



2019

## A STUDY OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN CLINICAL MUSIC THERAPY

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A STUDY OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT  
IN CLINICAL MUSIC THERAPY

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Music in the  
College of Fine Arts  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Christopher Allen Kelley

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Olivia Yinger, Associate Professor of Music Therapy

Lexington, Kentucky

2019

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### A STUDY OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN CLINICAL MUSIC THERAPY

Music therapy has been an established health profession for over 60 years serving a diverse population in different settings. Researchers studied the effects of burnout, career longevity, job satisfaction, and workforce analysis of clinical music therapy; however, no studies exist on the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment in clinical music therapy. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment in clinical music therapy.

Participants who completed an anonymous online survey ( $n = 1,240$ ) were board-certified music therapists who provided information on their current employment status. Results showed that the prevalence of unemployment among the participants was 5.78%, and prevalence of underemployment was 15.6%. Music therapists with more than 15 years of experience were more likely to work full-time than music therapists with 15 or fewer years of experience. Music therapists over 40 were no more likely to work full-time than music therapists who were 39 or younger. Implications for music therapy practice are discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** Music Therapy, Unemployment, Underemployment, Employment

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1/22/2019

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A STUDY OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT  
IN CLINICAL MUSIC THERAPY

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The prospect of finding the first job in music therapy appears exciting for most music therapists. Some music therapists will receive a job from their internship site, and others will find a job within a month after completing their board certification. However, some music therapists will search for several months and sometimes up to a year for their first job. Murakami (2012) shared her struggle with unemployment and seeking a music therapy job shortly after the completion of her board certification exam. She was unable to locate statistics on unemployment in music therapy.

Underemployment is another factor that affects individuals who are seeking to work full-time hours. Underemployment is a term coined in the early nineteenth century, but since then, few studies have been conducted to understand the effects of underemployment (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). Though music therapists who complete the annual workforce analysis conducted by the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) report how many hours they work per week (AMTA, 2017), no study could be found reporting how many part-time music therapists desire full-time hours.

In the early 1960s, the National Association for Music Therapy (NAMT) conducted two surveys of the current members where the results from one question provided data on unemployed music therapists (Michel, 1965). McGinty (1980) surveyed registered and non-registered music therapists mainly about salary and employee benefits; however, one question in the survey asked if the participants' degree of employment. Since McGinty's survey, no further research has been conducted on the degree of employment in music therapy.

## Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the following operational definitions.

*Clinical music therapy* describes the practice of music therapy as direct care to client/patients in either individual or group setting. Some music therapists teach music therapy in an academic setting, however, the researcher focused on music therapists working in clinical settings. After completing the board certification exam, most music therapists go into clinical settings for work.

*Involuntary part-time employment* describes a person working 33 hours or less who desire to work full-time; yet who, due to economic slack and business cutbacks, is unable to find full-time work (Dunn, 2018).

*Voluntary part-time employment* describes a person working 33 hours or less without the desire to work full-time hours (Dunn, 2018).

*Underemployment* is defined as “the condition in which people in a labor force are employed at less than full-time” (Underemployment, n.d., para. 1). Although Merriam-Webster also considers members of the labor force who are overly qualified for the current job as underemployed, the present study focused solely on whether workers had full-time or less than full-time work.

*Music Therapy* is “the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program” (AMTA, 2017, para 1).

## **Purpose**

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment among clinical music therapists. Research questions included:

1. What is the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy?
2. Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and years of experience among music therapists?
3. Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and age range among music therapists?

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **History of the Music Therapy Profession**

Physicians and various authors since the ancient Greeks have documented the role of music in healing (Byers, 2016). In 1789, an anonymous article published in *Columbian Magazine* identified music as a therapeutic process in regulating emotions (Davis, Gfeller, & Thaut, 2008). During the Great Depression, the U.S. government established the Works Progress Administration, which helped to hire and train unemployed musicians to play in hospitals and correctional facilities (Byers, 2016; Davis, 2003). Byers (2016) stated that even though earlier pioneers attempted to establish music therapy in the early 1900s, the music therapy profession is considered to have begun during World War II in the United States Army (p. 17). The U.S. Army established the Reconditioning Program that utilized music to address the physical and mental conditions of wounded military personnel (Byers, 2016; Rorke, 1996). Shortly after World War II, 122 Veterans Administration Hospitals employed music specialists who worked with other medical personnel (Rorke, 1996).

With the increased need for clinical music therapy, the National Association for Music Therapy (NAMT) formed in the 1950s to establish by-laws, educational and clinical training curriculum, and the registered music therapist designation (Byers, 2016). In 1971, the American Association for Music Therapy (AAMT) formed with similar purposes as NAMT but with differences in philosophy, education, and approach (AMTA, n.d.-a). The Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) formed in 1983 with the purpose of maintaining certification and recertification requirements for the current music

therapy practice (AMTA, n.d.-a). In 1998, NAMT merged with the American Association for Music Therapy to become the American Music Therapy Association, which is now the single largest music therapy association in the world (AMTA, n.d.-a).

As the effectiveness of music therapy became recognized, music therapists began working with other populations. According to Byers, by the 1960s “music therapists worked in a variety of settings, including mental health facilities, day treatment programs, general hospitals, and private music studios” (2016, p. 39). Music therapists began providing services in educational settings as the government passed legislation in the 1960s to provide fair education to individuals with intellectual disabilities (Byers, 2016).

### **Career in Music Therapy**

When interested in a music therapy degree, students often inquire about the viability of the music therapy career, and according to Lacy and Hadsell (2003), “It is important that accurate information about the prospects for generating one’s livelihood as a music therapist be known” (p. 110). Students are often concerned about job availability and salaries (Lacy & Hadsell, 2003). Researchers have investigated music therapists’ salaries (Cotter, 1965; Braswell, Maranto, & Decuir, 1979; Silverman, et al., 2013), career longevity (Braswell, et al., 1979; Decuir & Vega, 2010), job satisfaction (Braswell, Decuir, & Jacobs, 1989), and burnout (Clements-Cortes, 2013), but no information could be found exploring music therapists’ employment status.

Since 1998, the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) has compiled a workforce analysis of the music therapy profession, in which music therapists provided information on various factors such as: salary ranges by region, clients served, and

weekly hours worked (AMTA, 2017). Each year in the workforce analysis, AMTA also reports music therapy jobs added and lost, and between 1998 and 2009, 761 jobs were created and 161 jobs were terminated (Silverman, et al., 2013).

In 2017, AMTA's workforce analysis reported 10 music therapy positions eliminated, 12 positions resigned, and 98 new positions created within the previous year; however, the report analyzed positions with full-time employment status, which AMTA defined as at least 34 working hours per week (AMTA, 2017). Since these data did not include the results of part-time positions, the picture is unclear regarding job growth. Furthermore, AMTA's report did not define what "eliminated" means. Did the music therapist become unemployed due to the eliminated position? AMTA's report did not provide information about the prevalence of unemployment within the music therapy field.

AMTA (2017) reported that out of 1,246 total respondents, 43% worked part-time, which is 33 hours or less. Of those part-time employees, 35% worked between one and nine hours per week (AMTA, 2017, p 10). This report is valuable; however, the report did not offer reasons why music therapists work part-time hours.

Though the workforce analysis provides meaningful data, the survey response rate is a small percentage. In the 2017 workforce analysis, AMTA received 1,477 responses out of an estimated 10,000 potential respondents. AMTA noted that some of the respondents include students, interns, and retirees (2017, p. 8). Therefore, the data should be interpreted carefully as it represents a small sample size of practicing music therapists.



The data provided by the AMTA workforce analysis does not provide information about underemployment in the field of music therapy. The present study considered underemployment as part-time work, which is further divided into voluntary and involuntary. Involuntary part-time employment describes a person working 33 hours or less though wanting to work full-time; however, due to economic slack and business cutbacks, a person is unable to find full-time work (Dunn, 2018; Feldman, 1990). Voluntary part-time employment describes a person working 33 hours or less without the desire to work full-time hours (Dunn, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to determine the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment in the music therapy field since there has not been a significant study on the subject. Analysis of part-time employment will determine reasons for working part-time as well as reasons for working volunteer hours. Research questions included:

1. What is the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy?
2. Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and years of experience among music therapists?
3. Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and age range among music therapists?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

Prior to conducting this research study, the researcher submitted an exemption for approval to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Kentucky. The researcher sought an exemption due to the use of a survey with no identifying information and no more than minimal risk posed to research participants. The researcher received an exemption from IRB approval prior to conducting the study (See Appendix A).

#### **Participants**

The researcher contacted board certified music therapists within the 50 United States who opted to receive emails from the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) to ask them to participate in this survey ( $N = 7,023$ ). The researcher received automated replies from ten emails stating the participant was out of the office and would not return until after the survey period ended. This resulted in 7,013 possible participants, and 1,270 music therapists responded to the online survey.

#### **Instrumentation**

##### **Survey**

The researcher designed the survey tool used in this study, which was comprised of five main components: demographic information, music therapy employment, music therapy work experience, actively searching employment, and no longer searching employment. Though the survey consisted of 73 questions total, participants did not answer all questions. Using the branching logic function through REDCap, the survey

directed participants to specific questions based on their answers. Therefore, the length of time to complete the survey ranged from five to fifteen minutes.

### **Demographic Information**

The survey began with five multiple-choice questions regarding participants' gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and affiliated music therapy region. The participants had the choice to specify "other" responses that were not initially included in the answers (see Appendix B).

### **Music Therapy Employment**

The second section of the survey included one multiple-choice question regarding when participants received their first clinical music therapy job upon completing the music therapy board certification exam. Using the branching logic function through REDCap, the participants' answer determined which section of the survey was to be completed next. For example, if the participants chose "still actively searching," then the online survey directed them to answer the questions in the "actively searching" component only (see Appendix C).

### **Music Therapy Work Experience**

If the participants chose answer one through six in the "music therapy employment" section (see Appendix C), then the online survey directed them to the "music therapy work experience" section. The section included twenty-two questions about participants' current employment status, unemployment experiences, number of working hours, and factors when seeking employment (see Appendix D).

### **Actively Searching Employment**

If the participants chose answer seven in the “music therapy employment” section (see Appendix C), then the online survey directed them to the “actively searching employment” section. The section included nineteen questions about participants’ length of time actively searching employment, means of searching for employment, and determining factors when searching for employments (see Appendix E).

### **No Longer Searching Employment**

If the participants chose answer eight in the “music therapy employment” section (see Appendix C), then the online survey directed them to the “no longer searching employment” section. The section included four questions about participants’ reason for no longer searching employment in the field of music therapy, length of searching employment before stopping, resources used to search employment, and advice for future music therapists (see Appendix F).

### **Procedure**

The researcher bought and obtained email addresses from the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) for all board-certified music therapists practicing within the United States who opted to receive emails ( $N = 7,023$ ). A cover letter explaining the nature of the study, purpose, instructions, and consent of the participant was included as the first page in every survey invitation (see Appendix G). The researcher considered a survey as complete if the participant completed the demographic information section, the music therapy employment section, and one of the following sections: music therapy work experience, actively searching employment, or no longer searching employment. Participants were encouraged to answer every question truthfully but were allowed to

skip questions if preferred. There were 1,270 participants who submitted the survey, of which 1,240 completed the entire survey.

The researcher published the REDCap survey online for a three-week window to all participating emails on the CBMT list. Two weeks after the initial invitation, REDCap sent out an automated reminder email to potential participants who have not already participated in the survey. The REDCap survey closed after three weeks and collected no additional data. REDCap saved all surveys using a non-identifying format. The REDCap account was password protected and only accessible by the researcher.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

In this study, the researcher used a survey to examine the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy. Music therapists ( $N = 7,023$ ) were asked to participate in the study via email. Ten emails returned to the research by an automated reply stating that the participant was out of the office, and the date of their return was after the survey period ended. This resulted in 7,013 possible participants. During the three-week window, 1,270 music therapists responded to the survey, however, only 1,240 completed the survey as 30 participants began the survey but did not finish. Since the researcher allowed participants to skip questions, the number of participants ( $n$ ) may differ from question to question. Results are based on the total number of participants who answered each question.

#### **Demographic Information**

##### **Gender, Age, and Ethnicity**

Of the 1,238 participants who reported gender, 87.4% identified as female and 11% identified as male. The remaining 1.7% identified as either transgender male, gender queer, gender non-conforming, self-identify, or declined to state (see Figure 1).

No one reported as identifying as transgender female.

Out of 1,239 participants who reported age, 484 (39.1%) reported fitting into the age range of 20-29 years, eight participants (0.6%) reported age  $>70$  years, and no one reported falling into the age range  $< 20$  (see Figure 2).

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	136	11.0
Female	1082	87.4
Transgender Male	2	.2
Gender Queer	6	.5
Gender non-conforming	1	.1
Self-identify	4	.3
Decline to state	7	.6
Total	1238	100.0

Figure 1: Gender Identity of Music Therapists

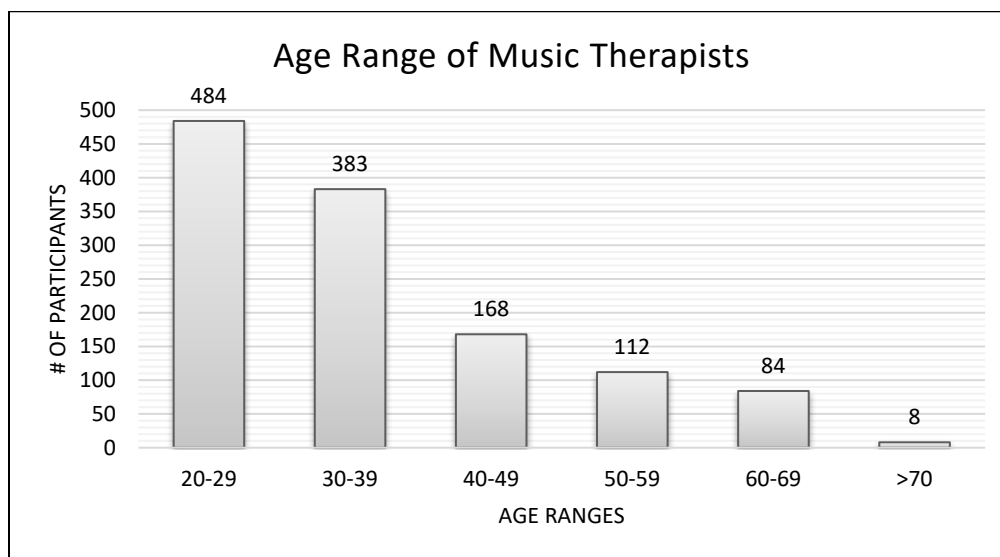


Figure 2: Age Range of Music Therapists

The majority of participants ( $N = 1,232$ ) reported their ethnicity as Caucasian/White ( $n = 1,108$ ; 89.9%) followed by Hispanic/Latino/Spanish ( $n = 38$ ; 3.1%), Asian/Asian American ( $n = 32$ ; 2.6%), Multiracial ( $n = 32$ ; 2.6%), Black/African American ( $n = 18$ ; 1.5%), Pacific Islander ( $n = 1$ ; 0.1%), and Other ( $n = 3$ ; 0.2%) (see Figure 3).

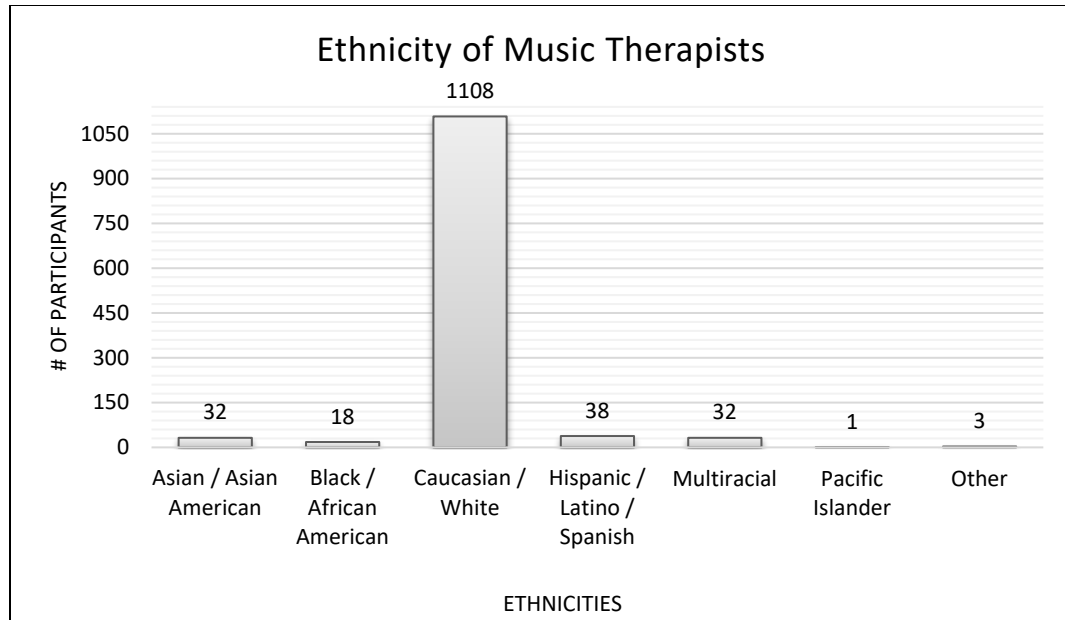


Figure 3: Ethnicity of Music Therapists

### Education and Regional Affiliation

A bachelor's degree was identified as the most common highest level of education for participants ( $n = 622$ ; 50.3%) followed by master's degree ( $n = 566$ ; 45.7%) and doctoral degree ( $n = 49$ ; 4.0%). Of the 1,238 participants who indicated an AMTA regional affiliation, 24.6% reported the Great Lakes region ( $n = 304$ ), 23.2% reported the mid-Atlantic region ( $n = 287$ ), 15.9% reported the Southeastern region ( $n = 197$ ), 11.8% reported the Western region ( $n = 146$ ), 10.3% reported the Midwestern region ( $n = 127$ ), 8.9% reported the Southwestern region ( $n = 110$ ), and 5.4% reported the New England region ( $n = 67$ ) (see Figure 4).



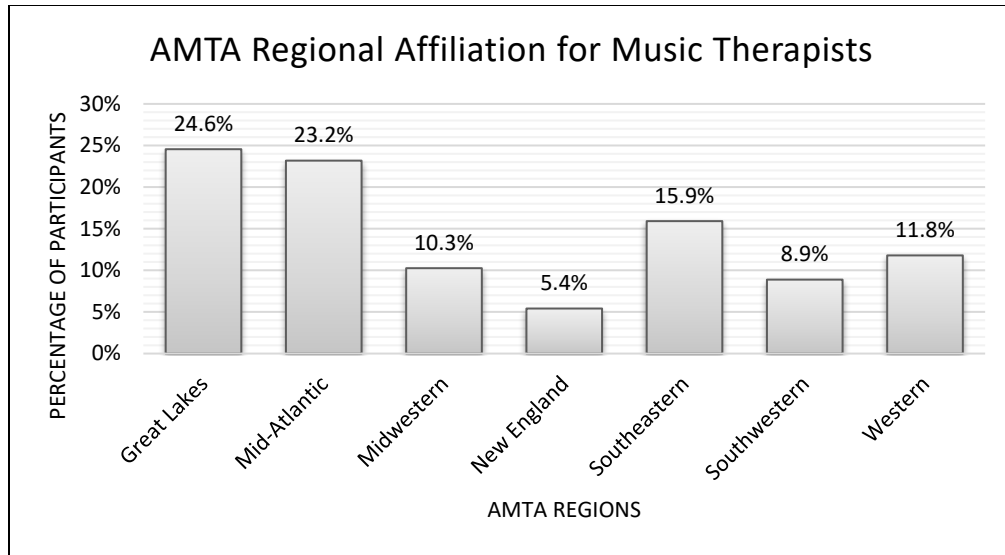


Figure 4: AMTA Regional Affiliations

### Music Therapy Employment

After the demographic questions, participants answered how soon they began working in a clinical music therapy position after completing the music therapy board certification exam. Of the 1,240 participants, many ( $n=563$ ; 45.4%) reported obtaining a clinical music therapy position before taking the music therapy board certification exam, while 438 participants (35.3%) reported obtaining a position within six months of completing the board certification exam. Fewer participants reported obtaining a position within seven to twelve months ( $n = 91$ , 7.3%), one to two years ( $n = 61$ , 4.9%), three to five years ( $n = 29$ , 2.3%), or six or more years ( $n = 10$ , 0.8%). Several participants ( $n = 28$ , 2.3%) reported still actively searching for a music therapy position, and 20 participants reported no longer searching for a music therapy position (1.6%) (see Figure 5).

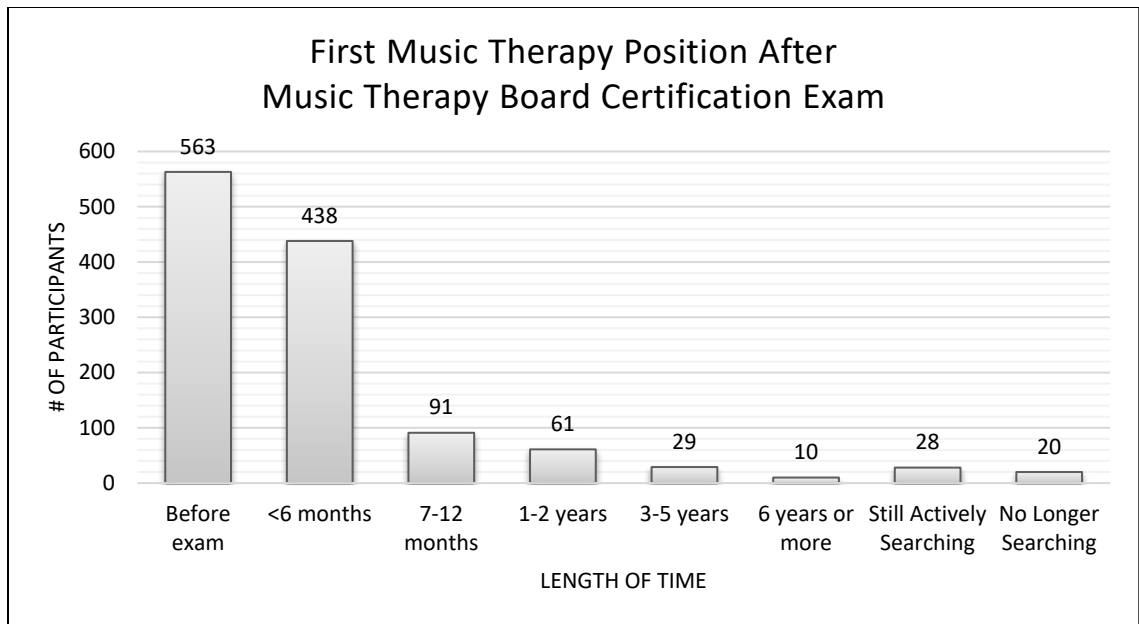


Figure 5: First Music Therapy Position

### Music Therapy Work Experience

Participants who reported obtaining a clinical music therapy position ( $n = 1,192$ ) answered questions in the music therapy work experience part of the survey. Since the researcher allowed participants to skip questions, the number of participants ( $n$ ) may differ from question to question.

### Years of Experience and Weekly Hours

Many participants ( $n = 457$ ; 38.5%) reported having one to five years of experience. Of the 1,186 participants, 10% reported less than one year of experience ( $n = 119$ ), 20.3% reported six to ten years ( $n = 241$ ), 11.9% reported eleven to fifteen years ( $n = 141$ ), 6% reported sixteen to twenty years ( $n = 71$ ), 5% reported twenty-one to twenty-five years ( $n = 59$ ), 3% reported twenty-six to thirty years ( $n = 36$ ), and 5.2% reported thirty or more years ( $n = 62$ ) (see Figure 6).

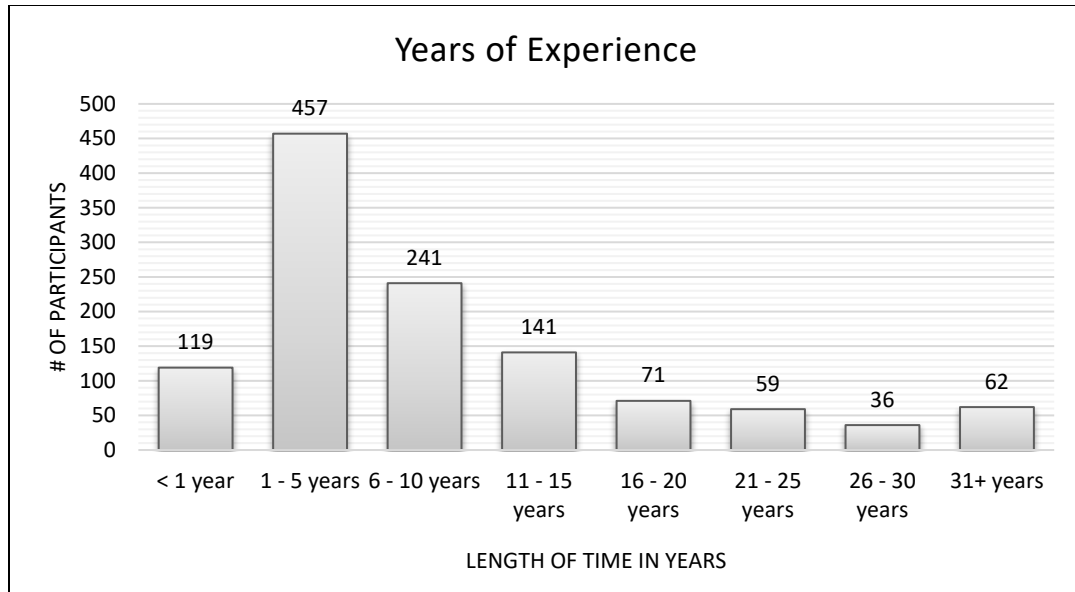


Figure 6: Years of Experience

Participants reported their weekly working hours, with the majority working 34 or more hours per week ( $n = 835$ ; 71.1%). Of the 1,174 participants, 84 reported working one to eight hours per week (7.2%), 77 reported working nine to sixteen hours per week (6.6%), 91 reported working seventeen to twenty-four hours per week (7.8%), and 87 reported working twenty-five to thirty-three hours per week (7.4%) (see Figure 7).

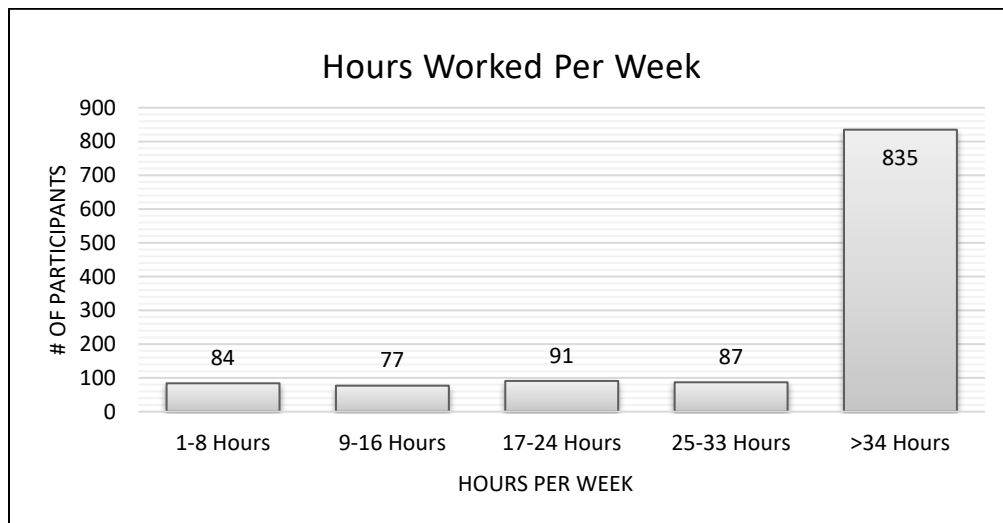


Figure 7: Hours Worked Per Week

## Voluntary and Involuntary Part-Time

Of the 339 participants who reported working part-time hours (33 hours or less per week), 150 reported working voluntary part-time hours (44.2%), 183 reported working involuntary part-time hours (54%), and six participants did not report the reason for working part-time hours (1.8%).

Participants working voluntary part-time hours ( $n = 150$ ) reported the following reasons: starting/raising a family ( $n = 60$ ), secondary source of income ( $n = 39$ ), health related issues ( $n = 7$ ), working two jobs ( $n = 41$ ), and other ( $n = 56$ ) (see Table 1). Of the participants who reported ‘other,’ 17 reported earning masters or doctoral degree while working, six reported driving, documenting, and planning took up most of their time during the week, four reported being semi-retired, four reported starting a new private practice, three reported being financially stable and not requiring more working hours, and two reported a second job as a part-time musician. One participant reported working voluntary part-time hours due to burnout.

*Table 1*  
Reasons for Voluntary Part-time

	Starting / Raising a Family	Secondary Source of Income	Health Related Issues	Working Two Jobs	Other
# of Participants	60	39	7	41	56

Participants working involuntary part-time hours ( $n = 183$ ) reported the following reasons: lack of funding for full-time position ( $n = 95$ ), trial period for new music therapy position ( $n = 19$ ), job listings for part-time hours ( $n = 80$ ), did not know why ( $n = 5$ ), and other ( $n = 77$ ) (see Table 2). Though 77 participants reported ‘other,’ only three provided

further explanation. Two participants reported “lack of clients” as a reason, and one reported, “It was the only position available.”

*Table 2*  
Reasons for Involuntary Part-time

	Lack of Funding for Full-Time Position	Trial Period for New Music Therapy Position	Job Listings for Part-Time Hours	I Don't Know	Other
# of Participants	95	19	80	5	77

### **Actively Searching Employment**

#### **Length of Time Seeking Employment**

Of the 28 participants who were actively searching employment in clinical music therapy, 14 reported searching for less than six months. Five participants reported searching between 7 to 11 months, five reported searching between 1 to 2 years, and four reported searching for 3 or more years.

#### **Employment While Searching and Volunteer**

Twenty-two participants reported having employment in a field other than music therapy while still actively searching for employment in music therapy. Six participants reported not having employment in a field other than music therapy. Of the 28 participants, seven reported volunteering music therapy services without pay, while 21 participants reported not volunteering music therapy services.

### **No Longer Searching Employment**

#### **Length of Time Seeking Employment**

Of the 20 participants who are no longer seeking employment in clinical music therapy, five (25%) reported seeking employment for less than 6 months before seeking

employment in another field, three (15%) reported seeking employment for 7 to 11 months, five (25%) reported seeking employment for 1 to 2 years, and seven (35%) reported seeking employment for 3 or more years. Participants' reasons for no longer seeking employment in clinical music therapy ranged from changed fields, could not find music therapy jobs in the area, became a stay-at-home parent, and music therapy jobs did not pay well.

### **Research Question 1**

*What is the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy?*

#### **Unemployment**

At the time of the survey, 34 participants reported being unemployed after holding a clinical music therapy position, and 28 participants reported still actively searching for their first clinical music therapy position. The total number of unemployed music therapist in the present study was 62 (34 currently unemployed participants plus 28 still actively searching participants). When asked about experiencing unemployment, 1,072 participants reported either currently experiencing unemployment, have experienced unemployment, or have not experienced unemployment. The researcher calculated prevalence by dividing the number of unemployed music therapists by the total sample size. Therefore, the prevalence of unemployed music therapists within this study was 5.78% (62 divided by 1,072, which equals .0578).

#### **Underemployment**

The American Music Therapy Association defined full-time employment as at least 34 hours per week (AMTA, 2017). For this study, the researcher defined

involuntary underemployment as an individual working 33 hours or less per week who desires to work full-time. Participants, who identified as voluntary part-time employees, were not included as underemployed since the participants chose not to seek full-time hours. Out of 1,174 participants who reported weekly working hours, 183 reported working involuntary part-time hours. The researcher calculated the prevalence by dividing the number of underemployed participants by the total sample size. Therefore, the prevalence of underemployed participants within this study was 15.6% (183 divided by 1,174, which equals .1558).

### **Research Question 2**

*Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and years of experience among music therapists?*

To analyze a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and years of experience among music therapists, the researcher grouped years of experience into two categories (between 0 to 15 years of experience and between 16 to 30 years of experience) and grouped weekly working hours into two categories (part-time hours and full-time hours). The researcher conducted a chi-square test to compare the proportions observed. The proportion of music therapists (90.1%) who have less than 15 years of experience and work part-time hours was significantly higher than the proportion of music therapists (83.4%) who have less than 15 years of experience and work full-time hours (Cramer's  $V = .086, p < .05$ ).

The proportion of music therapists (16.6%) who have 16 to 30 years of experience and work full-time hours was significantly higher than the proportion of music therapists

(9.9%) who have 16 to 30 years of experience and work part-time hours (Cramer's  $V = .086, p < .05$ ).

### **Research Question 3**

*Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and age range among music therapists?*

To analyze a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and age range among music therapists, the researcher grouped age range into two categories ( $\leq 39$  years of age and  $\geq 40$  years of age) and grouped weekly working hours into two categories (part-time hours and full-time hours). The researcher conducted a chi-square test to compare the proportions observed.

The proportion of music therapists (71.6%) who were  $\leq 39$  years of age and worked part-time hours was not significantly different than the proportion of music therapists (69.2%) who were  $\leq 39$  years of age and worked full-time hours (Cramer's  $V = .023, p = .422$ ).

The proportion of music therapists (28.4%) who were  $\geq 40$  years of age and work part-time hours was not significantly different than the proportion of music therapists (30.8%) who were  $\geq 40$  years of age and work full-time hours.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the clinical field of music therapy; to determine if there is a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and years of experience among music therapists; and to determine if there is a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and age range among music therapists.

#### **Research Question 1**

*What is the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy?*

The prevalence of unemployed music therapists who participated in the survey was 5.78%. In comparison, the United States unemployment rate was 3.7% in June 2018 during the time of the current study's survey, and this percentage includes individuals of all genders, race, ethnicity, levels of education, and ages 20 years or older in order to give an approximate comparison to the participants of this study (Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.-a). A search for unemployment rates by specific therapy professions for comparison yielded no results.

An extrapolation of this prevalence rate would suggest that approximately 406 of the 7,023 board-certified music therapists credentialed by CBMT could be unemployed. The AMTA (2017) workforce analysis reported that 10 music therapy positions were eliminated in 2016 and that 889 survey participants reported their membership level as professional. Assuming that the 10 eliminated positions suggested unemployed music therapists and that the 889 professional participants of the workforce analysis survey

were clinical music therapists, then the prevalence of unemployment for the AMTA workforce analysis participants was 1.12%. However, AMTA (n.d.-b) stated that the professional membership level contains “music therapy and other professionals interested in music therapy” (para. 1). Therefore, the results in the annual AMTA workforce analysis may not accurately represent the employment status of music therapists. Also, it is possible that board-certified music therapists who are unemployed may not be AMTA members, in which case they would not have taken the AMTA workforce analysis survey.

The prevalence of underemployed music therapists who participated in the survey was 15.6%. It is challenging to find comparable statistics to put this figure into context. The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is an industry classification system used to facilitate the collection and analysis of data relating to establishments, and the establishments are grouped into industries based on the similarities in services and production (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-a). Music therapy, along with art, dance, occupational, physical, recreational, and speech therapy, are classified under the NAICS code 621340 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-b), which the Bureau of Labor Statistics labels the code as “offices of specialty therapists” (2003). Though the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) does not provide a percentage of individuals underemployed, the agency estimated the average weekly hours of employees in the “offices of specialty therapists” industry was 28.3 hours during June 2018 (n.d.-b). The BLS calculated the average weekly hours by dividing the total weekly hours by the number of employees paid for those hours, which is different from scheduled work hours (n.d.-c).

Although AMTA's workforce analysis reports music therapists' weekly working hours, it is not clear whether the part-time hours are voluntary or involuntary, or what the participants' reasons are for working part-time hours (AMTA, 2017). Participants in the present study reported reasons for working involuntary part-time hours were lack of funding for full-time position, only part-time positions posted on job sites, and lack of clients. This may suggest the need for more advocacy from music therapists and AMTA in order to promote the field. Participants reported reasons for working voluntary part-time hours were starting a family, health related issues, working two or more jobs, and burnout. When considering renewal of board certification, it is unclear whether involuntary part-time music therapists will continue their certification or leave the field.

### **Research Question 2**

*Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and years of experience among music therapists?*

The proportion of music therapists (90.1%) who have less than 15 years of experience and work part-time hours was significantly higher than the proportion of music therapists (83.4%) who have less than 15 years of experience and work full-time hours. The results support the researcher's hypothesis that music therapists with fewer years of experience are more likely to work part-time positions.

Though music therapists gain experience through practica and internships before taking the board certification exam, employers may not want to hire newly board-certified music therapists because of the lack of work experience. To gain the experience needed for these positions, music therapists may resort to working part-time positions for a period.

### **Research Question 3**

*Is there a trend with regards to weekly hours worked and age range among music therapists?*

The proportion of music therapists (71.6%) who were  $\leq 39$  years of age and work part-time hours was not significantly different from the proportion of music therapists (69.2%) who were  $\leq 39$  years of age and work full-time hours. When considering the vast majority of participants in the present study (70%) were of the age 20-39, and the vast majority of participants (71.1%) worked 34 or more hours per week, it would appear that the younger music therapists may be working full-time hours.

### **Limitations**

This study posed some limitations. The weekly hours reported by the participants was one such limitation. The survey question asked participants to report weekly hours, but it is unclear whether participants were calculating multiple jobs when considering weekly hours. Participants may have two or more jobs with part-time hours, but collectively these hours add up to the equivalent of a full-time working week. The researcher suggests for future researchers to inquire how many jobs participants work per week.

Another limitation of this study was the small sample size of participants actively searching for their first music therapy position and of participants no longer searching for music therapy position. Due to the survey being distributed through the mailing list provided by the Certification Board for Music Therapists, the list contains only music therapists who are currently board certified and does not include individuals who did not renew their certification. Individuals who did not renew may have moved to another

field of employment. The length of the survey may also have limited the number of possible responses. Based on participants' responses to questions, the time to complete the survey ranged from 5 to 15 minutes.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Since this study is one of the first focusing on the unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy, further research is necessary. The field would benefit from understanding the employment trends in music therapy in order to provide effective strategies to maintain the viability. AMTA's workforce analysis should include data on current unemployed music therapists and part-time music therapists seeking full-time positions. Such data is pertinent to closely monitoring any fluctuation in music therapy employment.

Though the researcher asked participants to provide their AMTA regional location, it is unclear if the participants moved from one region to another. Since there are often regional differences in therapists' philosophical orientations, a music therapist moving between regions may experience difficulty transitioning to a position that utilizes a different therapeutic orientation. Future research is necessary to determine if adapting to new therapeutic orientation affects level of employment or salary amount.

As music therapists allow board certification to expire and decline to renew through CBMT, a survey given to those individuals on reasons for not renewing board certification would be of interest. The data from such a survey could help identify any possible trends. Future researchers could compare music therapy employment trends with other therapy disciplines to see if the music therapy career is as viable as other professions.

## **Implication for Clinical Practice**

Understanding the viability of a career is not only important for future music therapy students, but also for current music therapy employers. The results of the present study suggest that many music therapists are between the ages of 20-29 with 0-5 years of experience and earned bachelor degrees. When increasing employee retention rate, employers should consider offering newly practicing music therapists sufficient salaries, benefits, and support for continuing education such as graduate school.

Another potential benefit for employers is to offer music therapists with less than one year of experience an entry-level position. Some employers will not consider hiring an applicant who does not have sufficient experience. However, offering an entry-level position allows the employer to train the new employee on the company's procedures and policies. The position will allow the employer to evaluate the new employee's skills and experience gained through practica and internship.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy. The results of this study indicate a small percentage of music therapists experiencing unemployment or underemployment. Further research of music therapists' employment trends is vital in maintaining the viability of the profession and in providing additional resources necessary to create new jobs.

## Appendix A: IRB Exemption Certification



University of  
Kentucky.

Office of Research Integrity  
IRB, RDRC

### EXEMPTION CERTIFICATION

IRB Number: 43302

TO: Christopher Kelley, Master of Music  
PI phone #: 270320330  
PI email: cke242@g.uky.edu

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson  
Non Medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval for Exemption Certification

DATE: 5/3/2018

On 5/3/2018, it was determined that your project entitled "*The Prevalence of Unemployment and Underemployment within the Field of Clinical Music Therapy*" meets federal criteria to qualify as an exempt study.

Because the study has been certified as exempt, you will not be required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full review.

The Office of Research Integrity will hold your exemption application for six years. Before the end of the sixth year, you will be notified that your file will be closed and the application destroyed. If your project is still ongoing, you will need to contact the Office of Research Integrity upon receipt of that letter and follow the instructions for completing a new exemption application. It is, therefore, important that you keep your address current with the Office of Research Integrity.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" available in the online [Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook](#). Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through [ORI's web site](#). If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.

*Appendix B: Demographic Survey Questions*

Current instrument: **Demographics**

**Demographics**

**Gender**

- Male
- Female
- Transgender male / Transman
- Transgender female / Transwoman
- Gender queer
- Gender nonconforming
- Self-identify: (Please specify)
- Decline to state

Specify Gender:

Specify Gender

**Age**

- < 20
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 - 69
- 70+

**Ethnicity/Race**

- American Indian / Alaskan Native
- Asian / Asian American
- Black / African American
- Caucasian / White
- Hispanic / Latino / Spanish
- Multiracial
- Pacific Islander
- Other: (Please specify)

Specify Ethnicity/Race:

Please Specify

**Highest Level of Education**

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

**Affiliated Music Therapy Region**

- Great Lakes
- Mid-Atlantic
- Midwestern
- New England
- Southeastern
- Southwestern
- Western

reset

reset

reset

reset

reset

reset



*Appendix C: Music Therapy Employment Survey Question*

Current instrument: **Music Therapy Employment**

**How soon after completing the music therapy board certification exam did you begin working in a music therapy position?**

- I had a position before completing the music therapy board certification exam.
- < 6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6 years or more
- Still actively searching
- I never found a music therapy position and am no longer searching for one.

[reset](#)

Appendix D: Music Therapy Work Experience Survey Questions

Current instrument: **Music Therapy Work Experience**

For the purpose of this study, when answering all questions please consider your current or previous work experiences within the area of clinical music therapy, which is defined as practicing music therapy directly to clients/patients either in individual or group settings. Please do not consider any experiences in an academic setting, which is defined as teaching music therapy in a school setting for the purpose of training music therapy students.

**Years of experience as a clinical music therapist:**

- < 1 year
- 1 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
- 21 - 25 years
- 26 - 30 years
- 31+

reset

**What is your current salary?**

- < \$10,000
- \$10,001 - \$20,000
- \$20,001 - \$30,000
- \$30,001 - \$40,000
- \$40,001 - \$50,000
- >\$50,000

reset

**In what setting was your first clinical music therapy position following your board certification? (Check all that apply if you worked in more than one setting at the same time.)**

- Private practice (as owner)
- Private practice (as employee)
- Medical / Hospital
- Psychiatric facility
- Hospice / Palliative Care
- Assisted living / Nursing home
- School (K-12)
- Other: (Please specify)

**Specify other work setting:**

Other work setting

**Was your first music therapy position within your desired population?**

- Yes
- No

reset

**If no, please give your reason(s) for selecting a position outside of your desired population.**

Expand

Type in answer

**Was your first clinical music therapy job a position that you created and established whether in a private practice or in a facility?**

- Yes
- No

reset

**If yes, in what setting did you create the new music therapy position?**

Expand

Type in answer

**Would you have considered creating a new clinical music therapy position?**

- Yes
- No

reset

**If no, why not?**

Expand

Type in answer

**Have you changed jobs since your first clinical music therapy job?**

- No. I am still at my first job.
- Yes, but still in the field of music therapy.
- Yes, but in a non-music therapy field.
- No, but I am currently unemployed.

reset

**What was your reason(s) for changing jobs?**

Expand

Type in answer

**What was your reason(s) for changing jobs in a non-music therapy field?**

Expand

Type in answer

**While employed as a clinical music therapist, how many hours per week did you work?**

- 1-8 hours/week
- 9-16 hours/week
- 17-24 hours/week
- 25-33 hours/week
- 34 or more hours/week

reset

**For this study, 33 hours or less per week is considered part-time. Please choose one of the following choices that best describes your working situation.**

- Working 33 hours or less and choosing not to work full-time.
- Working 33 hours or less but seeking to work full-time

reset

**What were the reasons for choosing to work part-time employment (working 33 hours or less) and choosing not to work full-time? Select all that apply.**

- Starting/raising a family
- Secondary source of income
- Health related issues
- Working two jobs
- Other

**Please specify other reason:**

Expand

Type in answer

**What were the reasons for choosing to work part-time employment (working 33 hours or less) but seeking to work full-time? Select all that apply.**

- Lack of funding for full-time position
- Trial period for a new music therapy position
- Job listings were for part-time hours
- I don't know
- Other

**Please specify other reason:**

Expand

Type in answer

**As a clinical music therapist, have you ever volunteered your service without pay?**

- Yes
- No

reset

**If yes, why did you choose to volunteer your service?**

Expand

Type in answer

**While still utilizing your music therapy skill set, did you have a job title other than music therapist? (Select all that apply.)**

- No, my title was Music Therapist
- Rehabilitation Therapist
- Expressive Therapist
- Recreation Therapist
- Activity Leader/Director
- Other

**Please specify other job title:**

Expand

Type in answer

**As a clinical music therapist, are you currently or have you ever been unemployed?**

- I am currently unemployed but actively searching for music therapy position.
- I am currently unemployed but actively searching another career path other than music therapy.
- I have been unemployed but am currently employed in a music therapy position.
- I have been unemployed but am currently employed in a different career other than music therapy.
- I have never been unemployed within the field of clinical music therapy.

reset

**How long have you been unemployed?**

- 1-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-2 years
- >2 years

reset

**Why are you actively searching for a job in another career path other than music therapy?**

Expand

Type in answer

**How long were you unemployed before finding a new job?**

- 1-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-2 years
- >2 years

reset

**Why are you currently employed in a job other than music therapy?**

Expand

Type in answer

**When searching for a music therapy job, what were, if any, obstacles that made it difficult to locate job offers?**

- Job listings online were not removed for positions already filled.
- Job listings that utilized music therapy skill set had different job titles other than "music therapist."
- There were no job offers near where I lived.
- There were no job offers in my desired population.
- Job offered a low starting salary.
- Job did not offer benefits (health insurance, retirement plan, vacation, CMTE reimbursements, etc.)
- Other

**Please specify other obstacle:**

Expand

Type in answer

Below is a list of factors when searching for a music therapy job. Please rate the level of priority on a scale from 'Not a Priority' to 'Essential.'

	Not a priority	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority	Essential
Location of job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Population served	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Starting salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weekly working hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Benefits (health insurance, retirement plan, CMTE reimbursement, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What resources do you use to find music therapy job offers? (Select all that apply)

- American Music Therapy Association website
- Online employment sites (Monster.com, Indeed.com, etc.)
- Social network sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Attending conferences
- Other: (please specify)

Please specify other resources:

Expand

Type in answer

What advice would you give to a newly certified music therapist regarding employment?

Expand

Type in answer

*Appendix E: Actively Searching Employment Survey Questions*

Current instrument: **Actively Searching**

**How long after completing the music therapy board certification exam have you been actively searching for a music therapy position?**

< 6 months  
 7- 11 months  
 1 - 2 years  
 3 or more years

reset

**Are you currently employed at another job (not related to music therapy) while actively searching for a music therapy position?**

Yes  
 No

reset

**Are you currently or have you ever volunteered your music therapy service without pay?**

Yes  
 No

reset

**Why did you choose to volunteer your music therapy services without pay?**

Type in answerExpand

---

**What resources do you use to find music therapy job offers? (Select all that apply)**

American Music Therapy Association website  
 Online employment sites (Monster.com, Indeed.com, etc.)  
 Social network sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)  
 Attending conferences  
 Other: (please specify)

**Please specify other resources used:**

Type in answerExpand

---

**While searching for a music therapy job, have you experienced any of the following:**

	Yes	No	
<b>Job listings online were not removed after position was filled.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
<b>Job listings that utilized music therapy skill set had different job titles other than "music therapist"</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
<b>There were no job offers near where I lived</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
<b>There were no job offers in my desired population</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
<b>Job offered a low starting salary</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
<b>Job did not offer benefits (health insurance, retirement plan, vacation, CMTE reimbursement, etc.)</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
<b>Other: (please specify)</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset

**Please specify other obstacle(s):**

Type in answerExpand

Below are a list of factors when searching for a music therapy job. Please rate the level of priority on a scale from 'Not a priority' to 'Essential.'

	Not a priority	Low priority	Medium priority	High Priority	Essential	
Location of job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
Population served	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
Starting salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
Weekly working hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset
Benefits (health insurance, retirement plan, CMTE reimbursement, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	reset

What other factors do you consider when searching for a music therapy job?

Expand

What advice would you give for a newly certified music therapist in regards to searching for music therapy employment?

Expand

Type in answer



*Appendix F: No Longer Searching Employment Survey Questions*

Current instrument: **No Longer Searching**

**What is the reason for no longer searching for a music therapy position?**

Expand

Type in answer

**How long were you searching for a music therapy position before you decided to stop searching?**

- < 6 months
- 7 - 11 months
- 1 - 2 years
- 3 or more years

reset

**What resource(s) did you use when searching for music therapy job offers? (Select all that apply)**

- American Music Therapy Association website
- Online employment sites (Monster.com, Indeed.com, etc.)
- Social network sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Attending conferences
- Other: (please specify)

**Please specify other resource(s):**

Expand

Type in answer

**What advice would you give for a newly certified music therapist in regards to searching for music therapy employment?**

Expand

Type in answer

*Appendix G: Cover Letter*

IRB Approval  
5/3/2018  
IRB # 43302  
ID # 27795

Dear Music Therapist:

You are being invited to participate in a research study exploring the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment within the field of clinical music therapy. The purpose of the study is to analyze data from current and previously employed music therapists to gain an understanding of the employment rate in the clinical music therapy field. You have been selected to participate in this survey because you opted to receive emails through the Certification Board for Music Therapists. This study is a research project conducted by Christopher Kelley, MT-BC, to fulfill his thesis requirements as part of the Master's degree program at the University of Kentucky.

Your participation is voluntary. During the survey, you can choose to skip questions, and you may terminate the survey at any time without penalty. Survey data will be collected from each participant. All surveys will be submitted through REDCap using a non-identifying format. The survey itself asks for no identifying information. Documentation of informed consent will not be collected, as that would be the only way to connect the individual to their specific survey. Instead, participation and submission of the survey will serve as consent to participate.

Please be aware, while we make every effort to safeguard your data once received on our servers via REDCap, given the nature of online surveys, as with anything involving the Internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still en route to us.

Your return and completion of this survey indicates that you have studied and read the above information and freely consent to participate in this survey. Your return and completion of this survey also constitutes your informed consent to the survey information being submitted to and potentially used for journal publications.

To ensure your responses will be included in the study, please submit your completed survey by June 1, 2018. After reading the above information, please click on the link to begin the survey:

<INSERT LINK>

Thank you in advance for your assistance. If you have questions about the study, please feel free to ask; my contact information is given below.

Sincerely,

Christopher Kelley, MT-BC  
University of Kentucky  
School of Music  
cke242@g.uky.edu

Thesis Chair:  
Lorna E. Segall, PhD, MT-BC  
University of Kentucky  
College of Fine Arts  
105 Fine Arts  
Lexington, KY 40506  
lorna.segall@uky.edu

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## VITA

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### **EDUCATION**

**University of Kentucky**, June 2017  
Music Therapy Equivalency Training

**Western Kentucky University**, May 2006  
Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance

### **PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS HELD**

**Meaningful Day Services**, Jeffersonville, IN, November 2018  
Music Therapist

**Northeast Florida State Hospital**, Macclenny, FL, September 2018  
Rehabilitation Therapist/Music Therapist

**Child Development Center of the Bluegrass**, Lexington, KY, August 2017  
Practicum Supervisor/Music Therapist

### **PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS**

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit – Music Therapists, May 2018

Music Therapist – Board Certified (MT-BC), August 2017