being and make sure their total self is cared for, as the relationship between stress, chronic disease and burnout have been documented (Sutton, 1984).

It is widely accepted that the ability to cope with stress is an important determinant of one's health and well-being. Self-care and well-being are the very foundation of a resilient teacher who can cope healthfully and positively with the demands of teaching today (Sprenger, 2011). As Day (2012) posits, teaching is a passionate affair where the teacher is deeply involved in their vocation. This requires not only hopefulness, but also a resiliency and hardiness to manage and lead in challenging situations. Teachers' long-term capacities, commitment and passion to teach relate to their well-being and effectiveness (Day, 2012). Aguilar (1997) and Ashford et al (2006) define well-being as the emotional, psychological, as

well as physical, social and spiritual dimensions of self that help an individual to cope with life's demands. The physical components of adequate sleep, nutrition, exercise and the spiritual components of inner development (meditation, spirituality, journaling) all contribute to one's renewal of depleted energy and help cope with daily stress and more importantly, occupational stress (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998).

This study is interested in discovering, through retrospective and present day patterns, what percent of Waldorf teachers surveyed are maintaining or neglecting self-care practices – a measurement of their physical well-being. By inquiring about four components of self-care: sleep, exercise, nutrition, and inner development (meditation, spirituality, journaling) the researcher hopes to expand the understanding of Waldorf teachers' well-being with pilot sample size. Another aspect of this research, which is related to self-care and well-being, is the personal and professional *support* needed by a teacher, as support systems have been shown to contribute to well-being and professional development, as well as reduce stress and burnout (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Walen & Lachman, 2000; Botwinik, 2007; Day, 2012).

Definition of Terms

Self care

As defined in this study, self-care is personal health maintenance, promoting resiliency and prevention. Researchers have explored physical (Mahoney, 1997), psychological (Norcross, 2000), spiritual (Valente & Marotta, 2005), and support (Guy, 2000) components of self-care. Self-care habits are widely acknowledged to include eating well, exercising, practicing good hygiene and avoiding health hazards that would compromise longevity of health - anything done to restore one's health without the aid of a medical professional. The researcher is

narrowing the self-care patterns in this study to include the following four components: sleep, nutrition, exercise and inner development (meditation, spirituality, journaling, etc.) as they are identified as key factors in a healthy lifestyle, prevention of illness, and building resiliency to stress.

Well-being

Many studies seeking to explore the stressful aspects of a teacher's life and career refer to the 'well-being' or 'wellness' of the teacher (Day, 2012; Clausen and Petruka, 2009). The term well-being has many meanings depending on the context. It can be associated with quality of life and that which is good for an individual. Physical health and wellness can be constituents of one's "well-being." The well-being of teachers has historically and empirically included emotional, mental and physical resilience, defined as "a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community" (Foresight Mental Capital and Well-being Project, 2008 p10). According to Ashford, et al (2006), well-being is the emotional and psychological capacity to cope with demands across time, circumstance and setting, to include one's physical, social and spiritual dimensions, all of which make up the total self.

Balance

Balance is misconstrued as a static state of equilibrium. The researcher defines balance – in personal life and work, which are often inextricable – as a dynamic flow, teetering away from and towards balance, but never too much in one direction for too long. The terms self-care, well-being and balance will be used throughout the literature review to encompass the themes of resilience, hardiness, sustainability and maintenance of mental, emotional and especially for this study, spiritual and physical health.

Occupational stress/ teacher stress

Teacher stress is defined as a response syndrome of negative effects resulting from the multitude of tasks within a teachers' job (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1997) or any characteristic of the school environment that poses a threat to the teacher (Sutton, 1984).

Burnout

Burnout is the emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that comes about from job-related stress and roughly describes any negative responses by teachers to work-related stress (Blasé, 1982). It is a multi-dimensional syndrome with three levels or dimensions: emotional exhaustion, then depersonalization, and lastly, reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

I. Self-care & Well-Being: Why Self-Care is Important for Renewal

The topics of teacher stress and burnout are well researched and much written about, especially as stress continues to be a growing occupational hazard (Blasé, 1982; Guglielmi & Tatro, 1998; Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999; Hepburn & Brown, 2001; Kyriacou, 2001; Sprenger, 2011; Tripken, 2011). The literature confirms, study after study, that teaching is one of the top five most stressful occupations. Teachers dealing with daily stressors will seek both positive and negative coping - negative coping having detrimental affects to emotional, psychological and physical health (Sprenger 2011; Gulwadi, 2006). It has been recommended that teachers need to be given tools to build awareness of their stress levels, and schools should find ways to help teachers with skills to manage their stress.

Health care professionals and helping, or service providing, professionals have all been advised to practice self-care in order promote well-being and safeguard against occupational stress and burnout (Maslach, 2001; Campenni, Richards & Muse-Buke, 2010; Salee & Sibley, 2004; Petker, 2009; Mahoney, 1997). As individuals who are caring for others

professionally, the importance of self-care for psychologists, counselors and social workers is an ethical issue. The researcher argues that the teaching profession or vocation, as included in the field of helping professions, needs just as much awareness to self-care assessment and practices as other 'high touch' professions. 'High touch' is the term used to describe professions that are dedicated to improving the lives of others, sharing the belief that human contact is essential to the health and well-being of individuals throughout their developmental lifespan. The professionals in high touch fields have been found to share many personal and professional characteristics as well as some of the same potential hazards: boundaries, time/work load, expectations, role conflict, and ambiguity (Naisbitt, 1984; Campbell, 1994). Teaching, like other service or helping professions, is considered 'other-focused' or part of a 'one-way caring cycle' involving empathic attachment, active involvement and felt separation (Naisbitt, 1984; Campbell, 1994). Thus, turning the focus to balancing self-care, though difficult, is essential for renewal, longevity and prevention of burnout. However, while there is prolific research on the impairment of professionals in human service industry, as well as occupational burnout within the teaching and helping fields, studies on self-care of teachers is lacking.

The Waldorf teacher is tasked specifically with meeting each child's needs, therapeutically, through Steiner's pedagogy. Nurturing and attending to the overall well-being of students – cognitively, emotionally, physically and spiritually – as well as maintaining relationships with parents and colleagues, requires much physical and emotional energy. Tending to their own holistic well-being, through self-care maintenance, will create greater resiliency against occupational stress, illness and burnout. Habitual self-care practices offer longevity and sustainability in one's teaching.

Currently, there are no studies showing stress levels, nor attrition levels, at Waldorf

schools in North America. Thus, there is no evidence that this is a growing problem. While this study does not research or measure stress, burnout, or attrition, it does intend to capture the state of well-being through specific self-care practices. Research has found a positive correlation between stress and negative effects on mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Sprenger, 2011; Sutton, 1984; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998). Previous research has also found direct effects of self-care on well-being and self-awareness (Coster & Schwebel, 1997). Well-being and self-care often go hand-in-hand with the necessity to bring balance one's life. For teachers to sustain healthy well-being, they have to manage cognitive and emotional challenges (Day, 2012). Studies have been conducted to determine work-life balance for employees (Darcy et al, 2012), as well as work-life balance specifically as it is related to stressful factors for teachers (Clausen and Petruka, 2009).

A *solution focused* wellness lifestyle is proactive, preventative, and looks at the big picture with long-range objectives. While this may be too ideal for most to achieve, Burns (2005) posits that a more realistic approach is *stress management*. On the other hand, *problem focused* stress reduction is responsive, problem solving, intervening, short-range and big picture. *Burnout*, at the other end of the spectrum from solution focused, is reactive, with no plan, no picture, and focusing on treatment. One way to manage and reduce stress, thereby preventing burnout, is to be proactive with physical self-care.

The negative consequences and lifelong effects of neglecting self-care can drastically affect the quality of well-being, including illness, chronic fatigue and depression. Stress, nutrition, sleep, exercise, meditation and mindfulness are all interrelated. They either work as a team to create a vicious cycle, perceived as increased stress - emotionally, physically and mentally - or they can work as a team for improved well-being and physical health (Burns,

2005). Playing to these natural synergies, we can design our professional and personal lives to "actively balance" each other.

Overall, the sum of articles within the Waldorf movement have an prevalent theme of the quest for *balance* and how Waldorf teachers can bring more balance into life and into the school community (Schwartz, 1992/99; Trostli, 2000; Barocio, 2001; Mitchell, 2005; Sutton, 2008). This mirrors the self-care advice in current research for other service or helping professions (Baker, 2002; Salee & Sibley, 2004; Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson, 2001). The other overarching theme present in Waldorf literature is the importance of inner work on behalf of the teacher. Constant striving for personal and professional development, through self-awareness and self-reflection, is a distinguishable trait of Waldorf educators (Poplawski, 2006).

Balance: A Holistic Approach to Well-being

Baker (2002) writes that self-care is comprised of three components: self-awareness, self-regulation and balance. Our ability to self-regulate, or manage is increased by our commitment to self-awareness (observation of our own physical and psychological experience). It is through self-regulation that we strive to maintain balance, which is imperative to our core needs and concerns: body, mind and spirit, self in relation to others, and between the personal and the professional. This multi-dimensional understanding of self-care, balance and well-being is found throughout the literature.

Ideally one approaches well-being holistically, looking at the four pillars of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. On several occasions, Steiner states that the whole of a human being will only be understood when the nature of soul and spirit are related in harmony to the physical body (Steiner, 1981). This threefold perception of the human being (body, soul and spirit) is expounded further in Steiner's explanation of the nature of the

physical body. The fourfold-ness of the human body – physical (body), etheric (life force of the body), astral (emotion and memory) and Ego (higher Self)– form the basis for the majority Steiner’s work. Steiner calls his audience to intimately know the human being in this manner, in order to grasp the complexities that influence our health.

In his book, *The Fourfold Path to Healing*, Dr. Thomas Cowan (2004) writes of Steiner’s insight of the four-fold body working together, and his own integration of this knowledge into his medical practice. In the fourfold path, the physical body is healed through proper nutrition, paying particular attention the fats we consume, the quality of our food and how food aids in our digestion and assimilation of it’s nutrients and minerals; the etheric/life force body is healed through proper medicines, homeopathic, allopathic, herbal or orthodox; the astral/emotional body is healed through our body’s relationship to movement and space as it affects our feelings; the Ego/mental body is healed through inner objectivity and focused meditation to right thinking, which helps us be the masters of our own health.

Dr. Kelly Sutton (2008) posits, too, if one takes care to replenish their etheric body (with attention to daily, weekly, monthly and yearly rhythms, and through homeopathic and herbal medicines), their astral body (with sleep, exercise, laughter, self-expression and nature), and their Ego (with meditation, steadfastness through challenges, taking personal responsibility and respecting the freedom of peers), the health of the physical body will more easily fall into place. She notes that balance is found through self-trust and is the work of the Ego.

Mitchell (2005) recognized Steiner’s final comments in *Practical Advice to Teachers* as being a holistic guideline for sustainability and prevention of burnout:

1. The teacher must have initiative (Ego).

2. The teacher must take interest in all things (Astral body).
3. The teacher must not make compromises with the truth (Etheric body).
4. The teacher must never become stale or sour (Physical body).

Steiner says that the fourth point is easier said than done, but is the golden rule for a teacher's calling (Mitchell, 2005). Mitchell's advice to teachers seeking longevity and balance is mirrored in Sutton's advice: Tuning into rhythm, especially our own biorhythms for sleep, as our body has its own internal clock for digestion and sleep among other things; finding renewal through inner work, citing ways to strengthen and enliven both the teacher and the curriculum; as well as advice for time-management and planning yearly blocks. He also states the importance of finding a colleague who will listen openly and offer advice when needed.

Covey (1989) refers to "Sharpening the Saw" as preserving and enhancing your greatest asset – yourself. Covey classifies a balanced renewal of self as maintaining the four pillars: Physical, Mental, Social/Emotional, and Spiritual. In order to attend to these pillars of health, one needs to organize or master their time. According to Covey, Sharpening the Saw is incorporated into an individual's living principles so that it becomes a priority. He also links physical renewal to self-awareness. Spiritual renewal is associated with strengthening personal leadership, living out of your imagination and conscience, as well as drawing from a personal source of strength. Covey posits that renewal is rooted in transformation, continuous improvement, or striving.

The Physical pillar addresses daily exercise, including endurance, strength and flexibility, as well as nutrition and stress management. The Spiritual (inner development) pillar renews the individual; it is personal, inspiring, committed to values, and takes an investment of time. According to Hickman's 2010 survey/questionnaire, the Waldorf

teachers in his sample were most imbalanced within the physical dimension of renewal. Because the four pillars are so interrelated, a positive impact in one dimension (physical) will have an affect on the others. *Visa vie*, “to neglect any one area negatively impacts the rest.” Covey states, “As you act based on the value of physical well-being, instead of reacting to all the forces that keep you from exercising, your paradigm of yourself, your self-esteem, your self confidence and your integrity will be profoundly affected” (Covey, 1989).

Joel and Michelle Levey’s book, *Living in Balance* (1998), provides scientific based evidence that balance should be holistically approached from a body, mind and spirit perspective to include the physical, emotional and spiritual. The ‘Seven Principles for Living in Balance’ that conclude their book include: Attitude, Accountability, Commitment, Supportive Relationships, Service, Personal Mastery and Faith.

With an understanding that these aforementioned aspects of teachers’ health should be taken into consideration for general well-being, one researcher accessed these components in a small study of Waldorf schoolteachers and found that the pillar of physical health was out of balance.

Impetus for current study

Hickman (2010) conducted a personal study at a small, rural K-8 Waldorf school, established over twenty years ago. Hickman surveyed eleven teachers with experience ranging from 2-14 years. The goal of the study was to discover what attracted or inspired Waldorf teachers to this particular vocation and how their lives had benefited, or not, since being introduced to Waldorf. Results of this study show that the majority of teachers perceived some level of benefit to areas of spiritual awareness/practice, connection to colleagues at work and socially, quality interactions with family, and emotional health. In the area of health practices and improvement of *overall* health, less than half agreed that they had

benefited from teaching in Waldorf schools. Reasons stated for this Likert rating included the sedentary work of teaching and meetings, exposure to students' illnesses, exhaustion from teaching and thus less exercise, lack of time to exercise, healthy habits not being a priority against the demands of teaching and weak boundaries established between home and school. Those who perceived their health as either improved, or not significantly affected, attribute this to a sense of fulfillment and happiness in the community and teaching, not from attending to health needs.

This study was the impetus for the researcher's current exploration into the health and self-care practices of a broader population of Waldorf teachers. The researcher's hypothesis that self-care practices decrease after becoming a Waldorf teacher (and that this poses significant implications towards stress levels and lack of sustainability, thus burnout), were not confirmed by the little written on this topic within the Waldorf movement, as there is no data to prove this hypothesis.

Rational for the Four Fundamental Components to Health

Carrol, Gilroy, and Murra (1999) categorize self-care as including "intrapersonal work, interpersonal support, professional development and support, and physical/recreational activities" (p. 135). Of the physical components of individual self-care, adequate sleep, regular movement or exercise, and proper nutrition all improve health through strengthening the immune system, stress reduction, regeneration, and mental clarity among others (Burns, 2005; Mayo Clinic, 2013; National Sleep Foundation, 2013). These four components of health also improve emotional and mental well-being through mood. In addition, emotional and mental well-being can be promoted through the spiritual activities of journaling, meditation, mindfulness practice, prayer, and self-reflection. Support systems and social support, both professionally and personally, have been found to help cope with stress,

as well as improve emotional well-being (Sprenger, 2011; Richards, 2012; Griffith, Steptoe and Cropley, 1999; Guglielmi and Tatrow, 1998; Coster & Schwebel, 1997).

Exercise

Exercise increases overall health and sense of well-being. Physical exercise creates endorphins (the body's feel-good neurotransmitters) and oxygen needed for the brain, as well as a more efficient use of insulin. A lack of exercise or movement affects our mood (as less serotonin is released), our heart health, our weight, our mental clarity and our muscle and bone strength (Mayo Clinic, 2013). Individuals who participate in anaerobic exercise have been found to sleep better, have less anxiety and depression, and are better able to cope with life stressors and chronic stress (Mayo Clinic, 2013).

Dr. Adam Blanning relates movement of the metabolic system (our limbs) to the interaction and renewal of our bodies - and to the world around us. We need the warmth and strength of our metabolism to create in the world – the task charged to teachers. He offers suggestions, supported by recent research, on ways to move more quickly through or prevent a cold, all by engaging our metabolic system: exercise, sleep, and conscious reduction of stress (Nakata et al, 2010; Cohen et al. 2009; Nieman et al, 2010). The key, according to Blanning, is balancing our metabolic and nervous systems.

A study on the effects of movement classes (pilates, tai chi and Gyrokinesis) found that the regular exercise of these three activities improved mindfulness, sleep quality, mood, self-regularity, self-efficacy and perceived stress among participants (Caldwell et al, 2010). Studies on teacher stress show that one way teachers relieve stress is through regular exercise and movement (Rieg, Paquette, Chen, 2007). Other studies show that as teachers became more stressed and burned out, physical activity and diet dissipated (Clausen and Petruka, 2009).

According to the Mayo Clinic (2013) online resources for healthy lifestyle, “The Department of Health and Human Services recommends that healthy adults include aerobic exercise and strength training in their fitness plans, specifically: At least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity — or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity — a week and Strength training exercises at least twice a week.”

Sleep

It is stated that lack of adequate sleep can detrimentally affect our memory, concentration, adrenal glands, anxiety, circadian rhythms, interpersonal responses and increased aggressiveness, immune system and stress levels (Orzel-Gryglewska, 2010; Mayo Clinic, 2013; Harvard Medical School Division of Sleep, 2013). While individual need for sleep varies, especially by age, studies show that for adults, sleeping 7-9 hours on average per night results in optimum health and functioning (National Sleep Foundation 2013; Orzel-Gryglewska , 2010). Sleep is regulated by two body systems: sleep/wake homeostasis and the circadian biological clock. When we have been awake for a long period of time, sleep/wake homeostasis alerts us that a need for sleep is accumulating and that it is time to sleep. Our internal circadian biological clocks, on the other hand, regulate the timing of periods of sleepiness and wakefulness throughout the day. The circadian rhythm dips and rises at different times of the day, so adults' strongest sleep drive generally occurs between 2:00-4:00 am and in the afternoon between 1:00-3:00 pm, although there is some variation. The sleepiness we experience during these circadian dips will be less intense if we have had sufficient sleep, and more intense when we are sleep deprived (National Sleep Foundation, 2013). It is said that each hour of sleep before midnight is worth two hours of sleep after midnight. The body releases cortisol (an adrenal hormone) due to the “stress” of being alert and awake during “rest” time – when our circadian rhythm tells us it’s time to sleep. This

cortisol creates a “second wind” and we keep going until the adrenaline and creative brain energy are exhausted. If one is chronically stressed and tired, waking up in the middle of the night with pre-occupied thoughts can occur. This stress of being alert and awake during rest time, releases adrenaline into our body and thus, we stay awake for several hours in the middle of the night. “Frequent or constant stress can chronically elevate these hormone levels, resulting in a hyper-vigilant state incompatible with restful sleep” (National Sleep Foundation, 2013).

As mentioned, stress can be a major cause of lack of sleep or sleeping problems. The Better Sleep Council’s (2009) survey revealed that 65% of Americans lose sleep due to stress; 32% are losing sleep at least one night per week, and 16% experience stress-induced insomnia. One-third of average Americans, according to the NSF, are losing sleep over the state of the U.S. economy and their personal finances (National Sleep Foundation, 2009).

Involved in one of the most stressful and demanding occupations in the country, teachers can be especially affected by lack of sleep. In a survey of 109 teachers, administrators and support staff, in a Ball State University study found that 43 % slept an average of 6 hours or less each night, less than the 7 to 9 hours recommended for healthy functioning; about 64 % said they felt drowsy during the school day. Further, half of respondents experienced daytime sleepiness at least three times per week and either missed work or made errors at the workplace at least one day in the previous three months due to a lack of sleep, and only a third of school personnel admitted to getting a good night’s sleep most of the time. The study found that female respondents are more prone to suffer sleep disturbances, drowsiness and sleep problems. The researcher of this particular study attributes the results to long workdays, extending into nights due to work load, after-school activities and disturbed sleep due to concerns about students and school-related issues.

Lastly, 44.9 % of respondents worked part-time jobs to supplement their income, leading to increased workload on top of teaching (Ransford, 2008).

Nutrition

A diet high in organic, whole, unprocessed foods is optimal for health, reducing potential disease in the long-run, mitigating stress and boosting our immune system. Certain foods and vitamins aid in stress-reduction and conversely, too much stress can affect our digestion of food. Consuming foods rich with C and B vitamins, magnesium, folic acid, and tryptophan strengthen the immune system and create dopamine and serotonin, calming neurotransmitters that reduce stress effects and improve heart health. Foods that are good for the brain (Omega-3 fatty acids via fish, nuts, vegetables and fruits) will also benefit the activity of neurotransmitters (University of California, Irvine, 2012). As previously mentioned, the four fundamental components to health are interrelated. An example of this is caffeine consumption during the day affecting nightly sleep. In addition, Duke University Medical Center (2002) reports that that drinking coffee or other caffeinated drinks can make stress even more unhealthy. Caffeine raises blood pressure and enhances the effects of stress upon the body by increasing the hormones adrenaline and cortisol, which have been shown to exaggerate the body's glucose response to food (Duke Health, 2002).

In her article *Warmth, Strength, and Freedom*, Dr. Kelly Sutton states: "The more processed our food is, the more we need a vitamin-mineral supplement. This comes with today's over-busy lives. Stress, alcohol and caffeine all consume B vitamins" (Sutton, 2004). Many busy teachers skip meals, as their schedules are hectic and time is limited. Jabs and Devine (2006) explored the effects of time scarcity and prepared food consumption and choices, which is associated with a less healthful diet and potential health problems. Their

review of the literature cites that in general, “food choice research has indicated that time was a factor influencing people’s food choices and that lack of time was perceived as a barrier to practice healthy behaviors such as exercising and eating healthy foods.” The review also cites that home-prepared meals are healthier than prepared foods or foods consumed outside the home, and that though “the food and restaurant industry has responded to consumers feelings of time scarcity, most foods designed to be quick and convenient do not often meet health and nutrition goals.”

Inner development

Inner development is the personal growth one experiences through practice of self-reflection, awareness or mindfulness via meditation, journaling, and prayer, among other resources. Inner work for a Waldorf teacher is a spiritual scientific process, including, but not limited to anthroposophy (a study of the wisdom of being human). Research on the effects of journaling, prayer, and meditation, including mindfulness meditation, have proven to show benefits – both in the long term and short term – of individuals’ relaxation response, reaction times, emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence and functions, emotional health and mental health, as well as lower stress levels, anxiety and sleep (Richards, 2012; Moore et al., 2011; Singh et al, 2010; Caldwell et al., 2010; Oman et al., 2008; Schure, 2008; MayoClinic, 2013; Botwinik, 2007).

Research abounds on the topic of mindfulness and stress reduction as it relates to well-being. Mindfulness has also been positively correlated with self-awareness, where self-awareness is defined as “knowledge about the self,” mindfulness is knowledge and awareness of one’s experience in the present moment (Byrne, 2007). Brown and Ryan (2003) propose that self-awareness is an internal awareness of one’s cognitions and emotions, and mindfulness is both internal and external, being awareness of both one's

cognitions and emotions and the surrounding environment. As previously mentioned, Covey (1989) posits that physical renewal is linked to an engagement in self-awareness.

Given the daily stressors faced by teachers, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) suggested that promoting teachers' social and emotional competence might help teachers manage their daily stressors. For teachers in elementary and secondary schools, teaching is especially stressful because it is often marked by a narrow focus on day-to-day events, isolation from other adults, and limited opportunities for reflection (Fullan, 2001). One hallmark of Waldorf education is the inner path of the teacher – one of deep self-reflection and transformation that begins in teacher training. The agent for personal growth is the self, also referred to as the teacher's self-education. Knowledge of ones self can be attained through journaling, meditation, and exercises suggested by Rudolf Steiner.

For Waldorf teachers, it is believed that the benefits of inner work extend to every aspect of a teacher's life. According to Eugene Schwartz, Waldorf educator and advisor, a committed path of inner development by Waldorf teachers, rooted in anthroposophy, will improve the lack of energy, time and personal life that teachers currently experience (waldorftoday.com, 2012). The distinguishing characteristic, and according to Steiner, the primary pedagogical task, of Waldorf education lies in the teacher's striving to bring spirituality into education through their own inner work (Steiner, 1981). Inner work such as daily meditations, nightly reviews of the day, and journaling can develop self-awareness and mindfulness through reflection that leads to balance and clarity of thinking, feeling and willing (Steiner, 1947).

The soul capacities needed by Waldorf teachers to be effective in teaching are honesty, love and responsibility (Cameron, 2005). Inner work, such as meditation, helps one to develop these key capacities. Meditation has a long history rooted in spirituality around

the world and today research has found that it is linked to mind-body wellness (Shure et al., 2008). For Steiner, much like a Buddhist, mediation was essential for daily life, for discovery of ones self and for true knowledge. Anthroposophy also views mediation as working directly with the spiritual world. Master teachers of Waldorf education have found that a routine inner work practice, unique to the individual but guided by Rudolf Steiner's meditations, aid the teacher significantly in their daily workings with students and colleagues (Querido, 1991; Cameron, 2005; Vessier, 2009; Schwartz, 1992/2012). In Hickman's (2010) research on Waldorf teachers, one participant reported:

“My success as a Waldorf Teacher hinges on my commitment to rhythmic meditative work. So much is possible if I remember to ask each night for insight and inspiration in my work.”

As Vessier (2009) concludes from research conducted on the inner work of a Waldorf teacher: “Teaching, by its very nature, is leadership, and developing the capacities to guide and effect change in individuals or organizations requires deep inner work.” The researcher noted that the self-discipline to do her inner work was a challenge, but the results of a dedicated practice were manifold: personal growth, improved colleague and student relationships, and reduced stress. The mindfulness and specific meditations put forth by the researcher to improve relationships both with students and colleagues showed quantifiable results, evidence that inner work contributes to capacities of authentic leadership in the classroom.

Steiner writes of a spiritual balance obtainable between service to the needs of others and resiliency, or endurance (Steiner, 1947). When summarizing Steiner's requirements for spiritual training, or the path of a Waldorf teacher, one is left with the impression that the inner development of balanced, healthy thinking, feeling and willing are essential. This,

according to Steiner, is achieved through the practicality of anthroposophy, namely meditations. Almost 100 years after the First Free Waldorf School was established and Steiner gave his indications for inner work to the first Waldorf teachers, work-life conditions and societal changes have exacerbate stress levels.

Bento (2011) refers to the post-modern condition of societal stress as “Prolonged Traumatic Stress Disorder” and cites meditative exercises, as well as empirical research on the heart-mind science for the practice of positive imaginations accompanied by conscious affirmations, behind reducing stress. Bento and others recommend the practice of journaling (a form of self-reflection and mindfulness) to reduce life stressors (Waines, 2004). A meditative or self-reflective practice is one pillar in the holistic picture of health, yet a very profound one as it relates to our mental and emotional body.

The First Waldorf Teachers

In the documented faculty meetings from 1920-1924, Steiner’s guidance to the Waldorf teachers of the first school was given mostly in terms of inner or spiritual development. However, on countable occasions during faculty meetings, he addressed concern with, and was careful to avoid, the over-burdening of teachers. This included the number of hours they were teaching per week, the lack of time they had for adequate preparation (a critical aspect of teaching that aided in student interest and classroom discipline), and fatigue due to lack of sleep. Inventory of faculty hours teaching in the classroom was noted on many occasions, with the ideal being 16-18 hours per week, or about three hours per day. This allowed the teachers to use ample time to prepare the material for class, digesting the information until the educational process became an artistic endeavor for each lesson. Faculty meetings were weekly – sometimes several times per week – and many recorded meetings lasted until one or two a.m.

The inner and outer qualities he emphasized as paramount to the first Waldorf teachers far out-weighed any documented discussions on teacher well-being or health. However, upon deeper exploration of the spiritual path he urged teachers to follow, one can see how it lent itself to a life of health-giving faculties. Steiner implored teachers to have a responsibility of increased consciousness and an attitude of enthusiasm, liveliness, and strength in teaching, as to not become bored. *Humor* was repeatedly noted by Steiner as an essential component to teaching. He spoke of balance frequently, but the context was in relation to balanced teaching, in order to provide a health-giving and healing education to children. The agent for this therapeutic pedagogy was the spiritual insights of the teachers working with the children. Hence, a very strong relationship with the spiritual world and spiritual science was essential to the entire faculty (Steiner, 1983; Steiner,1998).

The stressors of the first school do not seem that far removed at all from the current struggles of Waldorf schools – finances, classroom discipline, enrollment and hiring, scheduling, faculty relations, the socio-economic-political strata of post World War One, as well as attacks on and within this educational and spiritual movement (*Steiner,1998*).

II. Teacher Stress: Sources and Manifestations

While studies on teacher self-care and well-being are limited, the issues of teacher stress, burnout and turnover are well researched (Sprenger, 2011; Blasé, 1982; Tripken, 2001; Kyriacou, 2001; Richards, 2012, Howard & Johnson 2004; Hastings & Bham 2003; Guglielmi & Tatrow 1998). Stress, unnoticed and unmanaged, leads to chronic stress and potentially to illness, strain, and burnout, which can result in attrition. Ramifications due to burnout and attrition include financial – costing the public school system and the United States millions of dollars annually (The National Commission on Teaching and America's

Future, 2007) – and emotional. Chronically stressed and burned out teachers have been documented to negatively impact the learning and motivation of students, and overall school climate (Farber, 1999; Geving, 2007). Adding to teacher stress are the major shifts in negative perception and lack of public support over the past twenty to thirty years that the teaching profession has felt, on a societal and political level. (Anderson et al, 1999).

How stress works

Endorphins are neurotransmitters released into our brain when we manage stress. A chemical imbalance of transmitters is created when our brains require larger amounts of endorphins to manage increased stress. As negative chemicals are released to balance the excess of endorphins, we feel stress more acutely, experience anxiety and experience even more stress. Thus, a stress cycle is created. Physiologically, our bodies respond to emotional stress with a ‘fight, flight, or freeze’ response, triggered by the primary neurotransmitter, norepinephrine. Digestion, immune system, blood pressure, adrenal glands, and muscle tension are all negatively affected and could eventually lead to illness (Burns, 2005; Schmidt et al, 2007). Our emotional and psychological resiliency, as well as physical self-care, play a huge role in the stress we experience day-to-day and in our long-term health.

There are many ways to manage and minimize stress, by way of nutrition, sleep, exercise and mental/emotional hardiness and healthy coping (Sprenger, 2011; MayoClinic, 2013; Petker, 2009; Burns, 2005; Botwinik, 2007). When we nourish our bodies with these aspects of self-care, dopamine is released into the brain, enhancing pleasurable feelings and motivation as perceived by the brain, as well as smooth motor movement in the body. According to Dr. Bruce McEwen, author of *The End of Stress As We Know It*, the most effective way to manage stress is through exercise, a healthy diet, regular sleep, moderate to minimal alcohol intake and not smoking. It’s not realistic, nor healthy, to strive for a lifestyle

with zero stress. However, it is important to realize the interconnectedness between these lifestyle factors. Taking inventory of where one is off-balance will tip the scales back towards sustainability.

Causes of Teacher Stress

Kyriacou (2001) defined teacher stress as “the experience by a teacher of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher” (p. 28) and Sutton (1984) describes it as any characteristic of the school environment that poses a threat to the teacher.

When one looks at the ‘stressors’ of teaching in a Waldorf school, the key perpetrators that are brought up in the literature include time-management and preparation (faculty meetings, block planning, organization of duties), stress from relationships (colleague to colleague, parent to teacher, teacher to class/student), and finances (salary, retirement) (Schwartz, 1992/96; Trostli, 2000; Mitchell, 2005). Education research on teacher stress mirrors these same stressors for public schoolteachers (Beers, 2012; Tripken, 2011; Sprenger, 2011; Richards, 2012). Granted, teachers at independent or private Waldorf schools are not subject to the testing, policies and administration of public schools. While the curricula, funding, employment and other policies of the public school system do not pertain to independent Waldorf education or pedagogy, much of the same stressors and tasks that universally affect teachers do apply. Where Waldorf class teachers stand apart significantly compared to primary, secondary and middle school public teachers is that they continue with one class of students, teaching first through eighth grade. This ‘looping’ was established by the first free Waldorf school in 1919 and continues at many Waldorf schools today, though some have adopted a four-year loop. In other cases, circumstances may cause a class to have several teachers. This ideal, of one individual stewarding and growing

alongside a class, on their own personal journey of self-education, brings many rewards and challenges. Typically, grades teachers do not repeat a year-long curriculum until many years later, thus they are perpetually researching, planning, organizing, writing, memorizing and developing a new curriculum every year, for eight years, to meet the developmental needs of the class and the individuals. Waldorf teachers at certain schools teach multiple subjects to their class, or other classes, for all eight grades and have to be well-rounded in many disciplines: math, science, language-arts, English, history, music, art, and movement. As part and parcel, Waldorf teachers have the freedom, as artists, to create their own main lessons and curriculum blocks. Without dictation by outsiders, teachers have almost limitless possibilities in their classroom to engage and connect with their students.

This freedom in the classroom offers sovereign decision-making and autonomy that is reflected in the governance of an independent Waldorf school. While all Waldorf schools will vary, depending on location, size and maturity among other factors, Waldorf schools are traditionally faculty-run. Steiner envisioned that a non-hierarchical faculty would make decisions and advise each other on the pedagogy and curriculum, the individual classes, the school festivals, the schedule and other organizational matters. Today, the self-administered partnership of a three-pillar organizational structure is the model at most Waldorf schools. A teachers' circle, faculty council, or college of teachers has primary responsibility for all pedagogical life-determining the curriculum and hiring, mentoring, evaluating, and dismissing teachers. A central responsibility of that leadership is to embody and develop the spiritual life of the school, as well as to exercise responsibility for its educational activities and management (Woods, Ashley and Woods, 2005). The other main decision making group is a board of trustees. This group may be comprised of teachers, parents, and community members who carry legal and financial responsibility for the school, who support the

education by making sure that there are adequate financial resources and physical space for supporting the education. An administration, grounded in an understanding of the curriculum, provides the support and the expertise needed to help increasingly mature and complex schools function well. The parent association, or parent guild, may foster community dialogues, sponsor adult education, support festivals, and serve the cause of responsible communication between teachers and parents.

Faculty-run schools have extraordinary freedom, not only in the academics, but the ethos, mission and values instilled at their school. Yet, the other side to that coin is more responsibility. Teachers are absolutely integral to almost every aspect of the structure and life of the school. This comes in the form of additional meetings, personal conflicts, and financial struggles, all trying to emotions, energy and time-management. As most independent Waldorf schools are tuition-based, finances can be unstable and unpredictable to a certain degree. This affects resources available to the school and to teachers, such as assistants for learning or behavioral needs, supplies, equipment, building and grounds and most importantly, pensions for retirement. According to a government funded study on Steiner (Waldorf) schools and mainstream schools in England,

“An integral feature of Steiner schooling is the importance attached to family support for the education of the child, and the importance of adult learning and development in the wider school community. ...Overall, much is expected of both parents and teachers over and above the normal level of contribution in state schools. Whilst this can be a source of strength and solidarity that gives a clear and worthwhile sense of purpose, it was clearly also a source of tension in some cases. The option of charging fees presents the schools with considerable dilemmas in balancing the relative values of freedom and independence, fully adequate funding (particularly of teachers’ salaries) and universal access to Steiner education regardless of means” (Woods, Ashley & Woods, 2005. Pg 103).

Studies on schoolteachers and stress abound in the research field, exploring the relationship of stress to *coping mechanisms, personal values, personality attributes, attrition, retention,*

burnout and job satisfaction. Research has been conducted on both the causes and effects of the aforementioned as well as possible solutions. Stressful factors identified for teachers in studies overall include transactional, individual and organizational, such as: student behavior/management, parents, colleagues, administration expectations and policy, testing and paperwork/documentation, role ambiguity, role conflict, role/work overload, and salary among others (Sprenger, 2011; Tripken, 2011; Richards, 2012; Ingersoll, 2003; Hepburn and Brown; 2001; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998).

Teacher stress has been categorized into first order and second order. First order stress interferes with teacher effort: leadership, colleges, parent support, supervisors, prep work, paperwork, large classes, discipline, and attendance. Second order stress does not interfere with teacher effort and includes salary, fatigue, sense of helplessness, boredom and loss of motivation and enthusiasm (Sprenger, 2011) In a national study on teacher stress and coping, the top sources of stress reported by 1,000 teachers included: Teaching needy students without enough support is stressful; Feeling over committed at work, with too many duties and responsibilities, taking work home; Lack of control over school decisions; Teaching students who do not seem motivated is stressful; Feeling constant pressure of being “accountable.” The top five manifestations of stress among teachers, from the same study, included: Feeling physically exhausted much of the time; Not as idealistic and enthusiastic about teaching; Feeling overwhelmed with what is expected as a teacher and having doubts about ability to make a difference in students’ lives; Job stress negatively affecting personal relationships; Worry about job security (Richards, 2012).

The consequences of teachers’ high can manifest within the classroom in numerous ways. Poor student performance, less student motivation, imitation of negative teacher’s negative behavior, disengaged students, and poor classroom management have been found

to be effects of teacher stress (Klem & Connell, 2004; Chan 1998). Blasé found that highly stressed teachers do not work as effectively as less stressed teachers, therefore, student performance suffers (1986).

The impact of teacher stress varies depending on individual factors such as social support, personality characteristics and job satisfaction (Gugliemi and Tatrow, 1998; Bachkirova 2005; Jepson and Forrest, 2006; Travers and Cooper, 1997) and studies have also correlated high levels of stress at work with high levels of physiological distress and lower job satisfaction related to school climate and culture (Tripken, 2011).

III. Effects of long-term Stress: Illness, Burnout, Attrition

The more detrimental effects of long-term stress are strain, chronic fatigue, burnout, absenteeism, early retirement or attrition in the first five years, lower self-esteem and decreased work effectiveness (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Kyriacou, 2001). The most common symptoms of teacher stress are feeling frustrated, tensed, and exhausted (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). Chronic stress has detrimental ramifications to one's physical, emotional and mental health.

Chronic Stress and Illness

While personality traits of hardiness (sense of control over life and personal commitment) include embracing challenge as an opportunity to grow, there exists a balance between a healthy amount of stress one manages on a regular basis and chronic stress that exceeds beyond what we can healthfully manage (Burns, 2005; Blasé, 1982; Bento, 2011). Chronic stress is prolonged states of stress leading to exhaustion, the final stage of the general adaptation syndrome, where in the first phase of dealing with a stressor, resources are mobilized, in the second phase, coping occurs and if pushed to the third phase, reserves are depleted (Blasé, 1982). If the 'fight-flight-freeze' response remains activated for an

extended period of time, we start to experience certain physical and emotional effects. Chronic stress can be the result of many repeated rounds of acute stress (episodic acute stress) or a life condition, such as a difficult job situation or chronic disease. In either case, the stress response remains activated as if we are thinking we should be running from our stressors. The thought of threat, on a continual basis, sends the message to our system that our survival mechanisms of fight-flight-freeze need to be continually activated. As a result, the normally functioning systems of the body cease to function so perfectly. Chronic stress of teachers has been found to result in fatigue, increased illness and symptoms such as: Tension or migraine headaches, sleep problems, upset stomach, change in appetite, nervous tension, heart palpitations, diarrhea or constipation, increased blood pressure, excessive sweating, menstrual problems, anxiety, anger, concentration problems, and depression (Hepburn & Brown, 2001). A review conducted by the National Association of Head Teachers in 2001 found that 40% of the head teachers reported seeking medical treatment for a stress-related illness (Jarvis, 2002). In addition, the psychological effects of stress can include anger, anxiety, depression, tension, indecisiveness, confusion, panic, guilt, worry, cynicism, frustration, resentment, and feelings of inadequacy. Prolonged stress may also lead to problems such as emotional exhaustion, negative attitudes about their students, job dissatisfaction, and decreased feelings of accomplishment (Wiley, 2000).

Burnout

Sprenger (2011) found that the top three stressors for teachers were unrealistic expectations upon teachers, excessive documentation and lack of consistency and support with administration. Unrealistic expectations create pressure upon the teacher, which could lead to perceived demands exceeding resources or capacity. This is the beginning of burnout. Burnout is the most researched topic on public school teachers relating to stress, after

research on the topic of stress itself. In fact, teachers are the largest homogeneous occupational group investigated in burnout research, comprising 22% of all samples (Schuaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Burnout is a multi-dimensional syndrome with three levels, or dimensions: first exhaustion, then depersonalization or cynicism, and lastly, reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). There are currently several instruments to measure burnout, but the most widely used is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) created in 1986 by Maslach and Jackson, with its origins in the care-giving and service occupations. Maslach found that “working with people, particularly in a care giving relationship, was at the heart of the burnout phenomenon.” Burnout is a slow process, and is the result of unmediated stress, a stressful situation when an individual believes there is no “out,” no buffers, no support system, no adequate rewards (Farber, 1984).

Tripken’s (2011) research on stress, coping and burnout explored the Transactional Theory of Burnout, which categorizes sources of burnout into three groups: individual factors, organizational factors, and transactional factors. The study focused more on organizational and transactional factors of burnout. Results found that several reported major sources of stress by participants corresponded with organizational factors such as: Work demands, administrative support, additional duties. Transactional factors included: Teachers' judgments of student misbehaviors, teachers’ perception of student apathy, perceived principal, peer support, administrative support, and perceived community/parental support.

Attrition

Teacher attrition levels have received much attention and scrutiny, as researchers are exploring the multitude of factors that affect why teachers leave or stay, and whether it’s an

issue of lack of teachers, or high turnover (Ingersoll, 2003). Attrition, or teacher turnover, is broken down into three categories: movers (those moving to another school to work), leavers (those who leave the teaching profession altogether) and stayers (those who stay with the same school) (Ingersoll, 2003). When comparing public to private school attrition in 2008-09, private schools have roughly double the percentage of teachers leaving the profession between their first and 19th year of teaching. After twenty years of teaching, private and public teacher turnover is the same (U.S. Department of Education, 2008–09).

The Bureau of National Affairs found that the annual teacher turnover rate in the year 2000-2001 was 15.7%, which was nearly double the turnover rate of all other working professions. Private schools were found to have 19.7% turnover and small private schools 21.8% (Ingersoll, 2003). In 2008-09, approximately 8 percent of public school teachers left the teaching profession compared with 16 percent of private school teachers. Another 7 percent of all teachers moved from their 2007–08 school to a different school (U.S. Department of Education, 2008-09).

Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) found that the public educational system has been losing teachers long before retirement years, with statistics such as 40-50% of all beginning teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching (Murane et al., 1991; Ingersoll 2003). Data shows that the three most prominent reasons for turnover are personal/family reasons, job dissatisfaction and desire to pursue another job outside of education. Top reasons for job dissatisfaction were identified as low salary, lack of support from administration, discipline problems and lack of influence in decision-making (Ingersoll, 2003; Bureau of National Affairs, 2002; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Based on the aforementioned findings, Ingersoll (2003) recommends increasing salaries. He also suggests increased support from school

administrations, especially for new teachers, such as sufficient classroom supplies and providing mentoring as ‘life for beginning teachers has traditionally been described as a sink-or-swim proposition, and as the data show, turnover is especially high among new teachers.’

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has proven to be linked to higher levels of teacher retention, and as job satisfaction decreased, attrition and absenteeism increased (Perrachione, Rosser & Peterson, 2008). Hargreaves (1994) found an inverse relationship between job satisfaction and role overload. In other words, increased teacher-perceived levels of role overload (e.g. excessive paperwork and other non-teaching duties) resulted in significantly decreased satisfaction. In addition, Hargreaves revealed role overload to be a major variable in teacher attrition.

Billingsley and Cross (1992) note that greater leadership support, as well as lower levels of role conflict, role ambiguity and stress were predictors of greater job satisfaction. It has also been found that only extrinsic factors influence teachers’ job dissatisfaction (role overload, low salary, parent support, student behavior, large class size), potentially contributing to attrition. Perrachione, Peterson & Rossier (2008) found that three intrinsic motivators (personal teaching efficacy, working with students, and job satisfaction) were perceived to significantly influence satisfaction and retention, while two extrinsic motivators (low salary and role overload) did not have any effect. Other reasons found for experiencing job satisfaction included: teacher support, having good students, and positive school environment. Findings also showed that 60% of respondents who claimed they would stay in the teaching profession, instead of leaving it for another job, would choose so due to: job satisfaction, retirement, personal teaching efficacy, schedule/time off and working with students. The remaining 40% who responded they probably or certainly would leave

teaching claim so for the same reasons of claiming job dissatisfaction: low salary and role overload.

Stress and occupational commitment is a very complex relationship. Jepson and Forrest (2006) found that workload was not an indicator of intended commitment to the teaching profession in their study on individual factors that play into perceived stress. They found a strong negative relationship between stress and occupational commitment. When occupational commitment increased, perceived stress decreased, implying that this individual factor may moderate the impact of job stressors.

A study on German Waldorf schoolteachers' attitudes that have an influence on job satisfaction and stress management used Grounded Theory to interview six teachers on their experiences with teaching, workload, and stress. Similar to Jepson and Forrest, the findings showed there was no direct correlation between weight of workload and levels of job satisfaction among the teachers. High levels of job satisfaction came from high levels of self-efficacy and autonomy through a commitment to personal responsibility. Individual responsibility was the attitude, or inner principle, that affected the perception of challenging situations, (e.g, taking ownership for the personal decision to be a Waldorf teacher in a larger scope). However, this commitment was not enough to safeguard against overload and burnout alone; it had to be coupled with certain staffing conditions and organizational structure. "If, however, the organizational and staffing conditions are fulfilled, then the principle of individual responsibility becomes a source of action based on initiative, which is focused upon those areas where provision has been made for freedom of action and, regardless of success, is intrinsically meaningful." Though teachers' personal commitments were reportedly taken as positive factors in meeting particular challenges they had to face, there arose difficulties in collaboration with colleagues and cooperation on a macro-level, as

personal initiative cannot bring about large-scale change on an individual level. School change is dependent upon the whole working together (Peters, 2013).

IV. Coping with Stress: Self-care as positive stress management

There are many responses to experienced stress by schoolteachers: mental, emotional, behavioral, and physical. Coping refers to attempts a person makes to cognitively and behaviorally manage the demands that overwhelm his or her individual resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping mechanisms vary depending upon the individual and the situation. Research has looked at preventative and combative coping, problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, as well as avoidant, positive, negative and neutral coping strategies (Sprenger, 2011; Chao, 2010; Matheny et al., 1986).

Positive coping by teachers includes a sense of organization, strong support groups, pride in achievements and competence in areas of personal importance. Negative coping and adaptive strategies have been found to include personal changes in behavior, emotional responses and physical responses. Unhealthy changes in behavior include smoking, drinking, outbursts of anger, sedentary lifestyle and sleeping problems (Gugliemi and Tatrow 1998). Emotional responses to coping may include anger, depression, anxiety and self-blame, leading to a lack of interest, social and emotional withdrawal from the class, loss of enthusiasm, humor and creative involvement. Physical changes in behavior include poor sleep, back pain, decrease in overall health and energy levels, and possibly chronic fatigue. The negative coping mechanisms (conscious or unconscious) utilized by teachers include unhealthy behaviors (smoking, drinking alcohol, excessively over/under eating, and drug abuse), distractions (television, computer, and filling up schedules) and withdrawal (sleeping, procrastinating, withdrawing from family, friends, and activities, and disengagement) (Sprenger, 2011; Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999).

Common positive strategies found to help teachers cope with and alleviate stress include: making time for exercise, yourself, and time with family and friends, as well as utilizing social resources, avoidance, reading, hobbies, movement, enough sleep, good diet, and meditation or solitude (Botwinik, 2007; Gulwadi, 2006; Hashim & Kayode, 2010). Ways in which teachers have been found to be proactive about stress reduction are through active planning, social support in their personal lives, and restorative coping (releasing stress in places away from the school environment such as nature, home, cafes, or church) (Gulwaldi, 2006; Hashim & Kayode, 2010; Tripken, 2011).

Social support has been associated with positive outcomes through use of active and healthy coping with stress and positive thinking (Shen, 2009; Freeman, 1987; Chao, 2011). Teachers who have a strong support network have been shown to better cope with the stress and demands of teaching, show more signs of resiliency, and (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Tripken, 2011; Ingersoll, 2003; Botwinik, 2007; Day, 2012) Griffith, Steptoe & Cropely (1999) found that a lesser use of social support was associated with an increase in disengagement. They found that disengagement (teachers giving up on the goals in which the stressor is interfering with) was a short-term solution and in the long run contributed to cumulating workloads, disruptive classes, and feelings of lowered self-esteem and helplessness. On the other hand, suppression of competing behaviors refers to teachers putting aside all activities in their lives so that they can concentrate solely on work. Teachers have a tendency to prevent distraction, focus more on work tasks, prevent outside interferences, and concentrate more on their thoughts on work in order to suppress competing activities. However, lessening the demand of other aspects of life and only focusing on work leads to teachers having an increased perception of stress levels, which prevents them from taking time to relax (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropely, 1999).

Sprenger (2011) posits that it's vitally important for schoolteachers to be aware of the level of stress they are experiencing and how to acquire coping skills to deal with the stress in a positive way. Sprenger's study, conducted at a rural primary school with forty teachers, found that the most common actions teachers took to prevent stress becoming a problem included: support from friends, adequate sleep, support from family members, advice from co-workers, and praying. Other actions to mitigate stress included avoiding stressful people, working on time management skills, exercising daily, taking rest breaks, participating in social groups or religious organizations, investing in a hobby or activity of interest, and avoiding excessive caffeine and alcohol consumption.

Several studies have found that teachers should participate in stress-management educational programs, leading to greater job satisfaction, thus resulting in sustainability and less attrition overall. An understanding of both the nature of stress and the sources of stress facing school administrators and teachers can provide useful basis for developing appropriate strategies. These strategies can be applied to reduce stress (Sprenger, 2011; Hashim & Kayode, 2010). Stokking, Leenders, Jong & Tartwijk (2003) found that teacher trainees should be supported with stress-coping strategies on four levels: the institutional level (cooperation between higher education institutions and schools), the curriculum level (addressing the structuring of the transition period), the relational level (addressing supervision and mentoring) and the individual level (significance of individual reflection).

Conclusion

A review of the literature included both the self-care advocacy for stress-management, sustainability and prevention of burnout as it relates to high-touch professionals, as well as a summation of the negative consequences of teacher stress, which

include chronic illness, burnout and job dissatisfaction all of which can contribute to attrition levels within the profession.

Self-care practices in high-touch professions (such as counseling, therapy and social work) have proven to aid in well-being and prevention of burnout. This proactive approach to well-being is also needed to maintain passionate, committed and resilient teachers. An accepted view of balanced and holistic health includes four dimensions working harmoniously: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Of these cornerstones of holistic health, the most fundamental are routine exercise, adequate sleep, proper nutrition and inner work. Inner work provides self-reflection and self-awareness, known to enhance one's well-being and coping skills. Maintaining these aspects of health also creates sustainability in one's personal and professional life, especially for teachers today who face many demands and stressors. Support, personally and professionally, has also been found to contribute to well-being and positive coping of life's stressors.

While Waldorf schools have a unique pedagogy, culture and governance, most of the stressors that affect its teachers are parallel to those that affect public schoolteachers. The teaching profession has been documented as one of the most stressful professions, with many environmental and personal factors contributing to stress. As such, the public school system has been researched prolifically for the effects of occupational stress upon teachers, students and the nation. The larger ramification of occupational stress can lead to chronic fatigue and illness resulting in potential burnout, which, along with job dissatisfaction, has been found to result in high percentages of teacher turnover. Becoming aware of stressors and understanding healthy and efficient ways to cope with stressors has been recommended in the research on teacher stress. As there is severely limited research on the prevalence of teacher stress, burnout or attrition within Waldorf Schools, the researcher feels there is a

need to begin exploration of these issues. Healthy self-care habits, as the foundation for well-being, are one predictor of resiliency to cope and manage with the demands of teaching, thus reducing the risk of burnout. This study sought to capture the status of self-care of a small population of current Waldorf-trained teachers through reported practices, perceived support needed and perceived sustainability within their career.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

Introduction

The proposed study is an assessment of the self-care practices of current Waldorf teachers, Pre-school through grade 12. The researcher aims to discover how self-care practices have changed, either improved or decreased, or have remained the same, with

teaching in a Waldorf school. In order to gauge the full spectrum of self-care and well-being, a mixed-method design is proposed. Quantitative survey questions on the self-care components exercise, nutrition, sleep and inner development are combined with qualitative, open-ended questions on support, home life, parenting and personal satisfaction of own self-care. This mixed-method survey used a convenience, non-random sample of current Waldorf-trained teachers.

The proposed study is a pilot sample implemented to measure the state of self-care and well-being of Waldorf teachers. This measurement of a convenience sample of practicing Waldorf teachers will indicate which aspects of self-care and support are most affected by or needed in teaching.

Research questions are the following: *Are self-care habits, encompassing the physical as well as the mental and emotional aspects, neglected as one embarks on the path of teaching in a Waldorf school? Which aspects of self-care are most affected by the Waldorf teaching profession? Which aspects of support are most needed by Waldorf teachers and how can this support be given? Do teachers perceive they will sustain a career in teaching with their current self-care practices?*

Procedure: Mixed Method Approach

Mixed method approach began in 1959 with Campbell and Fiske who used multiple methods to study the validity of psychological trails. This approach is also called a “multiple method matrix,” used to examine multiple approaches to data collection in a study. The reason for mixing different types of data in this research is in part an issue of triangulation, or seeking convergence across quantitative and qualitative. Open-ended questionnaires can inform multiple choice or Likert survey answers (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989). In the case of this particular study, one method is nested within another. Open-ended, qualitative questions with descriptive responses on support needed, lifestyle changes and self-care

satisfaction, are nested within a quantifiable survey of multiple-choice questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted on teacher stress, coping skills, burnout, and attrition, but little on teacher self-care, especially within Waldorf Schools. Qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted on the self-care, well-being and burnout of helping professions, mainly social work, counseling, and psychology/psychotherapy. Based on the direct relationship between self-care, burnout and stress among all high-touch and helping professions, especially teaching, there is a need to explore the state of Waldorf teachers' self-care habits.

In early October 2012, the researcher and researcher's advisor received confirmation from school contacts that a personally written letter by the researcher would be read at a faculty meeting, informing potential participants of the topic of the study, its importance, confidentiality and voluntary nature. This served as a consent form (See Appendix A). The contact person at each school agreed to forward the online survey link to the entire faculty of their school via email. Following confirmation that the letter had been read to faculty members, the researcher sent school contacts the online survey link via email, with instructions that the survey would be open to complete until late November. Contacts were informed that the researcher would notify upon closer date when the survey would be closed. Participation in the online survey was to be completely voluntary and confidential. Participants were given from October 8th through the end of November 2012 to fill out the survey. Upon the date for closing the survey, the researcher had a total of 43 surveys. To ensure a minimum of 50 completed surveys, representative of a small sample population of Waldorf teachers, the researcher and researcher's advisor contacted a breadth of independent Waldorf schools and teacher contacts. By February 2013, 53 online survey

responses had been submitted, though only 48 were fully completed surveys.

Design of Instrumentation

Current Waldorf teachers were asked to voluntarily complete an online survey through the service provider SurveyMonkey.com. Teachers were first asked a series of eleven demographic questions including age, sex, marital status, salary, number of children (if any), grade currently teaching, past grades taught, number of years teaching, and where and when teacher training took place. School names, as well as individual's names, were not included in any part of the survey.

The next section of the survey included the retrospective questions, asking teachers a series of multiple-choice and yes/no questions about four components of self-care practices *prior* to becoming a Waldorf teacher. The four dimensions of self-care included their exercise habits, nutrition habits, sleeping habits and inner development habits. At the end of the questions regarding exercise type and frequency, as well as inner development, an optional comment box was provided for further explanation of their habits. The following section of the survey included the 'after beginning teaching' portion, asking the same series of multiple choice and yes/no questions about the same four components of self-care practices, as they pertained to the individual *after* they began teaching at a Waldorf school.

Teachers were then asked yes/no questions, followed by open comment boxes for further explanation, on whether teaching has affected their home life and parenting. Next, they were asked, upon reflection, if there was something they wanted to change about their self-care. A Likert scale followed this question: Participants were asked to scale the four components of self-care (exercise, nutrition, sleeping and inner development), if their self-care was something they wanted to change for the next teaching year. The scale was a 1-4 ranking, with 1 being their choice for top priority of self-care. The last portion of the survey

was strictly qualitative. Teachers were asked to describe what support they need from each of the four sources: family, peers, school administration, and lastly, their teacher training institute or program. The survey concluded with a yes/no question and comment box for further explanation as to whether they believed they would sustain a career as a Waldorf teacher with their current self-care habits.

The online, self-administered survey/questionnaire offered quick turnaround, low cost, and was compatible with the researcher being in a satellite location - in a state not near many well-established Waldorf schools with personal contacts. The researcher hopes to identify attributes of the larger Waldorf teaching population based upon this small population sample. Other strengths of an online survey were the convenience for participants to fill it out on their own time, at home, and with a two-month window of time.

Instrument Validity

Threats to the internal validity of the findings are: Honest disclosure of self-care habits and practices; personal, subjective life experiences and biography that affect an individual's perception of self-care; personal boundaries of work/life and/or responses to stress and time-management.. Threats to external validity of findings include: Current life circumstances, or school environment, that affect responses at time of survey; changes in societal mores and cultural changes in self-care perception since participants began their teaching careers; researcher generalizations and biases; and statistical conclusion validity. Additionally, nine participants were not within the strict parameters of the sample population in order to obtain an adequate number of responses.

Participants

The researcher chose a convenience sample of participants: practicing Waldorf teachers, preschool through grade twelve with teacher training certification. In late

September 2012, contact was made with a faculty chair or faculty member at each of seven well-established independent Waldorf schools. Schools originally chosen to participate were based on contacts at each school that the researcher or researcher's advisor knew personally, to ensure commitment of administering the survey (as the researcher is in a satellite location). Of the original seven schools asked to participate, the same population of trained Waldorf teachers, preschool through grade 12, included approximately 100 individuals. As the November date for closing the online survey approached, and the minimum of 50 survey responses had not yet been reached, the sample population of participants became more randomized. Branching out from the original seven schools chosen for the sample population, the researcher contacted several other independent Waldorf schools (all within North America). The last nine survey responses (44-53) came from this second pooling of anonymous participants meeting the criteria of currently practicing and trained in Waldorf education.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study attempted to analyze the state of self-care practices of Waldorf-trained teachers after beginning teaching, as compared to self-care practices prior to becoming a Waldorf teacher. The independent variable was Waldorf teaching and the dependent variable was the individual. In order to analyze the effect of teaching upon the individual's self-care practices, a mixed method survey was administered to a target population of Waldorf teachers, preschool through grade 12, currently working within independent Waldorf schools.

As electronic survey was the only instrument of measure for this study, all surveys were submitted and collected via the online survey provider SurveyMonkey.com. Once the desired sample size of 50 surveys had been collected, the researcher closed the survey and

ceased contacting potential participants. Data was analyzed for both its qualitative and quantitative factors. Quantitative responses were analyzed using SurveyMonkey's electronic response summary, comparing 'prior to teaching' and 'after beginning teaching' multiple choice answers. In addition to statistical analysis, qualitative responses underwent a coding process. The researcher developed themes and provided an interpretation of the open-ended explanations and comment sections (Creswell, 2007). These codes represented core concepts, central categories, or themes related to teacher support, self-care and sustainability (Crosby, DiClemente, & Salazar, 2006). Respondents' repeated use of expressions or key terms, which illustrated commonly shared viewpoints, perspectives and experiences, were used to define the coding/trend categories used for sorting the data. An analysis of the qualitative comments and descriptions informed the quantitative responses and provided a deeper insight into the study's problem and questions.

Ethics

This study consisted of a one-time online survey concerning the self-care practices of current Waldorf teachers compared to self-care practices prior to becoming a Waldorf teacher. It was conducted solely online through the online survey provider SurveyMonkey.com. Confidentiality was strictly adhered to. The surveys were anonymous, voluntary and did not include the names of the Waldorf Schools. In the findings presented, names of the Waldorf schools will not be disclosed. The surveys were submitted via email to school contacts on October 8th, 2012 with a request for participants to complete the voluntary online survey by November 30, 2012. A broader group of anonymous Waldorf teachers were sent the introduction letter and online survey link via email in late January 2013. By February, 2013, 53 surveys had been submitted. At the closing of the survey, all participants were anonymous.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

Research has shown that helping professions, including teaching, are prone to high levels of stress and burnout. Therefore, attending to self-care practices such as routine

exercise, adequate sleep, proper nutrition and inner development builds resiliency and renewal for the professional. All four of these practices can have direct negative consequences to one's overall well-being if ignored over a long period of time. However, exercise, sleep, nutrition, and inner work can positively aid in the management and reduction of stress, an influential factor in burnout. A holistic approach to self-care should include the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of an individual's health. In addition, a strong support network has also been proven to aid in 'high-touch' professionals' self-care and management of stress. The researcher took this information from the field, along with the findings from a smaller pilot survey at one Waldorf School, and created the instrumentation described in the previous section.

Chapter Three entailed the design and implementation used to capture the current state of a small sample of certified Waldorf teachers' self-care practices. An online, anonymous survey (see Appendix A) was sent to a sample population of trained Waldorf teachers, preschool through 12th grade. Data collected from this sample population provided a range of insights and meaningful information on how participants perceive their own self-care, or lack thereof. The data provided a picture of self-care in relation to support given or needed, time, finances, job satisfaction, and experience with teaching, among other things.

Characteristics of the Survey Population

The target population initially averaged one hundred Waldorf teachers at seven independent Waldorf schools, teaching preschool through 12th grade. The population was widened in an attempt to obtain a minimum response of fifty participants in the convenience sample. A total of forty-eight participants completed the survey. The following table illustrates the quantifiable demographics of the sample population.

Table 1: Demographics of Sample Population

Age	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70
Percent of Participants	9.43%	13.21%	28.30%	39.62%	9.43%
Sex	Male	Female			
Percent of Participants	22.64%	77.36%			
Salary	\$20-30,000	\$31-40,000	\$41-50,000	\$51-60,000	
Percent of Participants	3.85%	42.31%	36.54%	17.31%	
Grade Currently Teaching	Preschool/ Nursery	Kindergarten	Lower Grades (1-4)	Upper Grades (5-8)	High School
Percent of Participants	9.43%	7.55%	24.53%	30.19%	26.42%
Marital Status	Single	Married	Divorced	In a Relationship	
Percent of Participants	18.87%	58.49%	15.09%	7.55%	26.42%
Children	Yes	No			
Percent of Participants	18.87%	28.30%			
Years teaching	1-3	4-8	9-16	14-24	25-33
Percent of Participants	22%	16%	44%	6%	12%

Findings: Self-Care Practices of Exercise, Sleep, Nutrition, and Inner Development

The following tables and discussion are relevant to the quantitative and qualitative findings on exercise habits prior to and after commencing teaching for 48 respondents.

Exercise Activity	Prior to Teaching	After Beginning Teaching
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Hiking	60.42%	43.75%
Walking	54.17%	66.67%
Running	27.08%	18.75%
Biking	35.42%	22.92%
Yoga	31.25%	31.25%

Table 2: Percentage of Respondents Engaged in the Following Activities

Table 3: Frequency That Respondents Engaged in Activities

Frequency	Prior to Teaching	After Beginning Teaching
Daily	29.17%	21.74%
Whenever able to	33.33%	36.96%
Specific Routine	12.50%	4.35%
Weekly	16.64%	15.22%

Weekends or on Outdoor Excursions	4.17%	17.39%
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Several common trends were present in participants' exercise habits. Of the four dimensions of self-care, exercise was the category that individuals found the most difficult to maintain after becoming a Waldorf teacher. Variety and intensity of exercising decreased, but not drastically. Walking was the only exercise activity that increased; all others decreased, with the exception of pilates and yoga which remained the same. Frequency in percentages did not change much overall. Thirty three percent exercised 'whenever able' prior to teaching and 37% after beginning teaching; 29% had a 'daily routine' prior and 21% after; 87% maintained the same exercise routine after commencing teaching. Frequency and intensity were affected the most, and by the following factors according to descriptions: lack of time to go to the gym or work out due to having younger children; age or physical hindrances like knee operations limiting the intensity of workouts; living in a more rural location eliminated the option to bike to work; available time due to nightly preparation for teaching or weekend commitments; and teaching the upper grades, which is more demanding (*"Recently, being back in the early grades again I have taken up many new forms of dancing and am dancing one or two times a week 2-3 hours of pretty energetic dancing - which for me is more regular exercise that I have had in the past."*)

Sleep

This table and the subsequent discussion describe the percentage of respondents' number of average nightly hours of sleep and sleep patterns.

Table 4: Hours of Nightly Sleep Prior to Teaching and After Beginning Teaching

Sleep	Prior to Teaching	After Beginning Teaching
5-6 hours/night	6.25%	20.83%
6-7 hours/night	20.83%	37.50%
7-8 hours /night	58.33%	33.33%
Over 8 hours/night	12.50%	8.33%

Participants are currently sleeping less compared to previous sleep habits. Individuals sleeping 7-8 hours per night decreased by 25% while those sleeping 6-7 hours per night increased by 17%. The most obvious shift in sleep is the jump from 6.3% to 20.8% of those getting 5-6 hours of sleep per night. Respondents were also queried on other sleep patterns, including bedtimes and weekend sleep habits. Over half of the participants (54%) reported getting more sleep on the weekends. Of those who prefer to go to bed on weeknights at a certain hour, 75% of them regularly get to bed at this time.

Nutrition

Table 5 and the following comments look at the nutrition, caffeine consumption and smoking habits of participants.

Table 5: Percentage of Respondents Nutrition Habits Prior to Teaching and Currently

Nutrition	Prior to Teaching	After Beginning Teaching
Ate most meals at home	58.33%	60.42%
At some meals at home, some takeout	37.50%	35.42%
Skip meals rarely	14.58%	12.50%
Skip meals often	6.25%	18.75%
Eat power bars and snack items for meals often	6.25%	16.77%
Caffeine	Prior to Teaching	After Beginning Teaching
Coffee (1-3 cups)	57.45%	50.0%

Black Tea (1-3 cups)	19.15%	18.75%
Herbal tea/Matte/Chai	25.53%	31.25%
None	12.77%	16.67%
Smoking	Prior to Teaching	After Beginning Teaching
Yes	12.77%	2.17%
No	87.23%	97.83%

Teachers eating habits had little change in terms of preparing meals versus eating out or taking out. However, the one noticeable change was a 10% increase in eating power bars and snacks for meals after their teaching careers began. Additionally, 12% more participants skipped meals after beginning teaching. After beginning teaching careers, participants smoked less, with only 2% currently, reduced from 12% prior to teaching. Respondents reported drinking less coffee and black tea after beginning teaching (by a small percentage). It was noted that 6% of respondents reported an increase of herbal/low caffeine teas after they began teaching.

Inner Development

The next table and discussion illustrate the changes in inner development habits prior to and after commencing teaching, as reported by qualitative and quantitative data.

Table 6: Percentage of Participants’ Inner Development Habits Prior to Teaching and Currently

Inner Development	Prior to Teaching	After Beginning Teaching
Reading spiritual literature	53.66%	66.67%
Meditation	51.22%	85.42%
Attending church or spiritual center	36.59%	12.50%
Journaling	31.71%	25.0%
Conferences/classes	34.15%	54.17%

Praying	43.90%	43.75%
Other (Yoga, travel)	46.34%	41.67%

Meditation, conferences/classes and reading spiritual literature increased the most.

Meditation was the activity with the largest increase, with 85% of respondents meditating today compared with 50% prior to teaching. Attending a church or spiritual center and journaling were the two activities that decreased; church/spiritual center attendance decreased by 24% after the teaching career commenced (and journaling decreased by 17%).

In the comments section, one participant stated they were never very spiritual before becoming a teacher, but became so after beginning teaching. Other respondents commented that time in nature, community activities and religious background had already influenced their inner development prior to teaching. The nineteen responses describing inner development after beginning teaching reflected how they use their meditative time. A common theme was the practice of daily/nightly meditations, mostly on students or on particular teacher verses. Two respondents reported that they benefit from meditation and spiritual exercises: *“I find that inner work and study as well as my meditations on my students is incredibly helpful for me”* A few responses described struggling to find time for inner development: *“...Usually too busy and exhausted [to do these spiritual exercises] any more.”*

Findings: Desired Changes to Self-Care

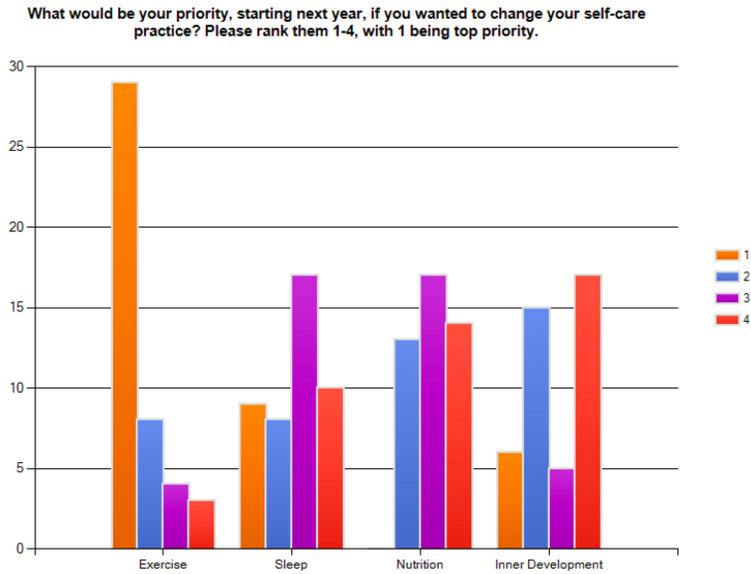
Forty participants responded to the question: “Reflecting on your self-care practice, is there something you would like to change about it?” The most common themes included wanting more exercise (especially daily exercise), followed by wanting more sleep. Other themes included: Better nutrition or different eating habits, more meditation/inner development/more of their own creative work, more work/life balance or rhythm within the

home, more time to “relax, breathe” or time for self-care, more outside relationships or time with family. One illustrative comment is: *“Not being so obsessive about doing the best in everything I do for my class and the school so that I had more time to just breathe out and relax! I need more time for my own creative work, and for my husband, and for taking care of my aging parents.”* Five participants commented on money being an issue. One stated: *“There is not enough money to care for myself. [I] find it to be a cycle because I couldn't afford care for myself I feel worse and the simple things I do practice aren't enough anymore because things I haven't attended to have grown chronic, so things that I haven't attended to have now grown chronic”* Finally, five participants commented that they would not change anything about their self-care, or are currently improving things they have wanted to change. *“I am getting better and better at recognizing what is essential. Cultivating POSITIVITY is the most important form of self-care. Age helps in improving this! Also, as you get older you have less demands about yourself, and you understand that the meaning in your life, the striving for balance, and the service you do for others are what regenerates you. Health does not come from the physical body, it comes from the soul.”*

Prioritizing the Four Self-Care Components

Table 7 and discussion reflect how respondents would prioritize self-care, if they desire to change their current practice, for the beginning of the next school year.

Table 7: Self-Care Likert Scale



When asked to rank their priorities of self-care, beginning next year, 44 participants responded. The 1-4 Likert scale ranked the categories of exercise, sleep, nutrition and inner development, with 1 being top priority for self-care. Table 7 shows the ranking. Exercise ranked #1 with 69.51% or 29 teachers. Inner Development ranked #2 with 34.88% or 15 teachers. Sleep and Nutrition were tied for #3, each with 38.64% or 17 teachers. Inner development also ranked #4 with 39.53% or 17 teachers.

Findings: Effect upon Home Life and Parenting

When asked how becoming a Waldorf teacher had affected their home life, participants had contrasting comments. Forty-two respondents commented on how teaching had affected their home life. Nineteen expressed *some* positive consequence, even if balanced by a negative. The most common themes found were: *Less time at home and time with family and/or partner; Contributed to making them a better person, enriches their life, happy to be teaching; Less free time for self (personal activities, rest or outside relationships); Less time at home or for household maintenance, chores or aesthetics.* Comments included: “I try

to live a better life. I have a garden and chickens and I got rid of my microwave. I have lost 50 pounds so far”; “Waldorf is a lifestyle but one I choose and enjoy”; “I am a much better person, so everyone benefits”; “...inner struggles but wouldn’t change it.” These comments reflect those individuals who view the effects of teaching at a Waldorf School as positive or make the most of both the positives and the negatives. Several commented having a more rhythmic life and household. Other view it as a work in progress that changes with experience and age: *“For the first several years it was difficult to hold boundaries with my class parents and have uninterrupted time with my husband. In the last year or so we’ve gotten much better at carving out time and communicating regularly...”; “It is a constant struggle against workload and expectations/ needs of the Waldorf community (parents/ colleagues/ students) to maintain a life outside of work, but it’s very important to do so! I love my work and I love my life outside of work - I strive to find balance (...every...single...day).”*

Less common themes include guilt for spending time on self, being tired, and salary being a problem or a factor. Several commented on how they now value weekends and quality time with family more than prior to teaching. At least two commented that they value relationships outside of school, or that having an ‘outside-of-school’ life helps them. Contrary to this, two different teachers mentioned that it is hard to keep relationships outside of school.

When asked if becoming a Waldorf teacher had affected their parenting, 44 responded. Over one-quarter (27%) of participants did not have children. Twenty-seven teachers agreed it had affected their parenting. Five respondents reported that did not affect their parenting. Thirty teachers commented with descriptions. The most common trends were: ***Positives balanced with negatives***. For example, their Waldorf teaching experience helped with understanding child development and philosophy, but they had limited time to be with their children. One respondent expressed uncertainty as to whether her occupation

at school negatively affected their children, however, she preceded this statement with the claim that it has positively affected her parenting. **Negative affect to parenting only:** “made me a long distance parent”; “Less patient because I have work stress and am tired”; “...I cannot even regularly accompany them on family vacations because of the demands of teaching. I feel unhappy about this”; “not being able to make a “real” dinner.” **Enriched, helped or supported parenting in some way:** “It has brought an awareness of health in living in the modern world”; “We through out our TV”; “The television was turned off, the rhythms of bedtime and meals time became more conscious, “warmth” with regard to clothing was paid more attention to, etc.” **Expressed a sense of improving, self-development or in-process with parenting.** An example of this follows: “At the beginning I had very little time for my children, and my wife (also a Waldorf teacher!) and I struggled to find a balance between work and parenting. Now, after many years, things have improved. In general, I think that my work with teenagers has helped me to become a better parent. But it was not an easy journey!” One of the most common negative themes was a sense of being “unavailable” to their children.

One participant found it easier as an early childhood teacher, compared to being a grades teacher: “When my children were growing, I was an early childhood teacher which fit in better with raising a family. I am now a class teacher, and I cannot imagine doing my job while raising children.” Another stated, “I tried to raise my child as a spiritual being” and another, “...would feel lost as a mother without anthroposophy.” One expressed having “higher standards” because they wanted their children to be examples of Waldorf parenting and not perceived as “faculty brats.” Two mentioned the support of the community helping with their parenting.

Findings: Support Needed for Self-Care

When asked what support Waldorf teachers would need in order to change their self-care to a desired state, answers varied from “no support needed” to specific needs of both a practical and emotional nature.

Family

When asked what support participants would need from their families, 34 responded. The question was not applicable to four participants, who live alone. Of the 30 remaining, 16 responded that they did not need any support, or that they already have a supportive family. Reasons included: children were grown and out of the house, or a very supportive spouse who cooked meals. Other responses in this category included: *“They are all very supportive. Being a parent and valuing my children's health and well-being requires me to be healthy and cook nutritious meals.”*; *“I have to work two jobs - they support me with child care. I don't think I can ask for any more support.”*; *“Mostly, my family is great and very supportive, but more financial support from my spouse would allow me to work part-time, which would mean more time for self-care.”*

Of those who described support needed, their common answers were as follows: Help with cooking meals, help with giving more personal time, help with chores, help with time or motivation for exercising, help with carpools, help getting children to sleep, help staying on track with a routine, help with childcare, help from family to call regularly or visit on weekends. Two mentioned more emotional support: *“understanding”* and *“acceptance.”*

Colleagues

When asked what support teachers needed from their colleagues at school, 35 responded. Three participants were unsure as to how their colleagues could support them, one commenting, *“I don't know how my colleagues could support me, because everyone's complaining about not having enough time for adequate self-care...”* Twelve commented that they do not need any more support, and of those, comments reflect *“great”* or *“wonderful”* support from their fellow teachers. One teacher described that colleagues were *“very understanding.”* Yet another commented that *“We don't see each other enough. And we can be distant because we're all so busy. It's too bad.”* The remaining comments for support included themes such as: Less *“late”* meetings

(sticking to a schedule); *“protecting time on weekends”* and afterschool; taking on more share of the workload; teamwork (especially with committee work); greater understanding for those who have children; more joy, positivity, enthusiasm; checking-in on how things are going and invitations to social functions outside of school; being a knowledgeable and friendly ear to listen or *“bounce ideas off of”*; and all striving for balance together. Others spoke of a need for more balance living within their school and faculty: *“There seems very little desire to honestly look at work load and life balance and actually tackle the tough conversations that would lead to a cultural shift in the school toward truly valuing the teachers rather than just chewing them up and spitting them out one by one as they burn out. This may sound harsh, but that is how it feels to many of us”*;

“It is challenging for teachers to be gracious about a colleague stepping back from some responsibilities when they themselves feel overwhelmed. I would like to look at what each of us feel would create balance in our lives and still serve the greater shared, heartfelt purpose of Waldorf education. I would like to then support each other in creating that vision together. The challenge of finances is most often where this falls down... I do not want to feel like a less committed teacher, less spiritual person that is letting the school down if I need to step off a committee to balance and care for myself and my own children”;

“More people to do committee work and take on leadership roles in the school so I can feel less guilty about taking time for myself. Or a culture where it is encouraged to not put everything into the school but instead if some things have to slide in order for the faculty to have a balanced life, that is okay”; and

“Some teachers have other jobs, and this leaves the rest of us to carry the extra weight of substituting, committees and extra help for the students.”

Administration

When asked what support they would need of their administration, 35 teachers responded.

Eight responded that no support was needed; seven responded that they would like less hours working after school or on the weekend; another seven commented on a “better” salary or a stronger sense of job security; four commented on better benefits and three on wanting/need a retirement plan. One respondent was unsure what support they could receive. Of those who commented on work hours or finances, examples included: *“Having to teach only the scheduled hours and not having to sub for other teachers would be helpful, or at least be paid to sub”*,

“...no pay or tuition remission cuts will help immensely with morale to keep going and make the work sustainable. As it is, will retire and move out of the area sooner than desired based on low salary versus high cost of sustaining oneself”,

“There is no feeling of job security among our faculty and, as a faculty... I think, for me, there is a constant thread of anxiety that interferes significantly with my ability to sleep, among other things. More transparency, communication, and ownership of the school by the faculty, would constitute ‘support’ in my opinion”,

“This is the area where I think a big difference could be made in our small school. Everyone, including our administrative team, is stretched very thin. Faculty [members] are responsible for as much as seems humanly possible, including the area of administration. I think the biggest help would be the employment (budget-permitting, which is not the case right now) of additional administrative and teaching staff to lighten the loads of everyone”, and

“I don't worry about Anthroposophically trained administrative officials. So, more of those are better for me.”

Teacher training program

When asked what support would be needed from their teacher training program, 28 responded. Nine commented that they do not need any support or expressed having “great” training. Other themes found were requesting more preparation for the “real challenges” of

teaching, such as: a “*realistic*” picture of child development/child needs today, a more “*practical*” approach to parent issues, prioritizing a schedule (e.g. time management) and mentoring. Three commented on the financial burden. Two mentioned support through a class on self-care and exercise classes offered on campus, one illustrative comment being: “*Students should be thoroughly immersed in self-care practices; as the health and breath and light of the individual as striving human being adds strength to the individual as teacher.*” Two teachers gave suggestions such as: “*What the training centers need to do is to do research on professional sustainability. i.e. looking at bringing some progressive, yet mainstream business practices that focus on supporting employees, streamlining communication, and providing alternative funding and income sources so that schools can pay teachers more and provide support staff and other infrastructure so that the teachers aren't tapped to do nearly everything and completely burn out after only a few years*” and “*All of us: teachers, institutions, society members need to think creatively to build new pictures of how to find this balance ...*”

One respondent commented that they do not use their teacher training center anymore for classes. “[I] have branched [out] into University classes for professional development. I enjoy the broader view points.”

Findings: Sustainability of Career with Current Self-Care Practices

To look at the larger picture of self-care and it sustaining one throughout a career, or conversely, attributing to a sense of ‘burnout’, Waldorf teachers were finally asked if they felt they would sustain a career in Waldorf education, in regards to their current self-care habits.

Of the 36 responses, 75% of teachers answered “*Yes*”: they felt they would sustain a career in Waldorf education. Of the 75%, six gave no explanations and another five explained that they are leaving the profession for personal reasons or retirement within 10 years. Of the remaining 24 who responded “*Yes*”, two attribute it to a strong will and temperament; one said they are “*past the hard years when everything was new*”; two said their

health is their top priority, they are satisfied with self-care and have support; one said that over the past 16 years they have found ways to create balance with personal needs and demands of school, but it was not easy and they *“paid the price to now be able to stay more in balance”*; and one said *“this is the work for me.”* Seven more answered *“Yes”*, however their explanations gave further insight. Of these, specifically four commented that not having a retirement fund was an issue: *“But last year I would have said no. So it's difficult to say. I love my work--and it is very, very hard work. We don't have a retirement plan, and so that's scary, too”*,

“I am currently an 8th grade teacher. I've made it once through! The only hesitation I have about repeating a cycle is that my school offers no retirement benefits”, and

“Though there is no ‘retirement’, so do we have a choice? There really is not an end in sight! I have been a person that tries to keep balance with family, self, and school. This has served me and fortunately my school has supported this. Therefore, I have the interest and energy to keep teaching.”

One explained they will sustain career due to their own child’s education at Waldorf, yet they are still concerned about sustaining their current schedule: *“I feel that I absolutely must because otherwise we cannot afford the education for our child, and that is something we're committed to. However, I have serious doubts about my ability to sustain my current schedule.”*

Of the 25% (11) that responded *“No”*, four explained it would be due to lack of a retirement package and three due to salary. Two commented on the stress levels; one commented on needing time with and for their own children; four commented on the workload, schedule and hours; four commented specifically on the lack of balance or sustainability; and one commented on parental expectations: *“I take very good care of myself, but this job is not doable. Parents’ expectations have risen to an unsustainable level. I can't wait to graduate my class (3rd cycle) and leave.”*

Other examples from “No” responses included: *“I will need to find more balance between work and home life. Personal recharge is minimal, and a daily struggle. The long duration of nightly preparation is currently the norm, and just WHAT I do. However, it is not sustainable, and something I would like to curb through efficiency and benefits of experience”, and*

“My spouse is also a Waldorf class teacher and we want to have children in the next few years. We both feel it would be unsustainable to raise a family with two class teacher parents.”

Finally, *“I do not feel that a Waldorf teaching career is sustainable -- financially, physically, emotionally. Between learning new curriculum, developing daily lesson plans, faculty commitments and meeting the needs of high-needs students and parents, grades teachers work upwards of 70 hours a week on a regular basis, as well as the majority of their summer, winter and spring ‘vacations.’ That simply leaves little time or energy for anything else. I am acutely aware of nutritious foods, the benefits of exercise, sleep, recreation, etc. but do not see how to regularly work that into a schedule already packed with professional and familial demands.”*

Summary

The results from the study reveal several subthemes that emerged from the data, which relate to the participants’ experience of maintaining their self-care and with the inner path of being a teacher. These themes include:

- A decrease in and dissatisfaction with current exercise habits; a decrease in nightly sleep; an increase in skipping meals and eating power bars/snacks; an increase in inner development activities.
- A combination of feeling very supported on all four levels, or needing more practical, organizational, and emotional support on all four levels.
- A lack of time for recharge and renewal of self due to workload and hours at school
- Financial concerns over salary and long-term benefits

- A large percentage of respondents expecting to “sustain a career as a Waldorf teacher.”

This chapter explored themes and various subthemes to gain a more in-depth view of participants’ experiences and perceptions of self-care, how teaching affects this aspect of well-being and what support is needed to achieve a healthy state of self-care. Of the above list of findings, the last theme could be interpreted as a high level of job satisfaction, despite the stress and despite perceptions of self-care. However, a notable number of participants throughout the survey questioned the sustainability of the either their self-care or the profession, and expressed concerns of how to create more balance professionally and personally. These findings and their implications for future research will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Introduction

This study sought to gain insight on the standing of self-care of certified Waldorf teachers through a small sample population, asking the research questions: How have the self-care practices of Waldorf teachers been enhanced, maintained, or neglected as a result of the nature of teaching? Do Waldorf teachers, over the course of their experience in teaching, neglect their self-care habits? If so, what are the long-term consequences? It also explored desired changes to self-care practices, the effects of home life and parenting on self-care, perceived support needed by teachers to maintain or improve self-care, as well as how self-care impacts the intent to remain in the profession.

The teaching profession is increasingly scrutinized for its stress levels, attrition and burnout. Self-care, as an aspect of well-being, is vital to one’s basic health and can aid in managing stress, providing sustainability for the teacher in their demanding work. Studies on teacher stress, attrition, burnout and job-satisfaction have not looked specifically at self-care

practices of teachers, thus there is a need for this data, especially in North American Waldorf Schools where no formal research has been conducted on the aforementioned topics.

Summary of Findings

Self-Care Practices

Self-care on the surface did not seem to change drastically, nor do teachers seem to be in a dire state of poor health. In some cases, unhealthy habits decreased (smoking and caffeine), or health-giving habits increased (inner development). However there were themes represented in the data of less exercise (by way of less intensity and frequency), coupled with expressing strong dissatisfaction with exercise habits. Lack of time is documented as the reason for activities such as hiking decreasing and workouts becoming less frequent. Children, age and location were other noted factors in a change or decrease of exercise routine. Respondents ranked exercise #1 in priorities of what they would change next year, showing they value its role in their self-care habits and would like to increase frequency or intensity to their personal standards.

The need for adequate sleep is probably one of the most important factors of health for a teacher, as it adversely affects weight, memory, immune system, fighting free radicals and overall resiliency for daily physical and mental demands (National Sleep Foundation, 2013; Wells & Vaughn, 2012). Working professionals, including teachers, depend upon their performance of physical and mental tasks, and problem solving abilities. Participants in this study are sleeping less by 1-2 hours, most likely due to nightly preparations and home life responsibilities. While they are generally getting to bed at the hour they desire, they are sleeping less. Most report catching up on their sleep on the weekends, however, a theme of having many events and school obligations on the weekends was also present. Weekends are

not a time of rejuvenation and renewal for teachers with festivals, parent and community gatherings scheduled.

Participants are generally satisfied with their nutrition and most are cooking at home, which gives one more control over the ingredients used and nutritional value. However, there is also an increase in skipping meals and replacing them with power bars and other snacks (most likely at school). Several things can make these either undesirable or unsustainable habits: modeling poor nutrition habits for children, lack of energy by skipping meals or low blood sugar, snacking can lead to weight gain, and relying on processed foods such as power bars is not as nutritionally sound as whole food options. Zero respondents ranked nutrition their first priority of self-care to change. This either represents a satisfaction with current nutritional habits or its level of importance compared to exercise, sleep and inner development (all ranked in this respective order for top priority). Convenience is most likely the reason for skipping meals and substituting them with power bars or snacks. Clausen and Petruka (2009) observed that in three case studies of teacher stress, as each teacher became more burned out, their routine of daily physical activity and proper diet dissipated. They posit that in many cases, teachers may be the last person to identify the exact causes of the stress-related problems or ways to overcome them. Teachers may not realize one of the underlying causes of poor self-care habits may be poor nutrition.

Inner development practices have increased, and several expressed that it has helped them in their teaching and value its presence in their daily or weekly routine. Hickman (2010) also found that respondents' familial relations deepened and improved due to an inner work practice, however physical and moral exhaustion kept one teacher from a daily practice of meditation. In the current study, two teachers commented that they did not have time or were too tired to develop regular inner work. Less journal writing and fewer attending a

spiritual center could be attributed to lack of time, or moral exhaustion as cited by Hickman (2010). It is also plausible that a decrease in attendance at churches or spiritual centers may be a change in religious denomination or spiritual orientation. Inner development had the highest ranking for 2nd priority of self-care practices. It also had the highest ranking for 4th priority, and a larger percentage ranked it 4th than 2nd. There could be two possibilities for this explanation: Some participants may desire to strengthen their inner development practice or they value its role in their well-being, while others may not feel they need to improve this practice (as it is already a strong habit) or perceive it as less important in their overall self-care.

Reflecting on your self-care practices, is there something you would like to change?

In terms of where participants see a deficit in their self-care, exercise and sleep are the two areas they would want to change the most, followed by better nutrition, then meditation/inner work. 'Balance' was a commonly used word in this section of the survey "*I would like to be more in balance with the demands of my preparation. Still a new teacher, in my 3rd year, I really turn myself over to my work, which of course I love!*" New teachers may prioritize work over personal health, instilling un-balanced and unhealthy habits that are difficult to change later on in their careers when the passion and enthusiasm for teaching may take more energy to conjure.

Time and money were also brought up in this open-ended question about self-care. Participants perceive time as a major hindrance in getting exercise, doing everything that needs to be done in a day, or spending time with family. However, for every one participant who commented that they don't have 'enough money' for their desired self-care, another one commented that they wouldn't change anything about their current self-care, or they are

continually improving the things they want to change. This goes to show that some seem to cope and adjust while others seem to struggle. The researcher interprets this as the affect personal perception has on the interplay of environmental and organizational factors of stress. When looking at the whole picture, one would have to take into account individual support received, organizational support received, ability to discern and create personal boundaries, individual coping strategies, and experience or job phase in the teaching career.

Effects of Teaching Upon Home Life and Parenting

With regards to the home life findings, half (19 of 40) of the participants view the changes since being a Waldorf teacher positively, even if they also addressed the negative effects or downsides. Comments relating a struggle to find balance, especially with time, were just as prevalent as comments about teachers' inner lives improving. Teachers' responses had a range of perceptions, falling into three general categories: a sense of satisfaction or positivity, a sense of struggling, and a group in the middle that view adapting to the profession as a 'work in progress' with ongoing improvements on their part. With teaching being documented as a demanding profession, those who find they are satisfied have come to terms with this life choice and do the best they can to find balance, especially with the life they create outside of school. This life outside of school, which can renew a teacher and provide needed social and moral support, is very important. Yet, the researcher wonders how much time Waldorf teachers have for this, how many desire it and of those who desire it, how supported are they in developing it?

With parenting findings, there seems to be a paradox of teachers perceiving they are becoming a better and a worse parent through being a Waldorf teacher. With that said, half (15 of 27) of participants who had children, and who agreed that Waldorf had effected their parenting, said that it had helped or supported their parenting in some way. Again, there

was a range of perceptions on parenting, but more found parenting specifically to be influenced positively than their overall 'home life.' Of the comments, positive perceptions or experiences included: a deeper understanding of child development and health; a more conscious and quality lifestyle; a spiritual insight and approach; attention to rhythm; matching schedules and having a supportive community. Negative perceptions or experiences with teaching and parenting included: lack of time to spend with children; stress of the job interferes with the way they interact with children; long-distance parenting; being tired, irritable, and *“negatively impacted my ability to follow through with many of the tenants we espouse in terms of being present for their needs. More often than not, I am overwhelmed with school/ committee work.”* It appears that individual factors such as age, experience and support at home and school play a role in how one perceives the relationship between Waldorf teaching and parenting. Moreover, with the lack of time for children that most respondents reported (due to teaching responsibilities), the researcher imagines that time for personal self-care would be even more limited, thus physical, emotional, and mental re-charge scant.

Support Needed

With support needed to achieve desired self-care, participants' responses had two themes. First, a group of teachers who expressed not needing any further support from family, colleagues, administration or teacher training (either due to the support already given to them or because they felt they could not ask for any more). Secondly, a group of teachers expressing needs for emotional, logistical and practical support from the four groups. It is important to keep in mind that support is very subjective and reliant on the perceptions of the participant, their unique home life, social and familial network, and school in which they teach.

In regards to support needed from family, forty nine percent of respondents were 51 or older, therefore many of their children are out of the house. Half of the participants with families, including children, stated that they do not need any further support from their families, or could not ask for more support than already being given. Of those who listed support needed, all was logistical in nature. Again, not enough time to do everything was the main source of needs. Understanding and acceptance were emotional need expressed.

As far as support from colleagues, teachers' responses ranged from receiving excellent support to expressing a need for balancing the workload more, to uncertainty with how colleagues could provide support. This appears to be where interpersonal relationships carry the strongest emotions, either lifting or deflating one in support. Taking and expressing a strong stance for one's personal well-being and health to colleagues can be difficult: *"[I] have been actively seeking to reestablish a rhythm to my physical well-being practices. [It] requires drawing boundaries at work which at times not well received."* Again, a different theme of schools' ethos was reflected in others responses. Comments from both sides of the spectrum show that a sense of 'understanding', as well as 'positivity' are strongly valued, whether present or not. This is reflected in the literature which finds interpersonal relationships with colleagues to be a main source of stress in teaching, as an entire faculty is independently and collectively coping with the demands of a school environment. Examples of participants comments expressed a need for emotional support from colleagues: *"checking-in on how things are going and invitations to social functions outside of school; being a knowledgeable and friendly ear to listen."* Sprenger (2011) found the greatest coping strategies used by teachers to deal with stress were neutral coping. Of the neutral coping skills, the most popular strategy was developing a strong support network, mostly so teachers could say what was on their mind. Some support networks of family,

friends and fellow teachers are used for advice and understanding, however participants in his study used their support to vent. (pg. 60)

Teachers expressed, yet again, a range of support needed from administration, from those needing no support, to those needing to work less hours after school and on weekends, or needing financial support (either in higher salary, job security, better benefits or retirement package). However, the largest percentage of responses commented on finances/salary, showing that administration is perceived to be responsible for this component within independent schools and that most schools surveyed perceive money as a strong determining factor in amount of workload and employee morale. How administration deals with enrollment and perception of job security influences teachers' anxiety, stress levels, and commitment, and it's evident that teachers rely on administrators for a sense of well-being and support. Teachers commented on needing more support ranging from leadership (communication and upholding the school vision) to logistical support (clean bathrooms and help with details like injuries scheduled lunch breaks) to organizational factors (less role ambiguity and workload/hours).

Support needed from teacher training received the least number of responses from participants (28). This could be from the difficulty in retrospection, as the majority of teachers began 9-16 years ago, or reflect uncertainty, or satisfaction. Only a few respondents made direct correlations to how teacher training could support them in their self-care practices: "*Exercise classes offered on campus to start/model healthy habits*" and "*...how to realistically set up a schedule that includes study, sleep, exercise, and meditation.*" Other comments seemed to relate more to overall support needed with the personal and professional demands of teaching. Two prevalent themes were strong satisfaction with teacher training experience, and a need for more practical and realistic pictures of what teaching would be like (i.e. Work

hours, child development, how to ‘form a class’, challenges in the classroom, how to meet the increasing needs of children, how to deal with parent expectations, time management and mentoring). Sprenger (2011) found that teachers feel teaching “is far more demanding a job than anyone can describe or prepare them for and that content knowledge alone will not lead to an enjoyable experience in the classroom.” A couple responses showed that participants place training centers with the task, or opportunity, of bringing progressive change to schools with supporting teachers in self-care (in both knowledge and practice) and sustainability.

With your current self-care practices do you feel you will sustain a career in Waldorf education until you retire?

Of the small population of Waldorf teachers in this study, only 36 commented on whether they felt they would sustain a career in Waldorf education with their current self-care habits. Of the 25% who responded, “No”, all listed salary, health benefits, retirement, stress and workload as factors that would hinder them from sustaining a career until retirement. Of the 75% participants who answered, “Yes”, many attributed their intent to remain teaching in Waldorf education to their temperament, time left until retirement, support received, commitment to health and experience with teaching. In addition, of the 33 who responded, “Yes,” 5 still commented that finances, benefits and salary, as well as schedule and wanting to have children, make it very challenging. Thematic findings showed a common use of words such as, “Hopefully,” “Maybe,” and “If possible” with these participants. As far as demographics are concerned with influencing intent to remain teaching, there is no correlation between age, marital status, years of teaching, which leads one to believe that factors such as support and environment (classroom, school) as well as personal factors have the most influence on whether or not Waldorf teachers believe they

will continue to teach. However, intent to remain teaching does not indefinitely mean that one will continue until retirement. It may signify commitment to the profession or job satisfaction, which are possible interpretations and topics that have been researched previous literature.

Interpretations and Context of Findings

Challenges: Time, Workload, Finances

It appears from responses that a combination of factors such as work overload, financial strain and lack of time are the main challenges facing the Waldorf teachers in this study, which may or may not contribute to them leaving the profession or changing roles at their school. As time can be correlated with workload, it appears that organizational factors maybe play a very large role in Waldorf teacher's stress. Tripken (2011) posits that organizational factors (class size, work demands, administrative support, additional duties, teacher preparation, and role ambiguity) contribute the most to stress and can eventually contribute to burnout.

This prevalent theme of a lack of time – for self, for family and for schoolwork – interferes with the individuals ability to mange self-care successfully or to a desired state. The researcher believes that the construct of time plays the biggest factor in the perception of self-care and the reality of self-care, directed by stress levels due to overbooked schedules. This is reflected in one participant's comment: *"The thing that hurts my self-care the most is taking on too much."* It has been found that hours and workload are among the top reasons for teachers leaving public schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2005). In addition, work overload has been highly correlated with the experience of teacher stress (Blasé, 1986; Mortiarty et al., 2001). Work hours and workload are extrinsic factors to the job, which have been found to be negatively correlated with job satisfaction and retention (Perriochine et al,

2009). They are also major contributors in well-being, and dramatically affect the ability to maintain healthy self-care. One respondent questioned the sustainability of working “60-70 hours per week” as a culture norm within the Waldorf movement. Lack of time and over scheduling is not a new theme for Waldorf Schools, or for our society as a whole. Studies on teacher stress show that unrealistic expectations and demands have increased beyond the capacity for teachers to meet them, and that “12 hours work days and weekend related school work are not uncommon practices for teachers anymore” (MacBeth, 2008; Sprenger, 2011). The researcher questions the ramifications of not having time to renew and nourish the Self. Not only does health fall to the wayside, but we don’t take the necessary time look within ourselves to ask important questions, such as “How are the students being affected by a teacher’s lack of adequate self-care or excessive demands of stress?”

Time and workload also effect teachers’ inner work practice. While it seems that most teachers are committed to some inner work or meditative practice, which strengthen their teaching effectiveness and home life, some find difficulties making time or even having energy to incorporate this into their routine. Educator Thomas Poplawski states that “Only through meditation can the teacher come to ‘living thoughts’ that will allow him or her to present the Waldorf curriculum in a vital and engaging way and to deal with the demands and challenges of being a teacher. For Steiner, the path of inner development is a *sine qua non* of being a Waldorf teacher” (*Completing the Circle*, 2006, pg. 10).

In responses to self-care support and to intent to sustain a career, multiple respondents brought up finances as a determining factor. The researcher finds it interesting that money was associated with self-care, or the ability to carry out self-care. However, this could also be an example of a misconstrued perception of the self-care really needed by teachers, who might know how to ‘take care’ of themselves, but don’t due to time, which

falls back on resources such as money. The compounding factors of some teachers having a low salary combined with little to no benefits and lack of retirement was perceived as a severe hindrance to staying in the profession, either citing logistical concerns or expressing feelings of insecurity, uncertainty or helplessness. In a study conducted to determine if and how Steiner schools (Waldorf schools) could be incorporated into the state funded or mainstream educational system in England, researchers analyzed aspects of pedagogy, school governance and teaching conceptions among both. They found with the 17 Steiner schools surveyed that:

“A common factor amongst schools which cannot fail to impress the outsider is the level of dedication by teachers who work for substantially less than the agreed national salary scales, and parents who contribute to the schools’ economy often on the basis of extremely limited means and a willingness to devote time in the absence of realistic fees. ...It does raise significant tension between the need to survive and adequately reward teachers and the need to be true to Steiner’s principles and ideals.”

Compromise and Balance

Due to the challenges discussed above, a sense of compromise in order to get ‘everything done’ seems to be made when one becomes a Waldorf teacher. ‘Everything’ includes the previously mentioned demands of the workload (curriculum planning, grading, parent education, meetings, festivals and fundraising) as well as balancing family life, household duties, parenting, and the emotional demands of teaching that leave one feeling drained and exhausted. Within that compromise there is a variety of results and priorities negotiated. For some it means placing health at the top of the list, for others it means slowly creating more personal boundaries between work and home, and still for others it means investing almost everything into the tasks of teaching, at the expense of self-care. While teachers in this study are engaging in physical exercise, they compromise with frequency and

intensity (walking more, running and hiking less), they are compromising sleep, and some compromise nutrition (eating quicker meals at school like power bars and snacks or skipping meals). Time for self is compromised even on the weekends, with many participants commenting that they work on weekends. Personal needs are shifted and re-prioritized due to the sheer amount of work it takes to run an entire school, tending to the needs and development of so many others.

And yet it seems that the largest and most common compromise Waldorf teachers have is one to make less money in exchange for the personal investment in a vocation with a specific vision and ideal, with intrinsic rewards. This personal investment demands a significant amount of teachers' resources – so much so that not a lot of one's self is left for much else, and this is where one chooses priorities carefully. Self-care can seem more dispensable compared to the personal and professional expectations of others and expectations we create for ourselves.

Day (2012) found that teacher identity plays a strong role in discoveries on commitment and resiliency and that teaching is fundamentally an issue of values. One struggle teachers face is the balance of socio-cultural, workplace and personal dimensions. Personal values, experience, biography and life situations will affect choices of self-care practices. Another compromise that seemed to result from the survey responses was a simultaneous 'finding oneself' (through self-education, better parenting, community and inner work) and 'losing oneself' (less time to relax, spend on personal hobbies or develop new skills, or even maintain aspects of health).

The causes of self-care being neglected or diminished, or even self-care improving over time, are hard to pinpoint because there are a multitude of factors that influence it. When looking at *how* participants perceive others could support them better, it is revealed

what self-care aspects are important or more simply, what general support is needed to maintain stronger sense of balance. Most comments pertaining to ‘support needed’ reflected how teachers place family support as aiding in self-care practices such as more exercise, or better nutrition. Family support was also needed for more time to do household duties, helping with children, or time for personal rejuvenation. Support from the other three, more organizational infrastructures of school (colleagues, administration and training centers) reflected the need for a lighter workload (demands and stress from time spend on work related duties), or understanding, acceptance, affirmation, including financial considerations, and stronger social relationships – highlighting emotional and physiological demands and investments of teaching). The question is if this organizational support were to be given to teachers, would they use the extra time, resources and energy for self-care practices and rejuvenation? Or, would the support lessen the burden of stress and make more time available for others (family) or for a second job – not for individual renewal? A couple respondents mentioned either desiring a second job, outside of Waldorf education, or colleagues having a second job which impacted the faculty. This could pose a cycle of increased stress and decreased self-care for many: Stress of financial burden leading to a second job, leading to less time for school obligations, increasing the burden on colleagues, resulting in less time for self-care for all. It appears that teachers’ needs are truly assessed, and the sustainability of their self-care choices are questioned, when teachers appraise the demands of the job and personal resources. This is reflected in the last question about feelings of sustaining a career in Waldorf education. The common struggles of schedule, workload and finances are brought up when sustainability and longevity are questioned.

Support

Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) discovered that the impact of stress depends on social support,

personality characteristics, and job satisfaction (p. 88-89). Day (2012) also found, in a study of the professional life phases of teachers, that supportive colleagues and a supportive personal network influenced a sense of agency, resilience and commitment within teachers. One can see how varying degrees or types of support received, as well as the underlying individual personality characteristics, are plausible for the diverse descriptive responses in this survey. Teachers expressed needs ranging from emotional, social and pedagogical support from colleagues, to leadership and logistical support from administration.

Again, studies find that school administration and peer support may help teachers in many ways to reduce stress, cope more effectively and create a more healthy and effective environment (Trippen, 2011; Day, 2012). Kyriacou (2005) outlined the components that contribute to a healthy teaching environment. Included in this outline was an environment that was supportive of teacher decisions and where all members feel valued. One survey respondent commented that they felt their school did not have a *“desire to look honestly at work load an life balance and take the tough conversations that would lead to a cultural shift in the school.”* Do schools need infrastructure that supports healthy dialogue and communication? In a study conducted at one Waldorf school in Pennsylvania, a non-profit organization was brought into the school to “oversee a new model for in-house professional development for teachers, or ‘peer coaching,’ a process that would develop an alternative to the traditional mentoring process.” Results showed that the use of specific protocols in faculty meetings created healthier communication, more efficient meetings, and a robust increase collegial support with personal and pedagogical challenges.

“In short, the implementation of “in-house professional development” or “peer coaching” has helped them realize one of the core values of Waldorf education: on-going, structured collegial dialogue as a means of creating a more fruitful and humane environment for students and teachers alike.” (Birdsall & Patterson,

2009)

One critical challenge found in Peters' (2013) research on Waldorf teachers and stress management/job satisfaction was that if a Waldorf teacher had a strong personal initiative, this "sustainable source of action" was dependent upon staffing and organizational structure being fulfilled within a school, as well as cooperation between colleagues. Stress management, as a component of self-care, and job satisfaction were dependent upon the structural conditions of the school. Teachers expressed difficulty "moving forward" as a group. They also experienced stress from the "paralyzing of individual initiative" and encountered problems when there was a lack of "willingness to change." Day (2012) posits that without organizational support, bringing a passionate and resilient self to teaching every day is stressful to the body, heart and soul. With support and a positive school environment, teachers will be able to maintain the commitment and optimism that they entered the profession with. Lastly, he posits that the support of colleagues and school leadership will aid in sustaining a healthy state of well-being. Aside from personal factors, support responses in the survey also varied because no Waldorf school is exactly alike in its structure and governance, finances or policy, ethos or stage of development. This wide range of variability makes it difficult to determine, specifically what support teachers need.

Job Satisfaction and Intent to Sustain a Career

Job satisfaction may also be a key factor in the 75% who report they will sustain a career in Waldorf education. It's of notable interest to look at investigations of job satisfaction in relation to the intrinsic rewards of teaching, the principles and inner attitudes of teachers, and professional life phase.

Jepson and Forrest (2006) found that the strong negative relationship between occupational commitment and perceived stress suggests that this individual factor may

moderate the impact of job stressors, thus it may act as a buffer against the heavy workload that Waldorf teachers experience. This is one possible explanation for the mixed responses in those who said, 'Yes' they felt they would sustain a career, yet their comments reflected a sense of doubt to sustainability or dissatisfaction attributed to schedule, workload, stress, and finances. With the responses to whether or not they felt they would sustain a career in Waldorf education, one could interpret the question and the findings in many ways.

In this study, finances, role overload, lack of time, parents, colleagues and administration seem to provide the majority of challenges one faces both emotionally and logistically. These extrinsic factors have also been found by Perriochine et al (2009) to influence job dissatisfaction. Perriochine et al found a nuance of dissatisfaction issues among 'satisfied' teachers that were extrinsic in nature for both the profession (e.g., role overload, low salary, and parent support) and the job of teaching (e.g., role overload, student behavior, and large class size). They also found that intrinsic factors were the main cause for job satisfaction and that satisfaction with the profession of teaching—not the job of teaching—determined retention. This is of significance because the current study on self-care did not investigate intrinsic factors, nor ways in which teachers were satisfied with teaching, to better understand the question of intent to continue teaching. Intrinsic factors such as self-efficacy, personal autonomy,

In interpreting respondents feelings of sustaining a career, a sense of commitment or job satisfaction could also be due to control over decisions in classroom and school, the personal development and spiritual growth, as well as self-efficacy through years of teaching (most participants have taught for 9-16 years). These are factors that have either been attributed to higher levels of job satisfaction or lower stress levels (Day, 2012; Perriochine, 2009; Peters, 2013). Having control of the decision making in one's classroom and the

flexibility to artistically create your own curriculum may very well be a strong factor in Waldorf teacher's job satisfaction and thus commitment to the profession. Peter's (2013) found that the inner attitude or principle of personal responsibility contributed to job satisfaction more than workload or stress. "For individual responsibility to come into expression through appropriate actions, individual initiatives must have the freedom to adopt their own forms... flexibility in choice of subjects and contents is indispensable."

Peter's findings on job satisfaction also showed that on the micro level, teachers' individual responsibility played out through a conscious self-awareness of their contribution to the challenging situation and accepting the consequences. This was referred to in one's decision to commit to the profession of a Waldorf teacher (mirrored in this study's response: "*Waldorf is a lifestyle but one I choose and enjoy*"). This aspect of individual responsibility is dependent upon constant reflection and re-actualizing. Teachers had to continually re-visit their own choice to teach in a Waldorf school and to their commitment to the "whole thing." It could very well be that many of the 75% who intent to remain teaching have a strong inner commitment and personal responsibility for choosing this profession, one which they hold themselves accountable for and thus focus on the intrinsic rewards of teaching more than the personal or environmental stressors.

Another possible factor contributing to the large percentage of teachers who feel they will sustain a career in Waldorf is the professional life phase, or years of teaching experience, of the majority of the sample population who participated in the survey. Day (2012) has researched how professional life phases of teachers influence their resiliency and well-being, and found that in the 8-23 year teaching phase, teachers are more strongly committed than both earlier phases (0-7 years) and later phases (24+ years). Day found that those in the earlier phase are susceptible to reduced sense of efficacy but have a sustaining

commitment, and that commitment is more likely to decline with those in the later phase. In the current study, 50% of participants are in the middle professional life phase (9-24 years), which was found to have ‘sustaining commitment despite challenging characteristics in teaching.’ However, as previously mentioned, it has been found that a large percentage (upwards of 46%) teachers leave the teaching profession within the first three to five years (Ingersoll, 2003; American Federation of Teachers, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Jalongo & Heider, 2006). These factors of intrinsic motivation, personal responsibility, professional life phases and experience, as well as overall support (including personal and professional) raise the question of resiliency and vulnerability. Who are the most vulnerable teachers and how do schools set up an infrastructure to identify needs and adequately support them?

Limitations

While there are several flaws within the design and implementation of this virtual pilot study, the greatest limitation is the population sample size, which totaled 48 completed surveys – hardly representative of the all the teachers at the over 100 independent Waldorf schools in the U.S. The study is, therefore, biased because of the limited response of the participants, which are not representative of all demographics. By sending the initial invitation letter to contacts at only seven chosen schools, most without high schools, the return rate was low (43 surveys). To capture at least 50 survey responses, the researcher broadened the population to a wide sampling of Waldorf schools. Though the researcher’s intention was to narrow the population to only certified teachers at established schools, in the end, a handful of participants were from unknown schools, of which might have been pioneering or less established schools, affecting survey answers (albeit a limited amount). As

a result of the limitations listed above, the study was fundamentally flawed from a quantitative standpoint. Other limitations associated with population are the regions in the country from which the schools were taken, which includes only one: the West. This study also excludes charter Waldorf schools, which comprise a growing number of schools in the movement.

The other flaw with the study, considered in Chapter Three, is that only one survey was administered, half of the data on self-care practices is retrospective. This means that the researcher cannot be sure that the teacher's report of what their self-care habits were for exercise, sleep, nutrition and inner development are accurate. Besides memory, recollection and responses are subject to the factors of individual biography, personal bias, variations in work and personal circumstances or events that occurred between the lapse of time.

Ideally, the study would have included supplemental interviews of Waldorf teachers to glean an even more in-depth perspective of the topic by garnering more qualitative data. The survey itself lacked certain questions that, in retrospect, the researcher wished it had included. These include measurements of stress, burnout, or coping, utilizing a legitimized tool of measurement or test, as well as other health-related questions including but not limited to: Body weight, drinking, substance use (alcohol/drugs), doctor visits and health insurance, other self-care practices, demands of different grade levels and mentoring. Much was not captured in terms of *why* and *who*.

Though small in size, reflecting more of a pilot study, the researcher was able to identify trends in self-care and the support needs of teachers, which will inform future research.

Implications for Waldorf Teachers Well-Being and Sustainability

“An educational system which is merely focused on revitalizing the past will, never come to address the

challenges of the future.” (Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners)

Although the aspects described above did impose many limitations on the findings and interpretations of the results, much insight has been gained into the degree of maintained or neglected self-care, as well as the perspectives of support, needs and impact that the Waldorf teaching profession has upon one’s lifestyle. This study’s implications for the Waldorf movement will be summarized in the paragraphs below.

As a society our eating habits, leisure habits, connections with family/relationships and work/life balance have all changed drastically due to our fast-paced lifestyles. When looking at the demands of mainstream teachers, and Waldorf teachers, one has to take into account society’s changes over the decades. The infiltration of media, consumerism, and the challenges that society faces, the teacher also faces – individually, as well as every day in the classroom with their students. Schools and teachers are continually looking at meeting the students changing needs in our modern times and the researcher believes that they also continually look at improvement of practices, organization and leadership as schools develop and face changes or challenges.

The researcher feels that this study created as many questions, or more, as it sought to answer and it is evident that a myriad of aspects of Waldorf teaching profession need to be explored. It’s also evident that some teachers need and desire to improve certain aspects of self-care, especially sleep and exercise, without which teachers will be more susceptible to strain, fatigue, stress and burnout.

Support will never cease to be needed by teachers. It would behoove schools to re-evaluate teachers’ changing needs and adapt for a more future-oriented sense of well-being, if not for retention, then for factors such as resiliency, effectiveness, passion, and enthusiasm. These have been found to help teachers motivate students and increase student

commitment, and they are the tenets of a Waldorf teacher that Steiner empathically indicated. What, of Steiner's vision and ideals for education, is not serving teachers anymore and what can still be maintained? Creating support requires a close examination of the macro or organizational components that are in place at schools including: leadership and defining roles; peer support; mentoring programs; healthy, honest and compassionate communication; meeting or evaluation policies; stress and time management skills; and coping skills, among others

School ethos and culture play a huge role in our expectations of the movement, of each other and of ourselves. Though the stigma of workload and schedule may be found across most Waldorf schools, no two schools are identical and each present their unique benefits and problems. Several participants stated similar comments of feeling very supported at their school. Contrasting to that, several expressed similar comments of low morale – from support, from lack of job security. These themes make very apparent how different schools create different internal atmospheres and schools, as well as teachers, cope with their stressors in different ways. Because school environment varies, so will support. Both the environmental and individual factors will contribute to some teachers being stronger or more resilient when faced with the demands and challenges of teaching, while others will be weaker. This brings up the implication of teacher vulnerability.

Who are the most vulnerable in the teaching profession, or in a school, and how do we support them for the wellbeing of a faculty, a community and most importantly, the students? As the survey revealed, the Waldorf teaching profession may not be sustainable for many people, due to workload, stress, demands and finances. Assessing resources, and identifying needs and coping skills will elucidate who is the most vulnerable within this specific profession. A last implication is that teachers need a voice, which is why further

research on their stories, experiences and struggles would contribute to better understanding the compromises made in being a Waldorf teacher and the needs of teachers, which directly influence the students in their classroom.

Implications for Future Directions

This study, though small in population size and limited, expanded the research on the effects of Waldorf education upon those who play a primary role in the movement: the teachers. Information found in this study could aid Waldorf schools, especially administrators and teachers, as well as teacher training centers in North America. While the topic of this study is not a new conversation within the movement, the research conducted by this survey had the purposeful intention of bringing this topic to the forefront of research on Waldorf teachers, as it deserves attention for the health of all human beings involved in a school community. Recommendations for future research on Waldorf teachers' self-care, and the profession at large, are limitless as there are only a handful that have been conducted. The researcher feels that this is an urgent topic and some of the directions in which one could take this topic are listed below.

First, it would be necessary to replicate this survey topic with a much larger, more diversified and representative population of Waldorf teachers across the United States. As it is, the findings of this study cannot be generalized and thus findings need to be confirmed or negated. Also, supplementing a survey with personal interviews would capture more narratives of the Waldorf teaching profession and glean a wider and more accurate perspective on the larger issues at hand. A longitudinal study would also be recommended in order to capture the changes in teachers' self-care, demands or stress levels over the course of a longer period of time (one year, for example).

As it's evident that support is essential to a teacher in many ways, a longitudinal study

or action based research on implementing supporting infrastructure such as stress management or time management programs, mentoring programs/peer support, new policy for meetings or looping lower and upper grades would document success and shortcomings of these initiatives.

Other topics worthy of exploring would be specifically measuring stress levels, burnout, demands and resources or coping skills, using qualified tools of measurement such as Maslach Burnout Inventory, Classroom Appraisal of Resources and Demands, or a Personal Wellbeing Index. Expanding self-care and the former topics to charter Waldorf Schools would impact a much larger population of those who could benefit from findings. This would also offer insight as to the comparisons of stress levels, burnout coping and job satisfaction between public and Waldorf (independent) schools, as it has been proven that Waldorf schools and mainstream schools can have a mutually shared learning from each other (Woods, et al, 2005).

Dovetailing off of those topics, it would be especially interesting to research retention, or attrition (though difficult to capture), within Waldorf schools in North America. One could investigate why teachers stay or how they sustain a career until 'retirement', looking at environmental and personal/behavioral factors. A more thorough investigation of professional life phases, much like Day (2012) researched, would include the three phases of early (0-7 years of experience), middle (8-23 years) and late (24+ years). Looking at commitment, passion, work/life balance, self-care and job satisfaction specifically with these three groups would help address issues of mentoring and vulnerability.

Lastly, research on how teachers' wellbeing, and teacher turnover, effects students or classes would contribute greatly to the Waldorf movement as understanding this adds to the body of research on Waldorf teachers' imperative role in shaping the development of the

child.

The information that I obtained from this study will hopefully spark courage within school faculties and administration, as well as within teacher training centers, towards conversation in supporting holistic well-being for sustainability of teachers and communities. Of course, each school is a unique being and will be served by different solutions. This study offered Waldorf teachers a voice to express their needs and concerns, with insight into how they perceive their own health, struggles and successes in balance, ability to manage and cope with workload and a glimpse into factors affecting retention/attrition. All of the aforementioned themes deserve further research within the Waldorf movement and the researcher is deeply grateful for the honest and thoughtful responses from teachers in this pioneering study.

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Instruments of Measure

APPENDIX A: Letter of Consent

Dear Waldorf Teachers,

I am conducting research for a Masters thesis in Waldorf education through Rudolf Steiner College, to be completed in Spring of 2013. This research will not only contribute to further the accreditation of this institution, but more importantly, it will ultimately further the Waldorf movement towards health, balance and sustainability of Waldorf *teachers*.

All who stand before a class of students as a Waldorf teacher have found themselves there by a calling to serve. This service is paramount for the healing and renewal of education and for the seeds of humanity to continue to be sown.

I want to know how Waldorf teachers heal and renew themselves?

I am seeking to discover where the ‘self’ of the Waldorf teacher stands in well-being and caretaking. The purpose of this research is to discover the current state of self-care of certified Waldorf teachers. A survey of 19 multiple-choice questions and 11 open-ended questions will be anonymously and confidentially administered and collected online. Commitment to the study is complete when the survey is answered to the participant’s satisfaction. Inquiries of self-care practices are distinguished by four categories: Nutrition, Sleep, Exercise and Inner Development.

Waldorf teachers strive out of their highest self to meet the ideals of Steiner's philosophy of education. Modern life meets us with the realities of our time: stress, time-management, relationships, and the seemingly never-ending preparation to meet the students guided by us. Where are the teacher's needs being met if one is serving students, parents, colleagues, school communities, and spouses or children? What message are we giving students, to whom we set the example of human striving for a balanced life, by our own self-care practices?

What stands at the intersection of our ideals for the future and the reality of teaching currently in the 21st Century?

What will sustain a Waldorf teacher throughout his or her vocation in teaching? Is it possible to challenge the legacy of self-sacrifice in order to strengthen ourselves as teachers through self-care?

What ails thee?

Your participation in this research - the first research to be done in the Waldorf movement on self-care of the teacher – is manifold: Further research will be possible to explore a deeper understanding and renewal of this important topic, one that can seem paradoxical. From this, teacher training programs, school communities and individuals will have the opportunity to develop their full potential, gaining valuable insight for health and balance. Your awareness of this topic and status of your own self-care will broaden out of a self-reflective process. Sharing your own experiences, of both the light and the dark of Waldorf education, is an invaluable resource to yourself and others in this journey of teaching.

I thank you in advance for your voluntary participation in this controversial, yet profoundly needed study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call my advisors: Robert Hickman, Ph.D. (916) --- ---- or William Bento, Ph.D., (916) 961-8727 ext. 145

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lauren Struckmeyer

APPENDIX B: Survey Items: Waldorf Teachers' Self-Care

Self-care of Waldorf teachers : A survey of certified Waldorf teachers, early childhood through high school, at five North American Waldorf schools.

To be sent out in Fall 2012

Please fill out the following questions to the best of your ability

1. Age 22-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, 60-70
2. Male or female (check one)
3. Current Salary \$20-30K, \$31-40K, \$41-50K, \$51-60K
4. Grade you currently teach (blank box)
5. Grades you have taught in the past (i.e Early childhood, Grades, High School)
6. Marital status: Single / Married / Divorced / In-relationship (check one)
7. Children: Yes / No (check one) If yes, how many (blank box)
8. *When* did you receive your Waldorf teacher training? (blank box)
9. *Where* did you receive your Waldorf teacher training? (blank box)
10. How many years have you taught in a school as a certified Waldorf teacher?

Patterns of self-care

BEFORE TEACHING

1. Before becoming a Waldorf teacher, what describes your physical exercise:
 - running
 - walking

- hiking
- biking
- pilates
- yoga
- dance
- exercise classes
- Weight lifting
- Other (rowing, kickboxing, mountain climbing, etc) (comment box)

2. How often did you participate in these physical activities:

- Daily
- Whenever able to
- Specific routine
- Every other day
- Weekly
- Weekends or on outdoor excursions

3. Before becoming a Waldorf teacher, how many average **nightly hours** of sleep did you get:

- Less than 5 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 6-7 hours
- 7-8 hours
- Over 8 hours

4. Before becoming a Waldorf teacher what were your **eating habits** per week:

- Ate most meals at home
- Ate some meals at home, some take out
- Ate most meals take out
- Ate regularly at restaurants
- Skipped meals rarely
- Skipped meals often
- Ate power bars and snack items for meals rarely
- Ate power bars and snack items for meals often

a. Before becoming a Waldorf teacher, what was your **caffeine** intake **per day**.

- None
- Herbal tea / Matte / Chai
- Black Tea (1-3 cups)
- Black Tea (more than 3 cups)
- Coffee (1-3 cups)
- Coffee (more than 3 cups)
- Caffeine pills

- Other forms of natural energy (dandelion tea, chia seeds)
- b.* Before becoming a Waldorf teacher, did you smoke cigarettes?
- Yes
 - No
- c.* If yes, how many cigarettes per day?
- 1-5
 - 6 or more
- d.* Before becoming a Waldorf teacher, the following describes your inner development (spiritual) activities:
- Meditation
 - Praying
 - Attending a church or spiritual center
 - Reading spiritual literature
 - Journaling
 - Conferences/classes
 - Other (Yoga, travel)

Patterns of self-care

AFTER TEACHING

- e.* As a Waldorf teacher today, which describes your physical exercise:
- running
 - walking
 - hiking
 - biking
 - pilates
 - yoga
 - dance
 - gym classes
 - Weight lifting
 - Other (rowing, kickboxing, mountain climbing, etc)
- f.* How often do you participate in these physical activities:
- Daily
 - Whenever able to

- Specific routine
- Every other day
- Weekly
- Weekends or on outdoor excursions

11. As a Waldorf teacher today, how many average **nightly hours** of sleep do you get:

- Less than 5 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 6-7 hours
- 7-8 hours
- Over 8 hours

12. As a Waldorf teacher, do you tend to get more sleep on the weekends?

- Yes
- No
- Same/no different

13. During the school week, what time do you prefer to go to bed?

- 8-9 pm
- 9-10 pm
- 10-11 pm
- 11-12 pm
- 12-1 am

14. How often does this happen?

- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Regularly
- Never

4. As a Waldorf teacher today, what are your **eating habits** per week:

- Eat most meals at home
- Eat some meals at home, some take out
- Eat most meals take out
- Eat regularly at restaurants
- Skip meals rarely
- Skip meals often
- Eat power bars and snack items for meals rarely

- Eat power bars and snack items for meals often

g. As a Waldorf teacher today, what is your **caffeine** intake **per day**.

- None
- Herbal tea / Matte / Chai
- Black Tea (1-3 cups)
- Black Tea (more than 3 cups)
- Coffee (1-3 cups)
- Coffee (more than 3 cups)
- Caffeine pills
- Other forms of natural energy (dandelion tea, chia seeds)

h. As a Waldorf teacher, do you smoke cigarettes?

- Yes
- No

i. If yes, how many cigarettes per day?

- 1-5
- 6 or more

j. As a Waldorf teacher, the following describes your inner development (spiritual) activities:

- Meditation
- Praying
- Attending a church or spiritual center
- Reading spiritual literature
- Journaling
- Conferences/classes
- Other (Yoga, travel)

1. Has becoming a Waldorf teacher affected your home life?

Yes

No

Please explain

2. Has becoming a Waldorf teacher affected your parenting?

Yes

No
Please explain

3. Reflecting on your self-care practice, is there something you would like to change about it?

4. What would be your priorities starting next year if you wanted to change your self-care practice?
Rank them 1-4 with 1 being top priority.

Exercise, Sleep, Nutrition, Inner Development

6. What support would you need to achieve your desired level of self-care?

Please describe with specific examples:

Support needed from your family

Support needed from your colleagues

Support needed from your school administration

Support needed from your teacher training program

7. With your current self care habits, do you feel you will sustain a career in Waldorf education until you retire?

Yes

No

Please explain

