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Nichole A. Ledermann

Eastern Illinois University

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Relations of Burnout to Elementary School Teachers,

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BY

Nichole A. Ledermann

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Relations of Burnout to Elementary School Teachers, Special Education Beliefs, and

Referral Expectations

Nichole A. Ledermann

Eastern Illinois University

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Abstract

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996), a teacher survey of expectations and preferences concerning case study evaluation referral, and demographic questions were completed by regular education elementary school teachers (n=88) in a midwestern city suburb. Results suggested that symptoms of burnout were not evident among this sample of professionals according to Maslach et al. (1996) criteria. Spearman Rho correlations between the MBI subscales and expectations or preferences to have students referred, tested and placed into special education services were not significant. Significant correlations were replicated among the subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Results suggested that level of burnout is not related to different beliefs or expectations of referral, testing and placement of students in special education. However, low return rate and the fact that burnout was not evident with this particular sample, suggest further research in this area is needed to determine if burnout symptoms affect expectations for testing and placement of difficult to teach students.

Chapter 1

Introduction

As education continues to be scrutinized in America, so too does the American teacher. Many teachers begin their careers dedicated to providing excellent educational opportunities for their students. Through this quest, they are bombarded with pressures from the community, the bureaucracy, and even themselves, to constantly push for improvements. The constant stress can deteriorate the motivation and drive of even the best teachers. Cox, Mackay, Cox, Watts, and Brockley (1978; as cited in Capel, 1992) found 78% of teachers reported work as the main source of stress in their lives, compared to only 38% of other professionals. Approximately 50% of America's beginning public school teachers leave the classroom within their first seven years of experience; two-thirds of this percentage will do so within the first four years (Huling-Austin, 1986). In a 1979 National Education Association (NEA) poll, 1/3 of teachers surveyed stated that if they were "starting over again" they would not choose to become teachers (National Education Association, 1979).

There are numerous stress-related variables present within a school system and many studies provide insight into these. Such variables included the physical environment (overcrowding of classrooms, poor lighting); organizational stressors (poor administration, unclear or conflicting policies); group stressors (poor relations with supervisors, supervisees, peers); and individual stressors such as work overload, excessive responsibilities, role conflict, and boredom (Rathus & Nevid, 1989). Russell, Altmaier and Vanvelzen (1987) also presented lack of social recognition of teachers, inadequate personal relationships, large class sizes, lack of resources, isolation, fear of violence, lack of

classroom control, role ambiguity, limited promotional opportunities, and lack of support, as contributors to stress. Although stress is present in all occupations, researchers suggest that the phenomenon of burnout, or the subsequent outcome of prolonged work stress, is quite evident among workers in human service professions (Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991; Farber, 1983; Maslach, 1982). Maslach (1982) indicated that burnout can be "a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or having problems" (p. 3).

The importance in studying burnout among teachers is that it may significantly affect their clients; students. Teachers who become burned out may be less sympathetic toward students; have a lower tolerance for frustration in the classroom; plan their classes less often or less carefully; feel frequent emotional or physical exhaustion; feel anxious, irritable, depressed; and in general, may feel less committed and dedicated to their work (Farber, 1984). Burnout may also lead to a tendency to be rigid in thinking, which may lead to a closed mind about change or innovation (Freudenberger, 1977).

Behaviors associated with burnout could have a devastating effect on students, especially those who do not learn as effectively as others in the classroom situation (at-risk students). Students need creativity and excellence from teachers. Children enter the classroom with divergent socioeconomic backgrounds, educational needs, and individual styles of learning. Although some of these students qualify for special education services, many students do not. These students will remain in the regular classroom, and will depend heavily on the resources of their teacher.

Understanding burnout and its effects on teachers' perceptions, and how those perceptions effect the education of children is important. This study will examine aspects of burnout as it relates to the attitudes of teachers toward special education.

Review of the Literature

Within the literature, debate exists on what exactly the term "burnout" describes. Although the term is commonly used within our society, many researchers approach the definition and its contributing effects to their own understanding of the construct (Farber, 1991). A common theme of agreement is that the burnout syndrome has been linked to identifiable psychological, and behavioral responses to unmediated work stress in a variety of helping service professions (Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, 1982). Additionally, a clear dichotomy does not exist between who is burned out, and who is not; as burnout is considered more a process than a state (Farber, 1983). Although many studies have attempted to predict who is more susceptible to burnout, the fact remains that burnout is a subtle pattern of symptoms, behaviors, and attitudes that are unique for each individual (Mattingly, 1977).

Burnout is believed to affect people who enter their professions highly motivated and idealistic (Pines & Aronson, 1988). Freudenberger (1977) wrote that burnout occurs most frequently among the most "dedicated and committed-those who work too much, too long and too intensely" (p.161). Additionally, they are said to be "excessively striving to reach some unrealistic expectation imposed by one's self or the values of society" (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; p. 17). They may feel pressure to give from three sides: themselves, needy clients and staff administrators (Farber, 1991). Acknowledging these pressures, individuals may feel guilty, expending even greater personal energy. However, the harsh reality is that many people involved in human service professions work with people who are extremely needy. The job may never seem to end, and with this, the professional may eventually display physical, psychological, and behavioral symptoms (Cunningham, 1982).

An attempt to measure burnout was explored by Maslach (1982). Maslach (1982)

defines burnout as a "syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment . . . a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or having problems" (p.3). Emotional Exhaustion is believed to be at "heart" of the burnout syndrome. This dimension refers to feelings of overextension and exhaustion caused by daily work pressures. Maslach wrote:

"people feel drained and used up" and in the process begin to cut back on their involvement with others to avoid emotional burden. "They want to reduce their contact with people to the bare minimum required to get the job done." . . . "They 'pigeonhole' people into various categories and then respond to the category rather than to the individual. By applying a formula, rather than a unique response, they avoid having to get to know the other person and becoming emotionally involved," (1982, p.3).

The second dimension of Maslach's definition of burnout, Depersonalization, refers to the development of negative attitudes and impersonal responses toward the people one works with. In education this could be the students, parents, other teachers, or even administrators. This detachment from others could be manifested in attitudes such as poor opinions, having pessimistic expectations, and even dislike of students. They may even fail to provide appropriate help, care, or service (Maslach, 1982). As negative feelings about others continue, caregivers may feel distressed or guilty about the way they have thought about or mistreated others. Realizing this was not the type of service they wanted to provide, caregivers may begin to feel a sense of failure.

Lack of Personal Accomplishment, or a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, is Maslach's third dimension. This sense of failure may create feelings of inadequate

personal achievement and may also be accompanied by a diminished sense of self-esteem.

Pines and Aronson's (1988) definition of burnout is comparable to Maslach's. They define burnout as a "state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding" . . . "caused by a combination of very high expectations and chronic situational stresses" (p. 9). Physical exhaustion is characterized by symptoms of increased susceptibility to illness, headaches, nausea, back pains, accident proneness, frequent attacks of virus and flu, and a paradoxical combination of tiredness and sleep disturbances. Accompanying these physical problems, symptoms of emotional exhaustion may include feelings of depression, which may lead to mental illness or in extreme cases, thoughts of suicide. Finally, mental exhaustion is specified by negative attitudes about self, work, and life in general; and may include lowered self concept, feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and incompetency. Although many teachers experiencing such problems may choose to leave the profession, those teachers who stay in the classroom may have a negative effect on their students (Hock, 1988).

Teachers who become burned out may be less sympathetic toward students and have a lower tolerance for frustration in the classroom. They may plan their classes less often or less carefully, and may feel less committed and dedicated to their work (Farber & Miller, 1981). These effects may have a significant consequence on the learning of students, although few studies that address these concerns. Students can be very demanding, especially at-risk students. Generally, students need constant supervision and guidance in the classroom. Additionally, classrooms consist of a group of individuals, who join the class with various strengths, weaknesses, and unique learning styles. "Our view of people is affected by their responsiveness to us" (Maslach, 1982, p. 23). When

students have difficulty learning, negative feelings may begin to develop (Maslach, 1982). Students who display learning difficulties may begin to be viewed by the teacher as chronic problems, which may seem constant and endless. "They do not change much over time, regardless of effort or resources expended. They may not be highly stressful problems to deal with, in and of themselves, but they are always there and never go away" (Maslach, 1982, p.23).

Special education was designed to assist students requiring a more individualized program of learning. Limited resources and legal guidelines, however, prevent all difficult-to-teach students entrance into special education. Approximately twenty-five percent of the regular education population are believed to have learning problems that interfere with educational performance, yet are judged to be ineligible for special education (Will, 1986). Despite this, many students referred will be declared eligible for special education placement (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Graden, Wesson, Algozzine & Deno, 1983). Algozzine, Christenson & Ysseldyke (1983) discovered that of the 5% of school aged children referred annually for special education services, 92% of referrals result in evaluations. Of these evaluations, 73% result in student placement in special education. Although there is little evidence that LD teachers employ different instructional approaches, material, or techniques with LD students (Mirkin & Potter, 1982), an overwhelming majority of teachers expected students to be tested and placed in special education programs (Ysseldyke, Christenson, Pianta, & Algozzine, 1983). Students who do not qualify remain in their regular classrooms, often to the exasperation of the teacher, parents, and students (Brown, Gable, Hendrickson & Algozzine, 1991).

The referral-to-placement process of special education fell under scrutiny following examination of current trends. Although some students were tested, qualified, and

removed from their classrooms (fulfilling some teachers expectations), other teachers were still left dissatisfied with current evaluation practices because they did not yield practical suggestions for intervening in the classroom (Christenson, Ysseldyke, & Algozzine, 1982). Consultation-based intervention teams, prior to a referral for case study evaluation, were introduced through team models already present to address alternative traditional teacher inservice training. Today, Teacher Assistance Teams (intervention teams) function as a day-to-day problem solving group for teachers (Chalfant, Pysh & Moultrie 1979). Their aim is to focus on helping teachers intervene at the source of students problems (in the regular classroom), preventing inappropriate placements in special education, and using school resources, money, and specialists' resources more efficiently to teach and intervene, rather than to diagnose and place.

Although approximately 66% of states require or recommend some type of intervention assistance team (Wood, Lazzari, Davis, Sugai, and Carter; 1990), research continues to investigate their level of effectiveness. Sindelar, Griffin, Smith, & Watanabe (1992) measured the effects of prereferral interventions with improvement in three areas. Initially, successful teams should be expected to reduce the rate of referral for assessment, identification and placement in special education. Secondly, improved student performance on achievement or behavioral measures should result in improved academic performance and classroom conduct, or altered teacher expectations. Finally, they write, teachers "should feel more efficacious; with their new found success, students should experience improved self-concept" (p. 248).

Generally, many studies of consultation process demonstrate positive results in all three areas (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Graden, Casey, and Bonstrom, 1985; Fuchs, Fuchs, Bahr, Fernstrom, and Stecker, 1990). However, not all studies reviewing attitudes towards

intervention teams have been so positive. Harrington and Gibson (1986) surveyed teachers who had experience with LD preassessment procedures. Although teachers were pleased with preassessment team members themselves, they did not agree that their teams' intervention recommendations were successful in correcting the referral problem. Survey respondents were mixed as to whether the team provided any new intervention ideas or whether the team explored a sufficient variety of intervention options. Furthermore, 42% percent of the teachers indicated they had failed to implement the recommended interventions. The preassessment process was reported as time consuming. Similar results were described in Brown, Gable, Hendrickson, & Algozzine (1991). Teachers indicated that they were willing to participate in the prereferral process, even though many believed that the interventions were only occasionally successful.

Teacher attitudes of intervention teams have been explored prior to the implementation of teams, and the attitudes that followed (Graden, Casey & Bonstrom, 1983). Although their study gathered results after only one year of implementation, (at a time where intervention teams were not as prevalent) they wrote that change was difficult due to many factors; but also that many teachers perceived consultation as a "threat to their own competency and to their perception that it is the student who has the problem" (p.18). Additionally the perception of limited options for instructional change in the regular education setting due to large class sizes and restricted options for curricular modification hindered acceptance to the intervention team process.

Success of intervention teams relies on many factors, including team members, quality of interventions suggested, and support given to referring teachers. Regardless, the referring teacher essentially is the key to making the interventions work in the classroom. When interventions are judged as incurring too many costs (e.g. time, energy, hassle),

teachers may not carry out treatments appropriately; because of the time required to do so, effort invested for minimal return, or the hassle of redirecting classrooms to adjust for the student (Noell & Gresham, 1993).

Teachers are primarily responsible for success of interventions and modifications for the difficult-to-teach student. If teachers lack confidence in their effectiveness or efficacy as a result of burnout, they may decide to complete the process of bringing a student to the Teacher Assistance Team, ignore or half-heartedly attempt suggested interventions, and in the end may gain what they were after, a referral for a special education evaluation. This result may not necessarily be a conscious decision, but a result that teachers may feel that they cannot effect change (Soodak & Podell, 1993). Characteristics of burnout in education is a very important area to explore. Teacher Burnout may affect many children in the classroom, particularly students who are difficult-to-teach.

The majority of the research has focused on attempting to predict who is more susceptible to the psychological experiences associated with burnout. These studies focused on demographic variables such as gender, age, years of experience, education level, and so on. Acknowledging that behaviors associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment exist, an area that needs to be investigated is how these behaviors affect the students who are to a large degree dependent on assistance from the teacher. The primary focus of this study is to specifically examine whether levels of burnout among teachers, as defined by scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1996) will be associated with high levels of agreement with the expectation or preference that students who are referred for case study evaluation should receive a label determining eligibility, and placement into special education.

This study investigated:

- (A) The percentage of teachers who were classified as burned out, based on Maslach, et al.'s (1996) criteria noted on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Emotional Exhaustion [EE], Depersonalization [DP] and Personal Accomplishment [PA]).
- (B) The internal consistency reliability of the MBI subscales (EE), (PA), and (DP).
- (C) The construct validity of the MBI subscales, predicting positive correlations between Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, and negative correlations between Emotional Exhaustion/Personal Accomplishment and Depersonalization/Personal Accomplishment.
- (D) Whether scores on the MBI significantly correlated with teachers' expectations or preferences for students who are referred for case study evaluation to be given a diagnostic classification to determine eligibility for special services and placement into special education.
- (E) Whether a significant difference existed between teachers who are and are not defined as burned out by the Maslach Burnout Inventory definition, and their views of case study evaluation classification and placement of students into special education.

Chapter II

Method

Participants

Survey materials were delivered to a sample of 230 regular education elementary school teachers who taught between the grades kindergarten and fifth grade throughout a midwestern city suburb. Teachers in this sample averaged 39.01 years of age (SD=10.20) and 13.41 (SD=9.12) years of teaching experience. The average number of students per classroom was 24.15 students (SD=4.35) and an average of 2.09 students (SD=2.23) in each classroom received special education services.

Instruments

The Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educators Survey (See Appendix B, questions 21-42; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996) is a self-report instrument comprising 22 statements rated on a 7 point scale (0 equaling 'Never' to 6 equaling 'Everyday'). Questions are divided among three subscales which reflect the authors' conceptualization burnout. These factors include Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Emotional Exhaustion, the first factor and "initial aspect of burnout" (p.28) is described by the authors as the "tired and fatigued feeling that develops as emotional energies are drained" (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996, p. 28). The belief is that as emotional energies become consumed, teachers are less able to devote their energies to the needs of their students. The second factor is 'Depersonalization' and incorporates negative attitudes and feelings teachers may develop toward their students, in turn physically distancing themselves from students, displaying negative attitudes towards students and perhaps ignoring students through psychological withdrawal. The third and final factor, Personal

Accomplishment, includes statements measuring educators attitudes toward their contribution to students' development. "When educators no longer feel that they are contributing to students' development, they are vulnerable to experiencing profound disappointment" (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996, p.28).

According to Maslach, et al. (1996), burnout is conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate to high degrees of experienced feeling. Scores are considered high if they are in the upper third of the normative distribution, average if they are in the middle third, and low if they are in the lower third (Maslach et al; 1996). A high degree of burnout is reflected by high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and by low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale. An average degree of burnout is reflected by average scores on the three subscales and a low degree of burnout is reflected by low scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and by high scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale. Using the Teaching Occupational Subgroup (K-12), on the EE subscale raw scores from 0 to 16 are considered low, from 17 to 26 are considered moderate, and from 27 and above are considered high. On the DP subscale, raw scores from 0 to 8 are considered low, from 9 to 13 are considered moderate and from 14 and above are considered high. On the PA subscale, raw scores from 37 and above are considered low, 36 to 31 are considered moderate, and from 30 and below are considered high.

The MBI-Educator Survey is derived from the original first edition of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey. This initial survey was developed from items collected from previous research interviews, questionnaires, and from a review of established scales (Hargrove, 1989). The original form which contained 47 items was reduced to 22 through a series of factor analyses and item selection criteria. The MBI -

Human Services form and the MBI - Educators form are similar in question and factor structure, with the only difference replacing the word "student" from "recipient".

Although the inventory is not theory driven, the MBI is a result of the authors' conceptualization of the burnout construct (Hargrove, 1989). The three factor structure of the MBI has demonstrated significant intercorrelations of .52 (between EE & DP), -.22 (EE & PA) and -.26 (DP & PA), and similar results have been found by factor analytic studies by Iwanicki & Schwab (1981) and Gold (1984). Additionally, reliability reported in the MBI Manual were adequate reliability with Cronbach alpha estimates ranging from .90 to .88 for Emotional Exhaustion, .76 to .74 for Depersonalization, and .76 to .72 for Personal Accomplishment (Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981; Gold, 1984). Test-retest reliability coefficients when the test sessions were separated by an interval of two to four weeks were .82 for Emotional Exhaustion, .60 for Depersonalization, and .80 for Personal Accomplishment and were significant $p \leq .001$ (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). As time intervals increased, coefficients decreased, but this is expected. After a three month period, test-retest correlations of .75, .64, and .62 for a three month interval were demonstrated by Leiter and Durup (1996), and .74, .72 and .65 were found by Lee and Ashforth (1993).

To obtain an assessment of teacher attitudes about student learning problems, teacher beliefs and expectations about the special education process, Graden, Casey & Bonstrom's (1983) teacher survey was utilized. Questions were based on a Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' (See Appendix B, questions 1-20). The first set of eight questions focused on teachers opinions regarding the current definition of Learning Disability, and characteristics of children who are so classified. The remaining questions focused on teacher expectations and their preferences for the referral process, after a special education case study evaluation had been recommended. The teacher survey

utilized in this study was an informal survey used previously to gain pretest and post test measurements after implementation of intervention teams in schools (Graden, Casey & Bonstrom, 1983).

The demographic questionnaire (See Appendix B, questions 43-52) included in this survey focused on items related to years of teaching experience, grade level taught, age, number of students enrolled in classes, number of students receiving special education services, existence of intervention teams and rating of these intervention teams. Teachers were asked to provide exact numbers, with the exception of ratings of intervention teams, which was rated on a continuum from 'Very Helpful' to 'Not a help at all'.

Procedure

Administrative permission was gained to distribute the survey packets to teachers by means of teacher mailboxes. Each teacher received a cover letter (see Appendix A) and a 4 page teacher survey which included questions from the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educators Survey (MBI: Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1996), questions addressing teacher attitudes about student learning problems, teacher beliefs and expectations about the special education process (Graden, Casey & Bonstrom, 1983) and the brief demographic questionnaire. Teachers were asked to voluntarily complete the survey materials and return them in a drop box that was provided near teachers' mailboxes. The drop box was sealed to provide confidentiality of responses.

Data Analysis

The statistical procedures used to answer the research questions were as follows:

- 1) Raw scores of each MBI subscales (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment) were converted to T scores, based on Maslach, Jackson & Leiter's (1996) Teacher Norms (p.6).

- 2) Means and standard deviations were obtained for each of the demographic variables: Subjects Age, Number of Years Teaching, Number of Students in Their Class and Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services.
- 3) Internal consistency of the MBI was investigated with the Cronbach's alpha estimate for each subscale (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment).
- 4) Pearson Product Moment correlations were obtained between the 3 subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment). (See Table 1.)
- 5) Spearman Rho Correlations were used to determine the degree of relationship among level of burnout, and the preferences and expectations of a classification label and placement into special education, after a case study referral has been made. (See Table 2.)

Chapter III

Results

Results of the Maslach Burnout Inventory yielded mean raw scores of 19.95 ($SD=11.10$) on Emotional Exhaustion, 3.81 ($SD=4.24$) on Depersonalization and 41.19 ($SD=6.09$) on Personal Accomplishment. Raw scores converted to T scores ($m=50$; $SD=10$) based on Maslach, Jackson & Leiter's (1996) 'Teaching' occupational subgroup norms resulted means of 48.82 ($SD=10.08$) for Emotional Exhaustion, 38.38 ($SD=6.85$) for Depersonalization, and 61.11 ($SD=8.83$) for Personal Accomplishment. While subtest raw scores were comparable on the Emotional Exhaustion dimension ($m=21.25$), the Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment dimensions were not comparable with the present study's sample ($m=11.00$ and $m=33.54$, respectively; Maslach, et al; 1996). This study's sample yielded much lower scores on Depersonalization and much higher scores on Personal Accomplishment. Thus, this sample of teachers appear to be dissimilar to the normative sample reported by Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (1996).

Further analysis of the MBI results indicated that no teacher in the sample could be classified as reporting high levels of burnout according to the MBI criteria (Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1996). Using a ± 2 Standard deviation criteria for determining significant deviation from norms, only one teacher in the sample demonstrated a high level of burnout.

Cronbach alpha internal consistency estimates for the MBI were .91 for Emotional Exhaustion, .72 for Depersonalization, and .75 for Personal Accomplishment. These results were comparable to the results found by Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) of .90 (EE), .76 (DP) and .76 (PA). Pearson Product Moment correlations used to investigate construct validity of the MBI resulted in a .60 correlation between Emotional

Exhaustion/Depersonalization, $-.33$ correlation between Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment, and $-.31$ between Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment (Table 1). All three correlations were significant, $p \leq .01$. The MBI manual reported $.52$ intercorrelation between Emotional Exhaustion/Depersonalization, $-.22$ between Emotional Exhaustion/Personal Accomplishment and $-.26$ between Depersonalization/Personal Accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996).

Spearman Rho Correlations were calculated to determine whether relationships existed between reported levels of burnout on the Maslach Burnout Inventory subscales, and specific questions provided by the Graden, Casey and Bonstrom teacher survey (1983). The four questions used as the focus of the study included, "I would expect testing to give a diagnostic label to determine eligibility for special services" (Number 12), "I would expect the student to be placed in special services" (Number 14), "I would prefer testing to give a diagnostic label" (Number 18) "I would prefer the student to be placed in special services" (Number 20) (Table 2). No significant correlations were found among any of the three Maslach Burnout Inventory subscales and these four expectation and preference questions.

Chapter IV Discussion

The first goal of this investigation was to determine the percent of teachers who would demonstrate significant signs of burnout on the Maslach Burnout Inventory as defined by Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter (1996). This definition provided by Maslach, et al. (1996) not only includes high scores in the areas of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, but also includes low scores in the area of Personal Accomplishment. Using Maslach, Jackson & Leiter's (1996) criteria, the present sample did not result in any teachers classified as having high levels of burnout. Only one teacher reported high burnout levels when the criteria were based on a ± 2 standard deviation. Although the Emotional Exhaustion subscale was comparable to Maslach, et. al.'s (1996) mean, Depersonalization scores were much lower and Personal Accomplishment scores much higher in the present sample.

One explanation for this result may be due to the small sample size that was obtained. With only 40% of the surveys returned, 60% of the sample was left unmeasured. With the voluntary nature of this study, teachers who did not participate may have felt overwhelmed or lacked the time to complete the survey. Teachers not completing the survey may or may not have demonstrated higher levels of burnout, but may have been unable to find the time to do another task. As one teacher wrote on the survey, "Sorry-I just don't have time for another form to fill out".

Small sample size may also have been a result of the time of year the survey was distributed. Teachers received the surveys during the month of May, one of the busiest times of the school year. Future studies should address levels of burnout at different times or throughout the school year, and not be limited to months late in the school year.

Examination of the internal consistency of the Maslach Burnout Inventory was another

goal of the study. Results were comparable with those found by Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (1996), with a high reliability of Emotional Exhaustion (.91), and a fair reliability of Depersonalization (.72) and Personal Accomplishment (.75). Intercorrelations between the subscales were significant, indicating measurement of three separate factors of the MBI, and supporting the construct validity. As expected, Personal Accomplishment was correlated with Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion positively correlated with Depersonalization.

To examine the relationship between levels of burnout and questions designated in the teacher survey (focusing on whether teachers would prefer or expect testing to determine a classification and placement into special education), no relationship was found with this particular sample of teachers and the questions specified. Although no relationship was found, future studies should continue to explore how symptoms of burnout may affect teachers' expectations and preferences concerning students who are 'difficult to teach' in a regular classroom setting. This study did not find any significant relationships. Further research in this area will need to address some of the limitations of this study.

One criticism that is addressed already in the field is the lack of a precise definition of burnout (Hargrove, 1989). Although Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (1996) have defined the construct by three factors, these factors do not clearly give an overall measure of the construct, only three pieces of the puzzle. The term 'burnout' has become a popular expression generally defining psychological and behavioral responses to stress. What exactly those responses are, is essentially the question. Each individual may experience burnout in their own unique way (Mattingly, 1977), and having only three dimensions of study may limit the wide range of symptomology experienced by the individual. Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (1996) admit that the inventory is a tool to further address the study of

the construct and not as a diagnostic tool to label who is or is not burned out. As the research continues to explore demographics on who is more susceptible to burnout, the research also needs to persist in defining what the construct is.

Another limitation presented in this study was the use of a nonstandardized teacher survey. Graden, Casey & Bonstrom's (1983) use of the survey was to gain a measure of attitude change prior to and after the implementation of intervention teams. Focusing on only four questions concerning expectations and preferences for a diagnostic label and placement into special education services may have been limited, as more information could be gained by having teachers verbally explain their reasoning to their views. Having future creative means of measuring expectations and preferences, in a more realistic setting such as actual responses or actions throughout the case study process may be a more accurate indicator of true attitudes and beliefs about the process.

In conclusion, little may be said about the relation of burnout to teacher expectations or preferences about referral due to the poor return rate of this study. Further investigation of burnout and how these behaviors affect the lives of children in the classroom is important. Teachers attitudes and their beliefs in their ability to effect change and assist students in learning merits further investigation, with all populations of students.

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Appendix A

Dear Elementary Teachers:

The purpose of my correspondence with you today is to ask for your assistance in a research project. Currently I am working on my Master's degree in the area of School Psychology and am gathering research in order to complete a thesis requirement. Not only will your participation assist in my endeavor, but will also assist in advancing research in education. The following materials will only take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The following instructions have been provided to easily complete these materials.

1. Please try to answer the material as soon as it is received.
2. You will find by your mailboxes, a white box labeled "Teacher Surveys". Please return surveys in this box as soon as you are completed with them.
3. Your interest in the research question and the results are more than welcome. If you are interested, you may include on a separate sheet of paper your name and address in the box. When completed, results will be mailed. **ALL QUESTIONNAIRES WILL REMAIN ANONYMOUS!**
4. Please feel free to contact me if there are any questions. During daytime hours I can be reached at (815) 624-2615, evening hours at (815) 633-7385.

Thank you so much for your time and participation! Your input and effort are greatly appreciated!!

Sincerely,

Nichole A. Ledermann
Graduate Student - School Psychology
Eastern Illinois University

Table 1

Intercorrelations of MBI Subscales (n = 88).

	<u>Emotional Exhaustion</u>	<u>Depersonalization</u>
<u>Depersonalization</u>	.60*	
<u>Personal Accomplishment</u>	-.33*	-.31*

* $p \leq .01$.

Intercorrelations reported by Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (1996)

	<u>Emotional Exhaustion</u>	<u>Depersonalization</u>
<u>Depersonalization</u>	.52	
<u>Personal Accomplishment</u>	-.22	-.26

Table 2

Spearman Rho Correlation Coefficients

	<u>Maslach Burnout Inventory</u>		
	<u>EE</u>	<u>DP</u>	<u>PA</u>
LD Classification. . .			
1. Useful category	-.14	-.03	.03
2. Accurately decide	.11	.27*	.10
3. Share characteristics	-.16	-.02	-.02
4. Need special teaching	-.03	.04	.04
5. Learn/regular classroom	-.04	-.01	.06
6. Problem in learner	-.03	.06	-.15
7. Problem in ed. environ.	.11	-.04	.07
8. Percentage LD?	.05	.24*	-.18
Expectations with referral . . .			
9. Testing	-.07	-.06	.09
10. Specific ideas	-.15	-.02	-.10
11. Strengths & weaknesses	-.21*	-.22*	.05
<u>12. Eligibility</u>	<u>-.14</u>	<u>-.12</u>	<u>-.16</u>
13. Specific teaching	-.02	.01	-.30**
<u>14. Placement</u>	<u>.06</u>	<u>.02</u>	<u>-.09</u>
Preferences with referral . . .			
15. Testing	-.08	-.10	-.02
16. Specific ideas	-.07	-.02	-.03
17. Strengths & weaknesses	-.13	-.19	-.06
<u>18. Eligibility</u>	<u>-.07</u>	<u>-.01</u>	<u>-.16</u>
19. Specific teaching	.12	-.00	-.14
<u>20. Placement</u>	<u>.02</u>	<u>-.12</u>	<u>.02</u>

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, n=88, EE = Emotional Exhaustion, D = Depersonalization, PA = Personal Accomplishment.

Underlined questions note questions focused in study.