

Professional Isolation and the Public School Music Teacher

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“If we want to support each other’s inner lives, we must remember a simple truth: the human soul does not want to be fixed, it wants simply to be seen and heard.”

Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*

ABSTRACT

Teacher isolation has been studied within general education for many years, beginning with *Schoolteacher* by Dan Lortie (1975). A review of the music education literature found no research that examines issues of professional isolation among public school music teachers.

In this investigation, one hundred randomly selected Illinois public school music teachers were asked to respond to a series of statements designed to determine to what extent public school music teachers feel professional isolation and to discover its causes. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale. Additional space was provided for open-ended comments. The survey was mailed to music teachers from around the state of Illinois, randomly selected from the total population of public school music teachers in Illinois.

Data analysis revealed statistical significance between years of teaching experience and specific likely causes of feelings of professional isolation. These results and suggestions for future research are presented as an initial step toward enhancing the current state of knowledge about this important aspect of the music teaching experience.

Introduction

Research issues often emerge from personal experiences. This article begins with a personal account, taken from teaching practice of one of the present authors (L.S.)

When I began teaching at Roosevelt Middle School of the Arts in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I was supported by mentors and colleagues, fellow teachers and administrators, all of whom welcomed my questions, provided encouragement, and support. This support was, naturally, invaluable. I felt fortunate, as I knew of other teachers who felt isolated.

When I moved to another district, I again had the opportunity to interact and connect with colleagues. Unfortunately, these opportunities became less and less frequent as a result of changing schools, administrators, and colleagues. Gradually, I became aware of a feeling of isolation I had not experienced before. As I talked with teachers in other districts, I learned that professional isolation was not uncommon for music teachers, particularly instrumental music educators at the elementary level. This isolation caused tremendous personal frustration for me, and became something about which I wondered (Sindberg, 2003).

Within general education, the topic of professional isolation has been well documented. Many authors state that the school structure perpetuates professional isolation, restricting the possibilities for teachers to observe and interact with one another (Calabrese, 1986; Flinders, 1988; Gaikwood & Brantley, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Robert, 1973). Others cite scheduling as a cause of professional isolation (Lieberman & Miller, 1992; Lortie, 1975,). As a result of professional isolation, “it is not unusual for teachers to feel that no one really cares about their work.” (Eisner,1992). Our interest in this topic grew as we began to think more about the person who teaches and how the individuality of the teacher is often set aside in the interest of teaching content and technique. Parker Palmer describes the teaching environment:

When we walk into our workplace, the classroom, we close the door on our colleagues. When we emerge, we rarely talk about what happened or what

needs to happen next, for we have no shared experience to talk about. Then, instead of calling this the isolationism it is and trying to overcome it, we claim it as a virtue called “academic freedom”: my classroom is my castle, and the sovereigns of other fiefdoms are not welcome here (Palmer, 1998, p.88).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which public school music teachers express feelings of professional isolation in their school setting and to determine possible causes of these feelings, as reported by teachers.

This study addresses two primary research questions, with additional sub-questions. The first main question is: Do public school music teachers experience professional isolation? Related sub-questions include: What are the effects of professional isolation on teachers? What are the differences, if any, between music teachers with varying levels of teaching experience and in different school contexts?

The second question addressed causes of isolation: What do music teachers report as being the causes of professional isolation? In relation to the primary research question, we also queried: Does isolation appear to be related to the subject they teach?

Hypothesis

At the outset of this investigation, we hypothesized that public school music teachers do experience professional isolation, although this may occur to varying degrees among individual teachers. Our prediction was that a significant number of respondents

would report some level of professional isolation, and that there would be some indication that isolation was related to the subject they teach.

In addition to the anecdotal work of Parker Palmer (1998), others have articulated the problem of teacher isolation. Richard DuFour (1999) says that teacher isolation is a major obstacle and prohibits schools from functioning as a professional learning community. Professional isolation has also been found to contribute to occupational stress in teachers (Dussault, Deaulin, Royer, & Loiselle, 1999).

Background

In reviewing the literature on professional isolation, the literature can be grouped according to three categories: theoretical examinations of the problem of isolation, empirical studies describing teachers' experiences of isolation, and studies that examine ways to solve the problem. The literature reviewed in this paper consists primarily of theoretical and case study research and uncovered no scholarly articles written specifically about professional isolation in *music* education. We begin by presenting studies that examine the problem of isolation.

In 1975, Dan Lortie published *Schoolteacher*. This book describes Lortie's sociological study, concluding that the organization and structure of schools perpetuate teacher isolation. His work continues to be cited consistently in studies related to the working conditions and environments of teachers. Lortie's seminal work is generally credited with introducing the concept of teacher isolation, and is often cited in scholarly articles related to isolation.

What is isolation? How has it been defined? Professional isolation, in general, has been defined as the "feeling experienced by teachers that no one cares about them or

what they do” (Robert, 1973, p.4). Lortie (1975) described three different types of isolation: “egg-crate” isolation, psychological isolation, and adaptive isolation. *Egg crate isolation* refers to the physical separateness of classrooms, where teachers have little contact with other teachers. Students and teacher enter the classroom, and the door is closed. *Psychological isolation* has to do with how teachers perceive collegial interactions. *Adaptive isolation* refers to the overwhelming feelings when attempting to meet new demands.

David Flinders (1988) seeks to critically examine the nature of teacher isolation. He states that the existence of professional isolation presents two paradoxes. First, classrooms are full of students, but teachers have few opportunities to discuss their work with peers. The second paradox is that teachers may view their classrooms as both a barrier to interaction and a means of protection from outside interference. Flinders includes a case study in which he examined pairs of teachers and their interactions with one another, in order to illustrate the nature of teacher isolation.

There are different perceptions about what constitutes isolation, contributing to its inherent complexity, causes, and the level to which it is perceived as a problem. According to Gaikwad & Brantely (1982), teachers have different perspectives assigned to isolation. For example, “what one group of teachers regard as isolation may be termed by others as individual autonomy” (p.15). The different perceptions of isolation further complicate our ability to understand it in various settings.

Calabrese (1986), DuFour (1999), and Lieberman & Miller (1984) have discussed the paradox of isolation—that is, feeling alone while in the midst of activity. Unlike other professions, teaching does not typically provide an experience that is shared with peers.

For teachers, primary feedback comes from the children they teach, not their colleagues. “For most teachers in most schools teaching is indeed a lonely enterprise. With so many people engaged in so common a mission in so compact a space and time, it is perhaps the greatest irony—that so much is carried on in self-imposed and professionally sanctioned isolation” (Lieberman & Miller, 1992, p.11).

A second category of literature reviewed for this study consisted of studies that document teachers’ experiences of isolation (Aiken, 2001; Dussault et al., 1999; Forsyth & Hoy, 1978; Smith & Scott, 1990; Zielenski & Hoy, 1983). While most of the studies presented in this literature review are empirical, Zielenski and Hoy conducted an experimental study that examined isolation and alienation in elementary schools. The authors based their study on previous research examining both the objective and subjective elements of isolation and alienation. Their findings showed that there is a high level of isolation and alienation in the elementary school setting (Zielenski & Hoy, 1983).

One particularly poignant case study was reported by Akin (2001). The author describes feelings of overwhelming isolation due to the lack of opportunities to engage in meaningful conversation with colleagues.

Learning as a process is an idea that is painfully neglected in my own growth as a teacher. This idea of process gets ignored in the teacher-proof curricula we are asked to use. In order to survive we must often pretend we know exactly what we are doing. And when asked to make improvements, we are simply expected to incorporate new techniques. I’m brought to my knees again and again under the weight of the purposeful, non-acknowledgement of

my own status as a learner. This is a burden under which I feel voiceless, unable to even think straight (Akin, 2001, p.10).

The isolated conditions in which teachers practice prohibits professional growth by making it difficult for teachers to exchange ideas and places teachers in a position in which their primary mode of learning successful teaching techniques is through trial and error (Smith & Scott, 1990). Furthermore, many researchers use a subjective measure of isolation, describing the extent to which group members feel they are estranged or isolated (Forsyth & Hoy, 1978). In their examination of isolation, Forsyth & Hoy found that teachers favored interaction with “respected coworkers” than with those in authority.

The third category of literature reviewed for this study was studies that examine ways to solve the problem. Several studies have looked at solutions to problems associated with isolation. One study sought to reduce isolation beginning with the student teaching experience. Frieberg, Waxman & Houston (1987) hypothesized that, by providing student teachers opportunities to engage in collegial conversations, the patterns of professional isolation might be eliminated. Rogers and Babinski (2002) reported the results of a project in which they formed collegial groups for new teachers, hoping to reduce the level of professional isolation. Their findings indicated that these New Teacher Groups did, in fact, help participating teachers alleviate some of their frustration and lessen feelings of isolation.

The existence of isolation has been a commonly accepted notion within the context of teaching, and there have been efforts to solve the problem. Teachers work in a culture of isolation, and opportunities to engage in meaningful professional dialogue are rare in the schools (Rogers & Babinski, 2002). Teachers are isolated in their classrooms

with little opportunity for interaction with colleagues (Thompson & Hamilton, 1991).

Thompson and Hamilton also point out that isolation is a particularly troubling situation for new teachers. Not always having mentors, new teachers are left in their classrooms to figure things out for themselves. This situation was also discussed by Rogers and Babinski (2002), who found that, unlike other professions, new teachers are often expected to perform the same tasks at the same level as veteran teachers.

The use of collaboration as a means of reducing professional isolation has been studied and is one of the more commonly discussed solutions. The “Professional Circle” was one model that sought to reduce isolation through the development of a collaborative group of teachers (Mycue, 2001). Teachers who participated in the “Professional Circle” indicated that their feelings of isolation were lessened. The study suggested that the Professional Circle provided a useful model to help teachers in their professional development. Dana (1993) sought to change the school culture from one of isolation to one of collegiality, by supporting teacher-initiated change through a collaborative research project.

Technology has been used as a solution to professional isolation among teachers. In one case study (Thompson & Hamilton, 1991), electronic communication systems were used by beginning teachers, allowing them to communicate with each other as well as experienced teachers and university faculty.

The preceding review of literature reveals several important findings. First, it provides evidence of the existence of isolation among teachers. Second, it discusses a variety of ways in which several authors have examined the various causes of isolation as

well as ways in which to deal with it. Finally, the literature reveals a lack of information regarding music education and isolation, which supports the need for the present study.

Design and Method

This empirical investigation utilizes a post-test only design, based on survey responses. Public school music teachers were invited to complete a survey comprised of a group of statements related to professional isolation. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Teachers were also invited to comment and explain their responses, some of which will be referred to herein.

Participating teachers were randomly selected from over 4000 names of public school music teachers provided by the Illinois State Board of Education. From that population, 100 teachers were randomly selected. The response rate was 36% (N=36). Survey instruments and consent forms were mailed to each teacher selected and a second mailing was sent, approximately four weeks later, to those teachers who had not responded to the initial request. In order to keep individual subject responses confidential, each survey was coded with an identification number.

The range of teaching experience present in the sample was one year to forty-five years. School types included urban, suburban, and rural. A pilot study was conducted prior to mailing the surveys. The purpose of the pilot was to determine the appropriateness and reliability of the survey items. As a result of the pilot study, minor improvements were made to the survey prior to data collection. Data were collected via postal mail. One participant responded via email, but this data set was incomplete so was excluded from consideration. Response data were entered into a computer using SPSS, a

statistical analysis program. Several respondents also included additional – sometimes extensive – notes with their returned surveys, confirming that the topic of professional isolation is important to many practicing music teachers.

Results

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of teaching experience and school setting on the teachers' sense of isolation and its causes, based on the survey responses of the 36 music teachers referenced above. Participants were divided into three groups according to their level of teaching experience (Group 1: 1-10 years, n=12; Group 2: 11-18 years, n=11; Group 3: more than 18 years, n=12). The second independent variable distinguished various school settings: urban (n=8), rural (n=15), and suburban (n=12). The same ANOVA procedure was applied to data collected for each of the seven responses related to isolation: existence of isolation, sense of isolation from other music teachers, isolation due to the location of music classrooms within the school building, isolation related to subject matter, isolation caused by scheduling, isolation caused by lack of administrative support, and the belief that isolation has a negative effect on teaching.

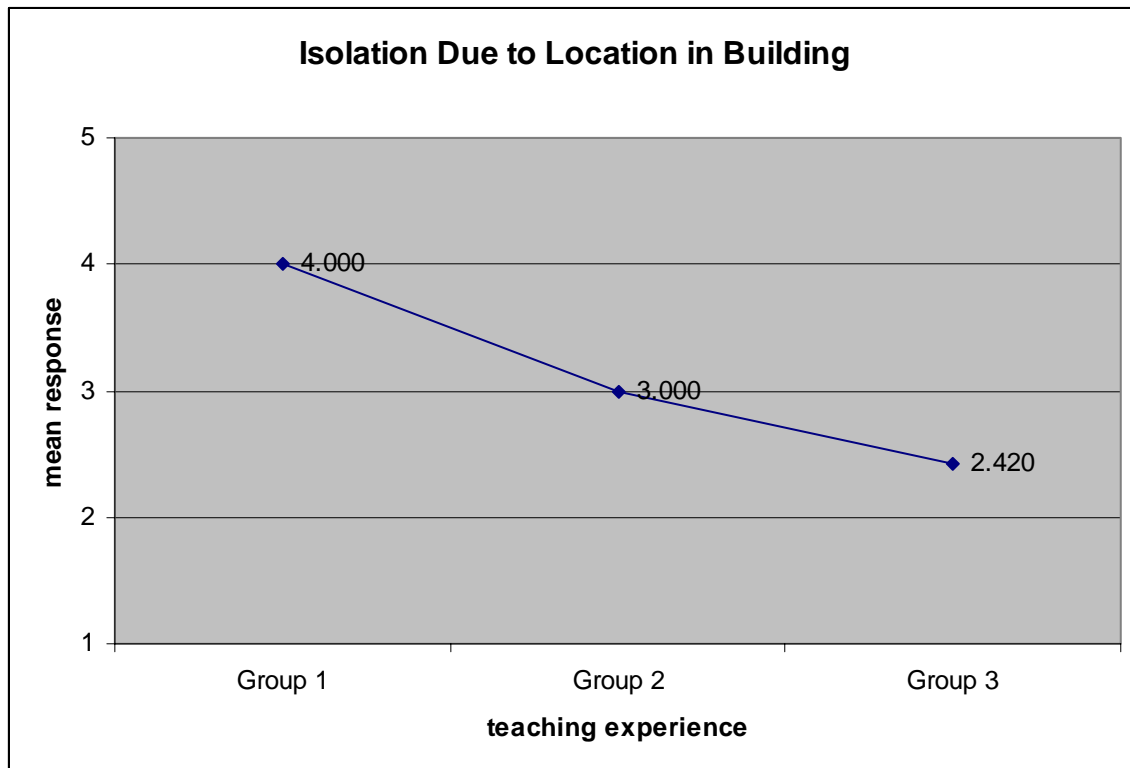
Several very interesting differences emerged from the data analysis. The questionnaire originally contained twelve items. Seven were selected for data analysis. This was decided on the basis of the research questions—as we reviewed those questions and compared them with the survey items, we selected those that were particularly related to the teachers' feelings related to issues of isolation. The following discussion will address only three of the seven questionnaire items; those for which the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference. All seven items are listed below, using an italicized

font to identify the three for which teacher responses provided evidence of a statistically significant difference between groups:

- I believe that professional isolation exists in my building.
- *I feel isolated from other teachers in my building.*
- I feel isolated from other music teachers.
- *I believe professional isolation is related to the subject I teach.*
- Scheduling has an impact on my level of professional isolation.
- I believe lack of administrative support contributes to causing professional isolation.
- *I believe professional isolation has a negative effect on my teaching.*

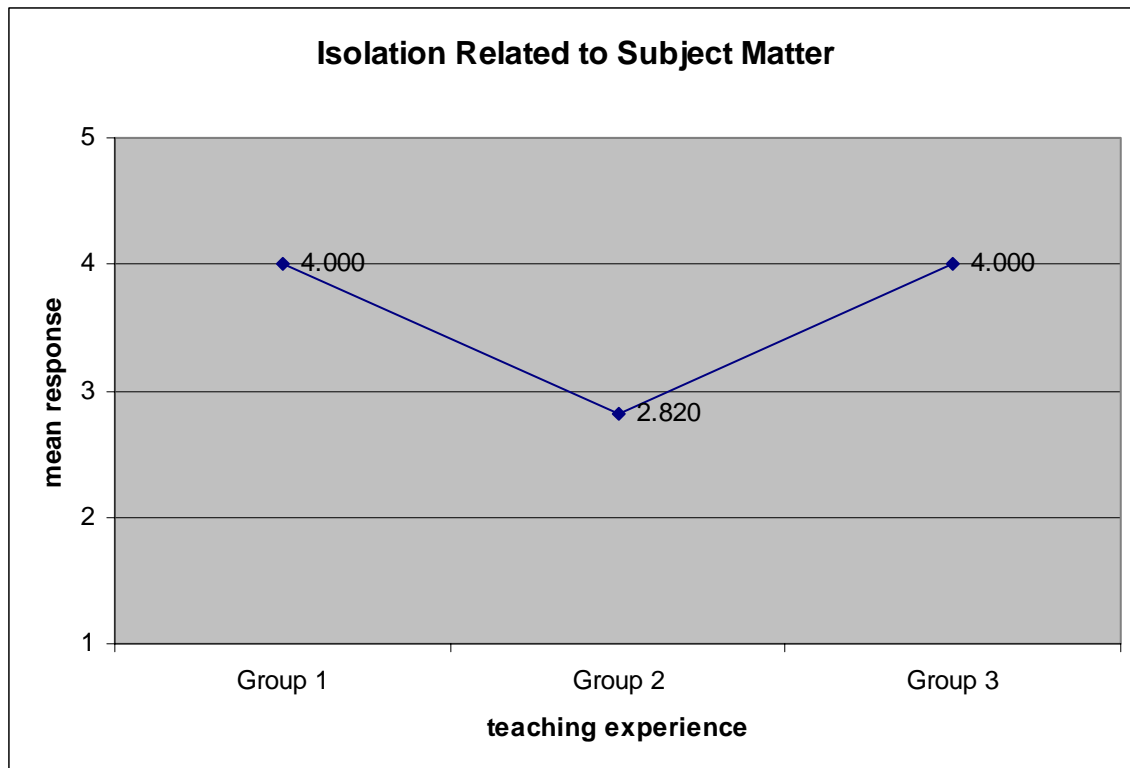
As shown in Figure 1, the impact of location of the music classroom within the school building varied significantly based on the level of teaching experience [$F_{(2,26)}=3.986, p=.031$]. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey honestly significant difference (HSD) test indicated that the mean score for Group 1 ($M=4.00, SD=1.128$) was significantly different from the mean score for Group 3 ($M=2.42, SD=1.165$). The mean response for Group 2 ($M=3.00, SD=1.183$) did not vary significantly from either Group 1 or Group 3. The main effect for school setting [$F_{(2,26)}=1.439, p=.255$] and the interaction effect [$F_{(4,26)}=1.245, p=.317$] did not reach statistical significance.

Figure 1. Graph illustrating the significant difference between groups in their response to the impact of location within the building upon the sense of isolation.



A statistically significant main effect also emerged from responses related to the influence of subject matter upon the sense of isolation. There was, once again, a statistically significant main effect for the level of teaching experience [$F_{(2,26)}=3.700$, $p=.039$]. In this case, however, Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons indicated that the mean response for Group 2 ($M=2.82$, $SD=1.250$) was significantly different from both Group 1 ($M=4.00$, $SD=1.206$) and Group 3 ($M=4.00$, $SD=.426$). There was not a significant difference between the latter two groups. The main effect for school setting [$F_{(2,26)}=1.615$, $p=.218$] and the interaction effect [$F_{(4,26)}=.699$, $p=.599$] were not determined to be statistically significant.

Figure 2. Graph illustrating the significant difference between groups in their response to the impact of subject matter upon the sense of isolation.



Finally, a significant difference emerged from the responses related to whether or not isolation exerts a negative impact on the teaching experience. Yet again, the main effect for level of teaching experience proved to be the sole statistically significant factor [$F_{(2,26)}=4.321, p=.024$]. The Tukey HSD test revealed that only the difference between the mean for Group 1 ($M=3.58, SD=1.379$) and Group 2 ($M=1.82, SD=.603$) was significant. The mean for Group 3 ($M=2.92, SD=1.165$) did not differ significantly from either of the less experienced groups. As in the previous two results discussed, neither the main effect for school setting [$F_{(2,26)}=.391, p=.680$] nor the interaction effect [$F_{(4,26)}=1.328, p=.286$] were determined to be statistically significant.

Figure 3. Graph illustrating the significant difference between groups in their response to whether or not isolation has a negative impact upon the teaching experience.

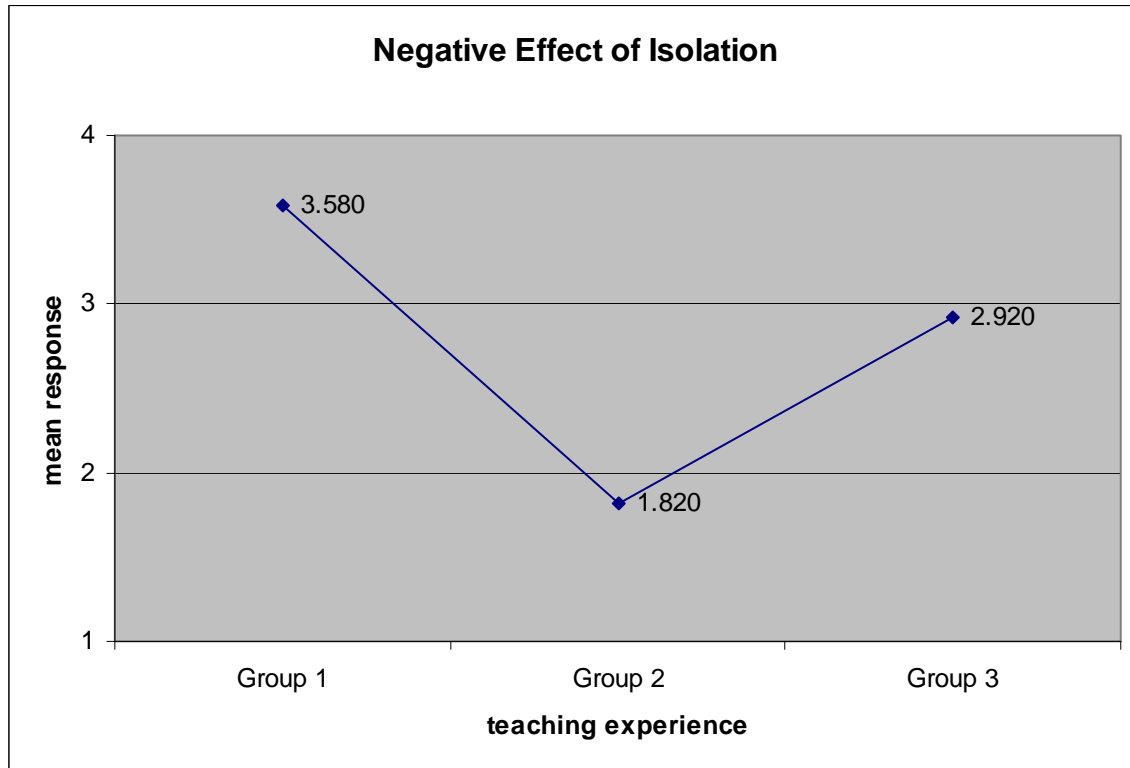


Table 1. Results of statistical analysis; bold-face text and asterisks identify statistically significant differences between groups based on the amount of teaching experience.

<u>Survey item</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>StDev</u>	<u>F ratio & p-value</u>
item #1	low exp	3.50	1.446	F=.260 ($p=.773$)
	med exp	3.27	1.272	
	high exp	2.92	1.311	
item #2	low exp	3.08	1.443	F=2.171 ($p=.134$)
	med exp	1.82	1.168	
	high exp	2.92	1.676	
item #3	low exp	4.00	1.128	F=3.986 ($p=.031$)*
	med exp	3.00	1.183	
	high exp	2.42	1.165	
item #4	low exp	4.00	1.206	F=3.700 ($p=.039$)*
	med exp	2.82	1.250	
	high exp	4.00	.426	

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item #5	low exp	3.83	1.115	F=2.313 ($p=.119$)
	med exp	3.09	1.375	
	high exp	3.92	1.084	
item #6	low exp	3.08	1.621	F=.485 ($p=.621$)
	med exp	2.82	1.250	
	high exp	3.08	1.621	
item #7	low exp	3.58	1.379	F=4.321 ($p=.024$)*
	med exp	1.82	0.603	
	high exp	2.92	1.165	

Discussion

Professional isolation is a reality for many public school music teachers, as evident from the results of the present study. The existence of isolation in general education is supported by others (Flinders, 1988; Lortie, 1975; Zielinski & Hoy, 1983). Responses to the survey item related to building isolation indicate that teachers with one to ten years of teaching experience feel a higher level of isolation than teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience. Responses to the survey item related to subject matter as an influence upon their sense of isolation indicate that teachers with 11-18 years of teaching experience respond in a way that is significantly different (i.e. feel less isolated) from the responses of teachers with more or less experience. Finally, according to responses related to the negative impact of isolation, a significant difference was found between teachers with one to ten years of teaching experience (feel more isolated) and teachers with 11-18 years of teaching experience (feel less isolated). It is not surprising that the less experienced teachers consistently feel the greatest sense of isolation when one considers the unique challenges associated with entering the profession. New teachers are likely to be more vulnerable to feeling isolated than their veteran

counterparts. According to Thompson & Hamilton (1991), explain that new teachers are often left to solve problems on their own, without the support of mentors.

Figure 1 indicates that teachers with one to ten years of teaching experience feel a higher level of isolation than teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience. This is not surprising when one considers the unique challenges associated with entering the profession. New teachers are likely to be more vulnerable to feeling isolated than their veteran counterparts. Figure 2 indicates that teachers with 11-18 years of teaching experience express a significant difference with regard to the influence of subject matter upon the sense of isolation. According to Figure 3, a significant difference was found between teachers with one to ten years of teaching experience, and teachers with 11-18 years of teaching experience, when responding to statements about the negative effects of isolation.

A teacher with three years of music teaching experience commented on isolation within the school building, which led to additional comments regarding this teacher's work. *"We have a weekly staff meeting. Unfortunately, I have yet to attend a meeting that directly concerns music or my curriculum. The music teachers in my district have tremendous and varied gifts. Sharing these gifts would only have a positive effect. The frustration of not being allowed this weighs heavily on my mind."*

Why do the teachers in the mid-range group, 11-18 years of music teaching experience, appear to feel the least amount of professional isolation this be so? Perhaps teachers in this group are established and feel confident in their work. Perhaps they are so immersed in their work as to not look outside their classrooms to a larger community. Perhaps their lives outside the classroom are full, to the extent that these teachers neither

seek nor need a community within their school. Perhaps they accept isolation as a working condition, as one teacher with 14 years of teaching experience indicates: “*I’m used to it and still strive to do my best.*”

The teachers with the most experience indicate feelings of isolation in relation to factors of subject matter. “*The music area is far away from other classrooms, and the music staff travels to other buildings*” (25-year teacher). It seems very possible that isolation is closely connected to the atmosphere of the school, such as administrative practices and philosophy, as well as trust.

We have seen, in this study, evidence that isolation exists for some music teachers, as described by the responses of this survey. This reinforces evidence presented in the literature, including the work of Dana(1993) and Lieberman & Miller (1992), who describe a longstanding culture of isolation that separates teachers from one another—a culture which calls for increased opportunities for collaborative conversations. The literature also includes solutions to addressing problems of isolation (Frieberg, Waxman & Houston, 1987; Mycue, 2001; Rogers & Babinski, 2002). Some of these studies addressed specific populations such as student teachers (Freiberg, Waxman & Houston, 1987) while others employ different means, such as collegial discussion groups (Mycue, 2001; Rogers & Babinski, 2002). These solutions suggest possibilities that may be replicated in music education.

Summary and Conclusions

The results of the literature review indicate that professional isolation is intertwined with other aspects of the working conditions of teachers. While some research indicates that collaboration is one answer to professional isolation, other

research indicates that the issue is more complex and cannot be solved by collaboration alone. In addition, the existing body of research is located outside music education. Personal experience reveals that music teachers are often not included in collaborative groups, the most common permutation of which is the “team.”

Does professional isolation have an impact on the music experience for the students? For the teachers? The findings of this study suggest that a significant difference exists between teachers of various years of experience. It also suggests three additional findings. First, public school music teachers feel isolated in their building; second, isolation is often related to the subject (in this case, music); and third, isolation has a negative effect on teaching.

This study was a descriptive investigation. However, because the sample was randomized, the group of Illinois music teachers provides a model that allows the data to be generalized to the population of public school music teachers in Illinois, though a higher response rate would provide a more reliable data set and should be one of the primary goals for future investigations into this topic.

A review of the comments included in the surveys suggests that some teachers prefer to work alone and are not concerned with isolation or alienation. Other teachers indicated a preference for interaction with others, wanting to interact with colleagues but having no opportunity to do so. The comments gathered in this study invite additional analysis, and is currently in process. The comments included in this study are representative of those provided by participants. It is possible that teachers prefer to have some choice regarding their desire to interact with colleagues and in what context. Results of the present study have shown that professional isolation is perceived

differently among different teachers. Some of this appears to be related to years of teaching experience, but additional research will be required to determine the extent to which other factors influence the sense of isolation and attitudes toward this condition.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are several possibilities for further study of issues related to music teacher isolation. A more rigorous study of professional isolation specifically focusing on the public school music teacher is desperately needed. Because there has not been sufficient study of this issue to conclude its existence or possible causes - much less how it might be remedied if shown it exists - more study is needed to establish a body of literature upon which to base our knowledge. Revision of the survey instrument used for the present study might be warranted, constructing questions or statements with greater precision and effectiveness.

Based upon the findings of a significant difference between teaching experience groups, further investigation could be conducted, honing in on specific causes that were determined to be significantly different between groups in the context of the present study: building isolation, feelings of isolation as related to the subject, and the effects of isolation on one's teaching. Additional case study research could examine the individual differences among teachers who experience feelings of professional isolation. These differences may include teachers who travel to multiple buildings, teacher specializations, such as choral, general, or instrumental music, and idiosyncracies of the school community.

A review of the additional comments provided by some teacher participants revealed a variety of viewpoints concerning the nature of professional isolation. Some

teachers consider it a personal choice, some viewed it as a natural condition of music teaching, and some felt deep sadness at being cutoff from meaningful dialogue with colleagues. These varying perceptions of isolation have been described by Gaikwad & Brantley (1992), who concluded that isolation is not a uniform phenomenon. Therefore, a second recommendation would be to carefully examine the qualitative data gathered in this study to gain a deeper understanding of professional isolation in the lives of teachers.

It is not so easy to categorize isolation according to years of teaching experience, school configuration, type, or other “box.” It is important to realize and acknowledge the unique experiences and stories of the persons who teach, and remember that, when one teacher feels isolated, the school community (in whatever form that takes), needs to tend to that individual.

To conclude this research study, we pass the torch back to the very teachers from whom we learned so much as a result of the present investigation, including extended comments from two music teacher participants. Each participant had two years of teaching experience, but very different perceptions of professional isolation and their work. The statements below provide further support for the value of collecting varied data for investigations related to educational situations and professional isolation, in particular.

Participant Comment #1

I think that, as with any job, you are only as isolated as you let yourself be. I do have a very supportive principal who thinks the arts are very important. But regardless, if you want to get involved, there's no excuse. People shouldn't blame “isolation” if they're not involved—they should look at the whole situation and see how they can make it better.

Participant Comment #2

I have taught in two rural school districts in central Illinois. In both cases, I have been treated like a babysitter. At my first job, I was responsible for music pre-K-12 plus JH study skills. It was terrible. I was never treated like an equal. I left that job after a year and came to this school hoping for a fresh start. I found the same problem again, however. This time I had to take on the library without anyone to help or mentor me.

I will be leaving music education after this year, due to the stress and isolation I have felt these past three years. I wanted to teach in a small school because that is the background that I came from. Now my feelings are that all small schools should consolidate. My friends that teach in the Chicago suburbs have had a wonderful first 3 years. They work with several teachers and have regular meetings with just the music department. It seems to be a lot different than my situation where I'm all alone all the time.

It makes me very sad that I am burned out after only 3 years. My friends tell me to come up north and get a "good" job. I wish I could, but I'm burned out from being an outsider and I don't have the energy to try again next year.

I would like to thank you for doing a study in this area of music education. I do believe that there is a terrible problem with music teachers being isolated from the rest of the professionals in the building. I honestly believe that if I could have had at least one person there for support and to talk about the profession with, I might not be leaving after this year. I'll be very interested to see what you find.

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