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The Changing Landscape of Teaching and Teachers' Stress:
A Revisit and Update

BY

Mike DeVillez

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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The Changing Landscape of Teaching and Teachers' Stress:

A Revisit and Update

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Acknowledgments

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Lastly, and most important, I send my heartfelt love and gratitude to my mother who more than anyone else, was the instrument from which I drew strength these last ten years. She is truly one of God's greatest creations.

Abstract

During the late 70s and into the 80s, there was a considerable amount of research devoted to the study of stress and teaching. During that time, it was well established that teaching can be a stressful profession. Since then, studies that examine stress and burnout in the profession of teaching have become more infrequent, although teaching has undergone rapid change. For example, new educational legislation, No Child Left Behind that has recently been passed directly impacts teachers and their approaches toward teaching. This study seeks to understand the current educational environment and the possible contribution to teacher stress. Results of the study showed that only 31% of teachers reported considerable stress related to their occupation. Further, they did not report stressful parent-teacher relationships, teacher "burnout," and/or the presence of depression which is inconsistent with previous studies. However, other factors were found to be significant contributors to teacher stress, such as heightening expectations for teachers, constant change in the form of "top-down" school reform, as well as low negative perceptions of administrators. An in-depth review of the literature and a detailed discussion of the results and their implication follow.

The Changing Landscape of Teaching and Teachers' Stress: A

Revisit and Update

Introduction

Many years ago, a teacher's role was perhaps easily defined. Indeed, a teacher's

influence and concerns were in many cases confined to the classroom, and this was

sufficient. However, as society's needs increased and less time was available for parental

nurturance of their own children, teachers began to take on extra responsibility (Weil,

1997). Today, it is not unusual to see different social programs being offered in the

schools to address current social needs. This is the nature of the profession of teaching,

an almost inherent expectation that teachers should be answerable to society's dictates

according to a perceived need. But what is the effect on teachers when they are constantly

exposed to the ever-changing atmosphere of the profession? The purpose of this study is

to help illuminate teacher stressors and their impact on the individual teacher as well as

the profession of teaching due to the changing demands in public education.

The landscape of teaching is not a stagnant one. Through the years there have

been several changes that have had an impact on teachers. For example, children with

special needs began to be accommodated in the public school systems and often times

abruptly and without time for special training of teachers (Public Law 94-142, 1975)

(Leal, Turnbull, Turnbull, & Shank, 1995). Further, there was a push for children with

special needs to be educated in the regular education classroom (inclusion) requiring

regular education teachers to accommodate these children (Leal et. al).

Another change in education that occurred during the Reagan administration was

the perception that our nation's children were underperforming the children of other

nations in academic achievement. This mindset is still being strongly felt today and has even increased to the point where recent educational legislation has been the result. Nonetheless, the overlying message is that the educational environment changes and sometimes changes abruptly. The challenge to teachers is to be able to incorporate the newly minted issue of concern and adapt to the new landscape and still deliver the quality education they were trained and expected to deliver. Sometimes however, the consequences of this accommodating posture may result in teacher stress or burnout. For the purpose of this study, the changing landscape is defined as influences within the teaching environment in which teachers have little or no control over (e.g., "top-down" school reform).

The literature review first presents an overview of the nature of stress and burnout in general, followed by the role of stress and burnout in the teaching profession in particular.

The Nature of Stress and Burnout

In this study, the following definitions of stress and burnout are adopted. "Stress is the psychological, physiological and behavioral response of individuals when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet those demands, which, over a period of time, leads to ill-health" (p. 17), (Palmer, 1989). In effect, stress occurs when pressure exceeds perceived ability to cope. Burnout on the other hand has been defined as, "A prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors" (p. 1) (Leiter, Maslach, & Schaufeli, 2001). In addition, for this study, the term burnout implies the presence of stress. However, stress does not necessarily imply impending burnout due to individual differences in coping with stress.

Stress is a naturally occurring response to a condition or potential which upon sufficient heightening can lead to physical and emotional ill-health. This is not to say that stress is generically bad. In fact, stress can be seen as a necessary state that leads to self-preservation, or to be more useful, a state which leads to getting things accomplished. Many researchers contend that we need certain amounts of stress to remain productive (Alley, 1980; Terry, 1997). For example, artists can be thought of as in a state of tension which allows them to create works of art. The end result, or the completion of the art itself, can provide a release from tension and a state of homeostasis. Therefore, stress does not necessarily mean something to be avoided at all cost. However, when stress (tension) is of sufficient magnitude, ill-effects of overall health can be the result.

Hans Selye (1956) was instrumental in developing the concept of stress. Selye maintained that stress was a non-specific reaction to the demands made upon the body from any external or internal influence. In other words, no matter what the influence, whether it is infection, failure, adjustment to a job or difficulty with a significant other, etc., the body responds in similar fashion (Coon, 1994). Selye acknowledged the usefulness of stress by using two terms to delineate between stress that was beneficial and stress that was harmful. The term 'eustress' was used to represent beneficial stress, and 'distress' was the term used to represent harmful stress. This is a useful distinction because it suggests the continuum that exists when dealing with internalized expression of emotion.

Given the above, it would be a fair assumption along the continuum that we are all indeed under a state of stress, and that would be correct. However, at some point some

individuals can enter a state of distress. If the distress becomes severe enough, this state can have health threatening consequences. Many types of occupations have elements that can contribute to a state of distress. However, teaching is perhaps noteworthy due to its service to society and the high visibility nature of the job itself. Both conditions combine to make teaching a highly scrutinized profession.

As a profession, teaching has been studied for the effects of "teacher burnout," which is a term that has been, for some, synonymous with stress. The term "burnout," was not originally exclusive to the occupation of teaching, nor is it now. The term began to be operationalized and used with some regularity during the 70's and was usually reserved for those who were working in the human services field (Leiter, Maslach, & Schaufeli, 2001). The term itself has generally referred to the complexities of relationship between people and their work. This relationship can be thought of as ecologically based sequelae between person and environment that contributes to the condition of stress (Hanchey & Brown, 1989).

Early studies in the human services field revealed that there were several common elements for those who were experiencing stress relating to their occupation. First, emotional exhaustion was a common response for those working in service and care of others. Second, many of these same people experienced depersonalization, or a deep cynicism about their work due to the emotional demands necessary. Many found it necessary to distance themselves emotionally from the perceived elements of distress. Consequently, this gave others the perception that these workers behaved in a callous and uncaring manner toward their occupational interests. Third, inefficacy, or the feeling of

absence of accomplishment was also common to the condition of stress (Leiter, Maslach, & Schaufeli, 2001).

Common mediating factors for the condition of burnout also became clear from early studies. It became clear that positive relationships between coworkers, family members, as well as administrative support became critical for ameliorating the effects of stressful events (Kyriacou, 2001). Without these positive factors, it was thought that stress leading to burnout was closely associated with the onset of anxiety and depression. More recent studies have verified these common factors but have also drawn a distinction between burnout and depression (Meier, 1984).

In 1981, Maslach and Jackson designed an inventory scale to measure burnout, known as the Maslach Burnout Inventory. One of their findings was that burnout was related to depression. There was however, a distinction made by determining that burnout is a problem that is job-related whereas depression is more pervasive in nature, which suggests lability for onset and expression. This is an important distinction because it suggests the affiliation of stress and depression rather than a causal relationship. Nonetheless, this does not rule out that stress can, in fact, serve as a trigger for depression (Hargens, 1983).

In 1993, Schaufeli, Maslach and Marek furthered their understanding of burnout by discovering the presence of five common elements: (1) mental or emotional exhaustion, fatigue, and depression, (2) an emphasis on mental symptoms rather than physical, (3) symptoms are work related, (4) those who show symptomolgy did not have previous psychopathology, and (5) decrease in work performance was the result of negative attitudes and behaviors. As mentioned earlier, exhaustion is thought to be the

first identifiable symptom followed by depersonalization (cynicism) and eventually, inefficacy (Leiter & Maslach, 1988).

More recent work that has focused on the integration of individual and situational factors seems to add support for job-person fit; this is perhaps especially salient for teachers. One model proposes that there are six areas for job-person fit that are associated with burnout: values, community, fairness, reward, control, and workload. Burnout occurs whenever there is an incongruence between an individual and any of these areas (Leiter, M., Maslach, C., & Schaufeli, 2001).

According to Leiter et al. (2001), a conflict in values may occur whenever an individual feels pressure to do something that is unethical or not in accordance with her or his own value system. This also encompasses situations in which the organizational values are incongruent with the individual's values. Another area is that of community. Whenever an individual experiences isolation or unresolved conflict within the working environment (community) then negative feelings of frustration and hostility become evident. In addition, fairness and reward are important factors in the workplace. A condition of unfairness leads to a deep sense of cynicism; and those who feel that one's hard work is not acknowledged and valued feel a sense of inefficacy. Control is the belief that one has the right to conduct her or his work in the most effective manner according to his or her own values and judgment. Individuals become distressed whenever they feel they are restrained from performing to their ability. Finally, workload is important because too many demands prevent one's ability to regenerate (Leiter et al, 2001).

Although generic in terms of occupational focus, the preceding information is particularly relevant to teachers, especially in today's educational environment. The remainder of the literature review focuses specifically on the issues facing the profession of teaching. However, the parallels should be evident and relevant to the information discussed above.

Stress and Burnout in the Teaching Profession

Although dated, a British study was conducted that looked at a meta-analysis of fifteen years of existing studies examining teacher stress. The findings of the study speak to the pervasiveness and commonalities that are found among those in the teaching profession around the world. One of the studies examined was conducted by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977). Kyriacou and Sutcliffe conducted four survey studies at several schools in England and asked teachers there to rate their experience with their job and stress. One of the studies revealed that more than 29% of the teachers considered their job as "extremely stressful." Another of the studies showed that about 23% of the teachers considered their job experiences also extremely stressful. In addition, Kloska and Ramasut (1985) showed significant levels of teacher stress in Wales. Their results revealed that 34% of the responding teachers experienced extreme stress associated with their jobs. Although these findings point to high levels of teacher stress, it is important to note that the studies do not reveal the sample size for each study and the method of data collection was self-report, which is perceptually based.

To give reference to the magnitude of the number of teachers who consider teaching to be a stressful profession, Trendall (1989) conducted a study which used a questionnaire survey to obtain teachers' perceptions of teaching. The data obtained from

237 teachers who completed the survey revealed that 74% of the teachers rated teaching as being either stressful or very stressful. Caution must be exercised when considering this statistic for it does not imply that 74% of the teachers were experiencing significant stress. Rather it simply means that this percentage of teachers had the perception that teaching is a stressful profession. Nonetheless, taken with the other studies, the inference of stress and teaching appears to be obvious.

Indeed, there are a myriad of studies conducted in the 70s and 80s that attest to the notion of stress and teaching, but one might wonder how teaching compares with other professions for levels of stress. In a study conducted by Cox, Mackay, Cox, Watts, and Brockley (1978), 100 school teachers and 100 other professionals were asked what was responsible for most of the stress in their lives. The responses revealed that 79% of the school teachers attributed the source of stress to be their work, whereas, only 38% of the other professionals considered work to be responsible. In a later study, Cox and Brockley (1984) conducted a similar study with similar results. In this study consisting of 45 teachers and 40 non-teachers, 67% of the teachers reported that work was the main source of their stress compared to 35% of the non-teachers. Therefore, it appears that teaching can be one of the more stressful professions. In fact, Christina Maslach (1981) recognized this to the degree that she developed a burnout inventory designed especially for teachers.

If the profession of teaching is potentially more stressful, what are the characteristics of stress typically associated with teachers like? Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's (1977) study showed that teacher stress may result in anger, anxiety, and depression which are frequently accompanied by physiological anomalies such as increased heart

rate plus a release of adrenocorticotrophic hormones (i.e., stress hormones) into the

bloodstream. Just a few of the more common physical effects that can occur as a result

are peptic ulcers and cardiovascular diseases. However, not all of the difficulties are

physical. Indeed, some of the other effects of stress can be psychological and behavioral.

For example, some of the psychological insults that can result from stress are anxiety,

dysthymia, and depression. In addition, behavioral difficulties can also develop from

stress such as deterioration in work performance as well as a deterioration in

interpersonal relationships (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977).

Special note should be made of the ecological relationship of the differing effects

of stress illuminated in the prior paragraph. Indeed, according to Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's

model, there seems to be a compounding effect once one is under the condition of stress

that apparently has influence over one's whole ecologic environment. This is to say that

all of the differing effects of stress have influence and consequences on one's overall

global functionability and health. In effect, they are all interrelated. This is important

because it supports the notion that the effects of stress incurred from one seemingly

isolated source or incident can in fact have furthering consequences. In addition, it also

suggests the possibility that one's performance in the work environment can as a result

suffer due to stress. As the authors mentioned, interpersonal relationships can also suffer

and when combined with the other effects, the result could be reduced ability to cope

(Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

The above findings are perhaps partly explained by Hans Selye's (1978) extensive

work with stress and its effects. Selye (1956), mentioned earlier, developed the General

Adaptation Syndrome (G.A.S.), which describes how the body responds to stress.

According to Selye's G.A.S., the individual responds to stress in three stages: (1) alarm, (2) resistance (i.e., fight or flight), (3) exhaustion. The first stage of alarm begins with the release of adrenocorticoprophic hormones into the bloodstream, which stimulates the adrenal cortex. The result is that the body is thrown into an emergency reaction. If stress continues, then the first stage is followed by the second which is the resistance stage. The resistance stage is finite and cannot last indefinitely. If the resistance stage is not resolved then the final stage of exhaustion ensues. At the point of exhaustion, illnesses in various forms often present e.g., cardiovascular disease, ulcer, anxiety, or depression. This is consistent with Kyriacou and Stucliffe's (1977) findings discussed earlier. It should also be noted that there are several other theories of stress that also have merit. However, Selye's model is perhaps more appropriate due to its consideration of both mental and physical symptomology and attribution. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that the literature suggests that personality types, e.g., Type A personality or Negative Mood may play a mediating factor in teacher stress and burn out (Lavanco, 1997; and Mearns & Caine, 2003).

Teacher Depression: Given the above discussion, it is perhaps appropriate to ask if significant stress has the potential for moving from the effects of stress into areas more commonly associated with depression. Unfortunately, there are considerable data available to suggest that this may be a possibility. In one of the more recent studies, Ronald Fisher (1995) conducted a study examining clinical depression in public school teachers. Participants were admitted to the study if they met three criteria: currently teaching full-time, possessed five or more years of classroom experience, and described themselves as "burned-out." The study required all participants to complete four

instruments: Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI); Beck Depression Inventory (BDI); My Vocational Situation (MVS); and Strong Interest Inventory (SVIB). This study sought to answer two questions: (1) Is this teacher burned-out? (2) Is this teacher clinically depressed? The study used three groups which consisted of the teacher's group, "normal" group, and a group of inpatients in a psychiatric hospital. The teachers' group was made up of individuals who had scored in the high burnout range on the MBI. After identifying those in the high burnout range, their BDI tests were then scored and analyzed. The results showed that the teacher burnout group was experiencing depression that closely resembled the depression levels found in those of the psychiatric inpatients. Further, when a second administration of the tests was conducted, the mean of the teacher burnout group was actually higher than the mean of the psychiatric patients' group. The results clearly suggest that at least some teachers who are experiencing significant burnout may also be experiencing clinical depression.

There have been others who have examined the relationship between teacher burnout and depression. Meier (1984) used several burnout inventories to determine the correlation level between these inventories and depression measures. Meier found that the correlation between the Meier Burnout Assessment and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) Depression Scale was .69. The research was undertaken with the intention of determining whether burnout and depression were discriminately different states. Meier's analysis was that there is overlap between burnout and depression when one is describing the effect of stress and teaching. However, Meier did delineate between burnout and depression by stating that depression is a less gradual state

with a steeper onset; whereas, burnout occurs over a longer period of time with the person losing a sense of positive work outcomes (Randall, 1993).

In another study, Schonfeld (1990) used the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D), an instrument for assessing depression developed by the National Institute of Mental Health, to sample the general-population (population non-specific). The study sampled 67 veteran teachers and the resulting mean score was 13.03, while the median mean score for 12 general population surveys was 8. A score of 16 is considered to be a cutoff point at which a major depressive disorder may be present. In the teacher survey, 32% obtained scores above the cutoff point of 16.

Based on the foregoing studies, the question posed at the beginning of this section (whether or not significant stress has the potential for moving from the effects of stress into areas more commonly associated with depression), is affirmatively answered. It appears that significant stress is potentially related to depression.

Teacher Attribution of Stress: According to the findings of Fisher's study (1995), teachers attributed their stress to society's unrealistic expectation, political rhetoric, critical parents, and unsupportive administrators. In addition, studies conducted by Travers and Cooper (1996), Benmansour (1998), and Pithers and Soden, (1998) suggest that the main sources of stress facing teachers are the following: coping with change, administration and management, role conflict and ambiguity, teaching pupils who lack motivation, maintaining discipline, time pressures and workload, self-esteem, and poor working conditions.

In the literature, attribution for teacher stress varied considerably. Because many of the studies in this area are dated, some of the more recurring themes for teacher

attribution of stress and burnout are examined. With this approach in mind, a specific few current issues, such as administration and management style, parent-teacher relationships, unrealistic expectations, and coping with change/school reform are briefly discussed. In other words, what role do administrators, parents, unrealistic expectations, and top-down school reform play in teacher stress? Political rhetoric in the form of school reform and coping with change receive special attention due to the current volatility in the educational-political environment.

Teacher Stress and School Administrators: The literature suggests that school administrators play an important role in mediating the effects of teachers' stress. For instance, Dworkin, Haney, Dworkin, and Telschow (1990) found that not only a principal's support positively impacted "stress induced illnesses" of teachers, most co-workers also tended to be supportive of each other if the principal was perceived as supportive. Two studies cited in Randall (1993) showed the negative impact of a school administrator's lack of support on teacher stress. In the first study, Hanchley (1987) administered the Maslach Burnout Inventory three times to 136 teachers in California throughout the school year. Based on the results, it was determined that burnout occurs from multiple factors with the principal's style of leadership being one of the critical elements followed by a principal's non-participatory management style, lack of sensitivity to school problems, and the lack of consideration for teacher's general welfare. In the second study, Jones (1990) highlighted the problems that exist whenever teachers try to conceal their difficulties from their administrator. Among the reasons for this concealment was the fear that teacher evaluations by administrators would reflect these difficulties as if the teacher is not competent to function adequately in the classroom.

In conclusion, Randall (1993) summed it up after a thorough and comprehensive study of teacher burnout and coping strategies of 300 teachers, when she said:

> It is this researcher's contention that teachers' responses to adverse environmental factors were, to a large extent, dependent upon the principal's support and empowerment of teachers. For example, urban elementary school #7, in a very poor section of the city, with children from four shelters attending the school, and some of the lowest achievement scores in the district, had an upbeat staff, overall, united in the face of adversity. The qualitative data suggested reasons for this, primarily because of the support and encouragement of the principal, who empowered teachers and parents who work cooperatively for the good of the students. Depressive symptom mean scores were lower than in the urban middle schools and urban high school and advice seeking was the highest of the eleven schools. Emotional exhaustion was the second highest of the eleven schools, but depersonalization and personal accomplishment dimensions of burnout were lower than in several of the urban schools (p. 299).

Parent-Teacher Relationships and Teacher Stress

There are few in-depth studies that focus upon the parent-teacher relationship from the perspective of the teacher. This factor alone would be worthy of a study. This study does not propose to go into an in-depth analysis of this relationship but rather mentions its relevance only for the purpose of the study at hand.

It has been well established for many years that it is desirable and indeed necessary for parents to be involved with their children's school experience (Griffith, 2001). However, Evans and Trimble (1986) reported that beginning teachers found that relationships with parents were among the most difficult problems they faced. Further, even veteran teachers have claimed that problems involving parents is one of the areas most responsible for job dissatisfaction (Chase, 1985).

O'Connor (2001) conducted in-depth interviews with both teachers and parents about the relationship between an elementary school and the families of children who attended the school. According to O'Connor, some of the teachers resisted taking on practices of supporting, nurturing, and rearing responsibilities of the children. Many of the teachers commented that they were expected to take on responsibilities that were not educational. One teacher stated, "Parents aren't doing their share and they're just depending on the school to do it for them" (p. 185). In addition, Ginsberg and Hermann-Ginsberg (2005) linked the parent-teacher relationships and societal expectations of teachers by pointing out, "Teachers today encounter a myriad of parental circumstances (e.g., single parents, and high poverty) and challenging parent behaviors (e.g., demands, abuse, and lack of interest), and parental and school obstacles to involvement (e.g., lack of time, feelings of inadequacy, and an unwelcoming school structure)" (p. 1).

In 2002, Tye and O'Brien conducted a research study that asked the question: "Why are experienced teachers leaving the profession?" Among the reasons given, many respondents claimed that there is a lack of parental support and that many parents take an adversarial position in regard to teachers and education. Further, some commented that students have no responsibility or accountability, and that some parents would rather sue

or threaten rather than help. Some of the respondents mentioned that dealing with discipline problems is bad enough, but not as bad as some harassment they have received from parents.

Expectations for Teachers and Teacher Stress: There are many differing types of expectations that teachers are faced with while trying to accommodate the roles that society has for its teachers. One of the expectations that has been extended to teachers, although unstated, is that of social worker. Indeed, teachers are not only expected to impart knowledge to their students, but in some cases extend social work services also to these, sometimes clients (Lumsden, 1998). Although the services provided are not typical of the same intensity of that provided by someone in the social work profession, teachers nonetheless perform a "frontline" duty to identify those in need. These types of extra duty often cause teachers to feel frustration and feelings of being overwhelmed as they try accommodating the needs of their students (Lumsden).

According to Weil (1997), some of the problems of excessive expectations are the result of schools trying to accommodate the perceived needs of their students. As schools try to extend services to those children that are perceived in need, they have inadvertently created a sense of responsibility for the well-being of those students. Whereas several years ago the raising of children was the sole responsibility of the parents, the schools now have an established stake in the successful rearing of children (Weil). Weil states:

> Ironically, the public schools themselves created the situation whereby they have become almost solely responsible for educating young people. When societal problems found their way into the schools, the schools enthusiastically accepted the challenge of managing those problems within

the existing school framework. But public schools are not designed to address many of the complex problems that have now become their role (p.761).

Perhaps summing up the current situation that many teachers seem to feel, Weil stated: "teachers have felt compelled to adopt a "be all things" mentality that has become a necessity for survival in the classroom. However, trying to please everyone often results in failure to satisfy anyone" (p. 760). This by itself may be a source of frustration and stress.

Mark Shinn (1982) addressed the issue of blurring of teacher responsibilities when he noted that the consequences for this can be significant. Shinn maintained that when professionals are uncertain of role expectations within a human services organization, they acquire a sense of powerlessness, which eventually can lead to a sense of meaninglessness. From Shinn's observations, it follows that teachers who experience unrealistic expectations in addition to other stressful factors may indeed experience the potential for burnout, and worse.

Teacher Perception of Political Rhetoric and "Top-Down" Change

In Tye and O'Brien's study (2002), a questionnaire that was completed by the teachers listed several reasons that teachers gave for having already quit teaching. Number one on the list was due to the pressures associated with the new accountability measures of high-stakes testing, test preparation, and meeting standards. Many felt that these measures that are associated with the new education legislation, No Child Left Behind, are a direct result of unfair political rhetoric (Perreault, 2000). Before addressing the perceptions of teachers on how change and political rhetoric affects their ability to

remain positively engaged with their profession, it is necessary to give a brief summation

of the current legislation that has become the focus of attention for so many.

In 1965, under the Johnson administration, there was a movement for government

to have a better accounting of how federal funds were being spent in order to help the

poor and minority groups with academic achievement. The idea was to provide assistance

through education to this stratum of population to help overcome their social economic

disadvantage. To this end, Congress passed in 1965 the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act (ESEA). This legislation was the precursor which led to President Bush's

administration bipartisan reauthorization of ESEA in 2001 called the No Child Left

Behind Act (NCLB) (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003).

Under NCLB's sweeping new mandate, a number of dramatic changes were in

store for education. There are two primary assumptions underlying NCLB: (1) external

accountability and the imposition of sanctions will force schools to improve and motivate

teachers to change their instructional practice, resulting in better student performance; (2)

schools that do not meet the state's proficiency goals on a standardized test in reading

and math for two consecutive years are identified as needing improvement. In this

manner, schools that do not show adequate yearly progress (AYP) are identified as "in

need of improvement." A point in contention, NCLB establishes a single performance

standard for all students, and schools with a disproportionate number of lower-scoring

students will have to make larger gains in order to show adequate yearly progress

(Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, & Orfield, 2004).

Schools that are identified as in need for improvement are exposed to sanctions as

a result. Schools that are in their first year of improvement are required to offer all

students the option to transfer to a higher performing school. Students that attend schools that are in their second year of improvement are eligible for supplemental educational services, which could be provided by private, non-profit, or public organizations. In effect, competition is being introduced into the field of education in order to improve student performance and add incentive for low-performing schools to improve.

According to Kyriacou (2001), researchers must always need to be sensitive to trends and changes in the educational environment. This is especially true in light of the changes that are occurring now due to the rapid changes in teaching methods, school curriculum, and assessment procedures. Kyriacou points out the following:

> The ability to change has become increasingly important if teachers are to cope successfully with the demands made on them. Research is needed on the stress generated by coping with change, so that such research can provide governments and policy makers with an ongoing critique of how various educational reforms impact on teachers' experience of stress (p.32).

In response to Kyriacou's position, in 2004, Harvard University conducted a study called Listening to Teachers: Classroom Realities and No Child Left Behind (Sunderman, et al., 2004). The focus was upon teachers' views of their schools, impressions and knowledge of NCLB, accountability, incentives and sanctions, and changes in curriculum and instruction.

Researchers for the Harvard University study designed a survey using a five point Likert response scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" for most of the items to assess teachers' opinions. The survey was given to teachers at Fresno Unified

School District in Fresno, California and to teachers at Richmond Public Schools in Richmond, Virginia. For sampling purposes, 19 schools in Fresno identified as needing improvement were selected in addition to 10 schools meeting adequate yearly progress. In Richmond, the sample included 15 schools needing improvement and 10 adequate progress schools. What follows are some of the findings from the survey.

According to this study (Sunderman et al. 2004), the primary purpose for the accountability measures is to exert pressure on teachers to change their instructional practices in order to increase student achievement. However, the teachers in Fresno reported feeling pressures that negatively affected morale and more critically, their performance. Almost 41% of the teachers in the improvement schools and 35% of the teachers in the adequate schools in Fresno felt this way. In the Richmond schools, almost half of the teachers felt the accountability measures were having a negative effect. This was true in both improvement and adequate schools alike.

Teachers in both Fresno and Richmond schools agreed that NCLB sanctions would unfairly reward and punish teachers. Over half of the teachers in Fresno reported strongly agreeing that sanctions were unfair with a third of the teachers in Richmond also strongly agreeing (Sunderman, et al., 2004). Troubling is the fact that the data for how long teachers plan to remain teaching lend support to the idea that NCLB may have the unintended effect of making it difficult to attract or retain teachers at low-performing schools. In fact 51% of the teachers in Fresno and 75% in Richmond's low-performing schools plan to leave within 5 years. This is troubling for the fact that while trying to improve the quality of education, there is the possible paradoxical effect of making it more difficult to actually fill the staff requirements of schools.

Interestingly, the Harvard survey (Sunderman, et al. 2004), confirms that teachers do think that NCLB accountability is having an effect on instruction and curriculum; however, perhaps not in the way intended. Many teachers in both school districts reported feeling that the curriculum, and, therefore, their teaching, has been impacted in a negative way due to accountability. Forty-six percent of the teachers at improvement schools in Fresno and 34% of the teachers at improvement schools in Richmond strongly agree that AYP requirements caused teachers to de-emphasize topics not covered for accountability testing. Surprisingly, the percentages of teachers who felt the same way at the adequate schools were even greater (Sunderman, et al., 2004). In effect, teachers are shifting their attention away from teaching subjects that are not tested to increasing the amount of time they spend teaching subjects that are tested.

From the above information, one might wonder what the effects of the new accountability measures are for our nation's teachers. According to the same study, teachers believed the NCLB sanctions were "counterproductive" and the likely result is that teachers will leave schools identified as in need of improvement. Further, the teachers did not believe that the NCLB sanctions were designed in a way that would lead to school improvement, nor did they believe that the accountability measures would motivate teachers to improve. In fact, as has already been suggested, teachers may in fact be more inclined to leave the profession.

In Perreault's study (2000) that examined the thoughts and feelings of teachers about the current educational environment and "high stress testing" in particular, many were outspoken critics. Indeed, the current literature abounds with these sentiments regarding the recent changes that have occurred in education and the references as such

would provide similar views. However, the following quote from a teacher in Metro Atlanta (as cited in O'Hanian, 2004) perhaps frames the current changes in education with unusual clarity:

> The kids hate school. There is no fun, no enthusiasm. We have been ordered to teach nothing that isn't on the state tests. Each month we are presented with a new cure-all that we must incorporate. The principal even suggests dropping science and social studies since these scores do not count for AYP. We made AYP last year, but probably will not this year because of our special-ed population. The principal's response; do nothing in special-ed except teach the test. The teachers in our school have a can't do anything about it, so better go along attitude. They have stopped doing anything interesting and innovative (p. 1).

Finally, although interventions for stress and burnout are not the focus of this study, it should be noted that most burnout interventions focus primarily on individual-centered solutions, such as intra-individual based strategies that strengthen the internal resources of the self. However, research has found that situational and organization based factors have a bigger impact on mediating the effects of stress and burnout. It appears a focus on the job environment and the person's interaction with it is essential for successful interventions of burnout (Maslach & Goldberg. 1998). As such, the prior mentioned studies highlight the necessity of taking measure of the current teaching landscape in order to assess the changes that may be occurring and the potential fallout for teachers.

Statement of the Problem

As has been noted in the literature review of this study, it is fairly well established that teaching can be a stressful profession. Factors that can potentially contribute to stress and burnout are commonly and currently present within the profession. Kyriacou (2001) pointed out that researchers will always need to be sensitive to trends and changes in the educational environment. This may be especially relevant to today's rapidly changing educational setting, thus, it is perhaps prudent to examine the current landscape in order to understand teachers' assessment of the factors that contribute to their stress and potential burnout. Further, if teachers are as stressed as the literature suggests, it would seem that ultimately their students would be impacted. Thus, it is critical that teacher stress be better understood for many reasons, but particularly to provide students with as high quality of an education as possible.

In addition, there is a noticeable lack of current studies that examine teacher stress. The topic seems to have been popular in the 70s and 80s (e.g., Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977 and Cox & Borckley, 1984) with interest waning in the 90s and beyond. The current study attempted to contribute to updating the literature.

Teachers' negative reaction to NCLB has been documented by a few studies (e.g., Perrault, 2000; Sunderman et al., 2004). However, the possible relationship between teacher stress and "high stakes testing," NCLB in particular has not been studied. The current study investigated whether or not there is a relationship between teacher stress and "high stakes testing," NCLB.

The study attempted to answer several questions: (1) Is there high teacher stress, and if so what do teachers attribute this stress to: administrators, parents, rising

expectations for teachers, or political/legislative interference? (2) Is there a relationship between teacher stress and the current educational reform, NCLB? (3) How do teachers manifest their stress? (4) How do teachers cope with stress? It was assumed that the answers to these questions would help to illuminate teacher stress in the current environment and also provide future research direction.

Based on the literature, the following predictions were made:

1. Participants would strongly agree that teachers are currently facing significant stress (Trendall, 1989; Cox & Brockley, 1984).

2. Participants would attribute their stress to "high stakes testing," NCLB (Tye and O'Brien, 2002).

3. Participants would report significant level of psychological and physical symptoms related to stress (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977; Pearlin & schooler, 1978).

Method

Participants

Of the 419 teachers who received the survey, 43% ($n=180$) responded. The teachers were from six different school districts from the southeastern Illinois region. Of the participants who responded, 75% ($n=136$) were women and 25% ($n=44$) were men. Twenty-six and 36% of participants were within the age range of 41 to 50 and 51 to 65, respectively. Most of the teachers were experienced teachers, 36% ($n=70$) had 20 to 30+ years of teaching experience, while 23% ($n=42$) reported teaching 1 to 5 years. The majority of teachers, 69% ($n = 124$) taught in regular education. All teachers polled

taught Kindergarten to 12th grade. Finally, 75% (n=135) of participants were married.

More detailed demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Instrument

The instrument was developed based on previous examples of burnout

inventories designed by Christina Maslach (MBIO, Maslach, 1981) and a similar burnout

inventory designed by Freudenberger (1975). These instruments were modified to more

accurately reflect the current teaching environment according to the literature. Both

aforementioned scales used a Likert Rating scale, and questions were aimed at assessing

stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression. The Maslach inventory was more specific to the

teaching profession, while the Freudenberger inventory was more broadly based and

aimed more for human service professionals (e.g., social workers, mental health workers,

nurses, teachers, etc.). The instrument developed for this study used similar questions that

were aimed at the issues that teachers face in the current teaching environment, such as

stress related to management, parents, expectations for teachers, and school reform.

The teacher questionnaire consists of 60 items and has eight sections (see

Appendix D). The instrument uses a Likert rating scale of "strongly agree" to "strongly

disagree" for negatively framed statements and "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"

for positively framed statements, except in sections one and eight, which simply asked

closed ended and open ended questions, respectively. Section I sought demographic

information. Section II, Teacher Experience, assesses teacher stress (e.g., "I enjoy

working with people." Or, "I feel a great deal of stress from my job."). Sections III, IV,

and V were designed to assess teachers' current perceptions of factors that may

contribute to teacher stress, such as administrators (e.g., "If I have a problem, I know my

administrator will listen to me with honest concern."), parent/teacher relationships (e.g., "Parents are appreciative of my efforts."), and expectations for teachers (e.g., "As teachers, we are expected to do more and more."). Section VI considers changes/top-down school reform (e.g., "Sometimes, those who are responsible for change do not understand teaching."), and section VII assesses coping strategies for dealing with stress (e.g., "I am now or have in the past used antidepressant medication."). The end of the questionnaire, Section VIII, solicited additional comments.

Procedure

The procedure followed an adapted version of Dillman's (2003) protocol for completing surveys. School administrators were contacted in writing asking them for their permission to allow the teachers in their respective schools to participate in this study (see appendix A). Once permission was granted by signature (see Appendix B), a contact person (school psychologist, principal, or office personnel) was identified in each school; and the number of teachers in each school was then obtained. To begin the study, the researcher notified the contact person that the questionnaire was to be distributed to the teachers via the teachers' mailboxes. Attached to each questionnaire was a letter to the teachers describing the study and its purpose (Appendix C). In addition, the letter addressed the confidential and voluntary nature of the study. No identifying information was sought and teachers could refuse to participate. Lastly, instructions for completing the questionnaire were provided in the teacher's letter (Appendix C) along with an envelope in which to place the completed questionnaire.

After completion, each individual questionnaire was put in an envelope and sealed for confidentiality purposes and it was placed in a large manilla envelope at the

school office. The teachers were given a total of 10 days to complete the questionnaire.

After the ten day period, the researcher visited each school to pick up the sealed manilla

envelope containing all of the completed questionnaires. The total elapsed time for

conducting the survey from beginning to pick-up of completed questionnaires was

approximately 15 days. The following is a summary of the content of the packet the

research assistants received:

(1) Teacher Questionnaire and a letter describing the purpose of the study and addressing

confidentiality (e.g., to assure confidentiality, no personally identifying information is

sought, only aggregate data would be reported, and each questionnaire would be

numbered for data management purposes only), (2) plain security envelope for teachers

to place their completed questionnaire in, (3) security seal for teachers to seal the

envelope and place the seal across the flap, (4) a large envelope for returning the

individual sealed envelopes containing the completed questionnaire.

Design and Data Analysis

This research project was a correlational study. It attempted to investigate the

relationships among teacher perception of stress, teacher attribution of stress (parents,

administrators, change/school reform - NCLB), expectations for teachers, and coping

strategies.

Results

Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency and mean) were used to summarize the data

to identify teachers' perception of stress, their attribution of stress (e.g., administrators,

parents, expectations for teachers, or change/NCLB), and coping strategies. For all items

in general, lower means (<3.00) indicate a more negative perception, and higher means

(>3.00) indicate a more positive perception. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was also conducted to assess the relationships among teacher stress and current educational reform (NCLB), administrators, and parents (contributors of teacher stress as perceived by participating teachers). For this study, Hinkle, Wiersman & Jurs' (1988) rule of thumb interpretation of correlations is used, that is, correlations of less than .30 indicate little relationship between the variables.

Are teachers currently facing significant stress?

Personal experience was designed to highlight the presence of stress, depression, and anxiety that teachers experience and to what degree. Results showed that 55% of teachers reported moderate sense of stress [item 5 ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.39$)], but not frustration [item 8 ($M = 2.96$, SD = 1.42)], or burnout [item 4 ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 3.21$)]. Similarly, teachers reported little anxiety [item 12 ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.30$)], depression [item 15 ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.26$)], or unhappiness [item 21 ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.40$)].

Do teachers attribute their stress to school administrators, parents of their students, other's expectations of teachers, or change (school reform, NCLB)?

Participants appear to be positive and satisfied with their school administrators. They perceived them to be supportive [item 25 ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.33$)]. Further, teachers also did not report problematic relationships with parents [item 32 ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.01$)]. Overall, participating teachers did not attribute stress to administrators or parents. There was a moderate positive relationship between teachers' perception of administrators (item 26) and frustration with their job (item 8) ($r = .32$, p <.01). Participants who have a positive opinion of their administrators experience less frustration with their job.

As far as expectations for teachers are concerned, results showed that teachers think that they are increasingly expected to do more as teachers (item 36 ($M = 1.10$, $SD = 1.47$); the expectations for teachers are unrealistic [item 37 ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.43$)]; and teachers have taken on responsibilities other than teaching [item 39 ($M = 1.09$, $SD = 1.34$)]. A moderate positive correlation was found between unrealistic expectation (item 37) and teacher stress (item 5) ($r = .30$, p <.01). Teachers who think the expectations for teachers are unrealistic also experience teaching to be stressful.

Regarding teachers' reactions to the condition of change in education as well as the politics that may be associated with change, teachers reported that the teaching profession is constantly undergoing change [item 41 ($M = 1.18$, $SD = 1.32$)], and these changes are not warranted. In regard to the current legislation (NCLB), many teachers indicated that it does not have a positive influence for education [item 45 ($M = 1.47$, SD = 1.31)] nor positively impact children's education [item 47 ($M = 1.61$, $SD = 1.27$)]. Teachers that reported expectations for teachers are unrealistic also reported that NCLB is unrealistic ($r = .41$, p <.01). Further, there was a moderate positive correlation between negative view of NCLB (item 45) and teacher stress (item 5) ($r = .29$, p < .01)

There was a significant correlation between the changes in the teaching profession (item 41) and teachers' responsibilities (item 39) ($r = .47$, p <.01). Participants who think that the teaching profession is constantly changing also feel that they are taking on responsibilities other than teaching. Table 2 presents means for teachers' perception of personal experience of stress and their attribution of stress.

Do teachers show psychological and physical symptoms related to stress; and what are the coping skills they use?

In terms of *coping approaches* that potentially may be used to combat the effects of stress, most teachers (70%, *n*=127) reported taking no days off from school for mental health purposes. Further, only 28% (*n*=51) claimed to take 1-3 days off from school during the academic year due to stress. Ninety- four percent (*n* = 170) have not utilized counseling services, and 81% (*n* = 164) have not used medication for dealing with stress and depression. Teachers were also asked to assess whether or not they have adequate coping skills for dealing with stress. Over 80% (*n*=149) responded that they have adequate coping skills.

There was a significant correlation between stress (item 5) and coping skills (*r* =.34, p <.01). Participants who did not experience significant stress reported that they have adequate coping skills. Table 3 presents coping strategies of teachers.

Finally, in the teacher questionnaire there was a section devoted explicitly for personal comments. It appears some teachers took advantage of the opportunity and expressed their frustrations with NCLB, paper work related to documentation, lack of parental control of children and support, etc. Additional comments are presented in Table 4.

Discussion

The current study was born out of the understanding that indeed, the teaching profession can be a stress inducing environment, and this is an environment in which teachers are expected to function. Further, it is well established that teaching is not in a static state, but rather that changes are inherent within the profession itself. Perhaps Kyriacou (2001) stated it best when she suggested that researchers must always be sensitive to trends and changes in the educational environment. Kyriacou further stated

that "research is needed on the stress generated by coping with change" (p. 32). As such, the prior sentiment frames the purpose of the study, which was to assess teachers stress related to their job, their attribution of stress, and coping strategies. Results are discussed below in light of the predicted outcome:

1. Participants would strongly agree that teachers are currently facing significant stress.

Results of the present study showed that 31% of teachers feel a considerable amount of stress from their occupation. In a prior study, Trendall (1989) using a teachers' questionnaire survey concluded that 74% of teachers rated their occupation as either stressful or very stressful. Further, a study conducted by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) in England, found that 29% of the teachers considered their job to be extremely stressful. Another study conducted by Kloska and Ramasut (1985) found that 34% of their participants also considered teaching to be extremely stressful. Therefore, there seems to be some consistency among previous studies and the current study for levels of teachers' stress.

2. Participants would attribute their stress to their relationships with school administrators and parents, high expectation put on them, and "high stakes testing,"
(NCLB).

In the present study, it was interesting to note that less than 14% of the participants rated their administrators as poor, or worse. This represents a high degree of approval for the administrators of each school surveyed. School administrators make an important contribution to the overall wellbeing of the school environment. Randall (1993) showed that one of the main deterrents for preventing teacher stress was the ability of administrators to provide leadership and concern for their staff and the school

environment. This is an important distinction to make for it supports the idea that individuals profit more from improving ecological factors rather than bolstering intra-individual capacities for dealing with stress (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

The literature also suggested the parent-teacher relationship as being a potential cause for stress for teachers (Gibbs et al., 2005; Evans and Trimble, 1986; Chase, 1985). Surprisingly, the participants of this study did not find the parent-teacher relationship to be a major cause of stress for them. Further, most of the participants felt the relationship to be positive. This finding is in direct conflict with the current literature. However, it is important to note that the nature of parent-teacher relationship is not well understood due to the lack of empirical studies on the subject. In addition, there are perhaps many possibilities of why the present study does not support the sentiments found in the research regarding parent-teacher conflict. Perhaps one of the most salient factors is that the study was conducted in a small Midwestern geographic location where most people may know each other. Therefore, it is possible that this familiarity could have influences for interpersonal relationships between parents and teachers.

The issue of heightening expectations for teachers was frequently encountered in research. Indeed, Lumsden's study (1998) suggested that teachers were experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed by trying to accommodate the needs of their students. Weil (1997) agreed by suggesting that some of the problems of excessive expectations are the result of schools trying to accommodate the perceived needs of their students. As other studies have shown, the results of this study seemed to be in agreement with the increasing expectations for teachers. In fact, 84% of the participants of the present study suggested that teachers are expected to do more and more by providing services for

children not specific to teaching. This perception may cause stress for teachers. It is conceivable that as expectations for teachers mount, there may be less time to perform the service they were trained to perform. This perception was summed up by one of the participating teachers who commented, "Many wonder, "Why do I work so hard?" Nothing matters except doing paperwork and documenting it. Students used to be held accountable for remembering assignments, grades, etc. Now we are accountable for informing parents of assignments, grades, etc."

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) issue is important to consider due to the fact that, in general, teachers have negative feelings regarding NCLB. The NCLB issue was viewed by participating teachers as the most consistently negative factor examined in the study. However, not as clear is the issue of whether NCLB contributes significantly to teacher stress. The correlation between NCLB (item 45) and the presence of teacher stress (item 5) was moderately significant ($r = .29, p < .01$). Participating teachers also reported only a moderate degree of stress, in general. Therefore, perhaps the question is not convincingly answered at present. Nonetheless, the research may suggest that doing what one does not agree with or does not see as making a difference is a source of dissatisfaction and stress (Leiter et al, 2001).

There were two additional factors that were included under NCLB: NCLB's impact on education and the changing nature of education. Perhaps there was more unity shown among teachers in regards to NCLB than any other factor examined in this study. The overwhelming majority of participants of this study (76%) did not think that NCLB is having a positive impact on education, which is consistent with the current literature. The theme for these teachers seems to be represented by this comment, "NCLB has been

detrimental to students. The stress of increased testing leaves less instructional time and is unrealistic." Research suggests a wide displeasure with the mandate (Sunderman, et al. 2004) as well.

As is perhaps evidenced by NCLB, education would seem to be in a general state of change. The state of change was alluded to by Kyriacou (2001) when she stated that "the ability to change has become increasingly important if teachers are to cope successfully with the demands made on them" (p.32). Kyriacou's comments were in direct response to policy makers and their considerable influence on education. With the emphasis of change in mind, the present study examined how the participants view the state of change in education.

As with NCLB, participants were overwhelmingly in agreement that indeed, their profession is constantly undergoing change. Eighty-six percent of the participants considered teaching to be constantly in a state of change. However, the question is whether this is a stress inducing event for teachers. There was a significant correlation between the state of change (item 41) for teachers and stress (item 5) ($r = .23, p < .01$), suggesting that teachers may be negatively impacted by the constantly changing teaching profession. Sunderman et al. (2004) concluded that the primary purpose for the accountability measures (e.g., NCLB) is to exert pressure on teachers to change their instructional practices in order to increase student achievement in order to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP).

3. Participants would report significant levels of psychological and physical symptoms related to stress.

Participating teachers (73%) reported that they did not feel any pervasive sense of sadness (depression). Also, most teachers did not feel the need for medication, counseling services, or days off from school due to mental health issues. Contrary to the current results, Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) noted that teacher stress may result in anger, anxiety, and depression, and indeed this seemed to be true for their study. However, the present study revealed that in general, the participants of the study are coping well with the stressors of teaching and indeed are doing so without the aid of antidepressants, counseling services, or frequent days off from school. In fact, there was little to suggest that the stressors that the participants feel as a result of teaching are contributing to depressive symptoms.

Also of importance is the issue of "burnout." For instance, Schonfeld's 1990 study which examined teacher "burnout" and the possible contribution to depression found that 32% of the teachers obtained scores that were indicative of major depressive symptoms. For the present study, however, only 13% of the participants felt any sense of "burnout" from their jobs. This seems surprisingly low considering the general consensus that teachers experience a high degree of "burnout" (Fisher, 1995). Although it is only conjecture, the present study does note a high degree of satisfaction among participants for their administrators, which could positively mediate potential "burnout." Indeed, the critical importance of ecological factors for ameliorating the effects of stress and possible "burnout" has been documented (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

4. Participant teachers would show poor coping skills.

Participants overwhelmingly (82%) reported that they have adequate coping skills at present. Contrary to predictions 3 and 4, participants of this study are able to cope with

the rigors associated with teaching and indeed, are apparently not experiencing any symptoms of depression to any significant degree. It should be noted that this is a highly personal issue, and participants may or may not feel at ease to answer with complete candor. Further, as has already been amply identified, the effects of a positive ecological environment in which to function can not be overly emphasized for its importance in mediating the effects of stress; and as discussed previously the participating teachers of this study acknowledge that they work for supportive administrators.

No study is without a limitation, and there are a few limitations in this study as well. First, because the study involved intra-personal issues concerning stress, anxiety, and depression, many participants may have found these issues to be too personal to divulge information willingly and truthfully. Although parameters were in-place to assure confidentiality, some may have had a natural and understandable reticence for complete disclosure. In addition, the decision to use a letterhead on the questionnaire itself might have had an unintended outcome. The intention was that a letterhead may lend credibility to the study and also encourage participation. However, there is the potential that some of the questions may not have been answered honestly due to the possibility of wanting to appear more positive. Because of this potential, there were measures used to ensure complete anonymity. Nonetheless, participants may have been potentially more guarded. Secondly, because of time constraints and limited resources, the study had to be conducted on a scale that was manageable for the researcher. Thus, a limited sample in terms of diversification was obtained. Indeed, it would have been advantageous to include larger metropolitan areas as well as differing geographic areas of the state of Illinois, if not the country to better represent the sample in terms of ethnicity. As a result

some of the results cannot be generalized with any degree of certainty beyond the sample area.

Implications of the Study

The present study was conducted in order to add to and update the literature regarding the relationship between the teaching profession and the potential for stress, anxiety, and depression. Perhaps one of the major contributions and implications of the present study was that it illuminated the need for serious evaluation when considering the merit for school reform, such as NCLB. The overwhelming majority of teachers in this study did not perceive NCLB as making a positive contribution to student learning. It is understood that conflict in values and loss of control over work are both major contributors of stress (Leiter et. al., 2001). This suggests that there are serious ecological consequences whenever change is invoked by "top-down" process. Stressed teachers seem to have negative interactions with students (Lamude, Scudder, & Forno-Lamude, 1992), and students seem to sense teacher stress and react to it, often not in a positive manner (Liza Nagel as cited in Israel, 2005). Thus, in the best interest of children, it is imperative that this line of research continues in order to better understand teacher stress.

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Table 1

Demographic Information of Participating Teachers

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Age		
21-30	32	18
31-40	33	18
41-50	46	26
51-65	69	38
Years Teaching		
1-5	42	23
5-10	30	17
10-20	37	21
20-30	47	26
30+	23	13
Marital Status		
Married	135	75
Single	45	25
Gender		
Male	44	24
Female	136	76
Teaching Assignment		
Regular Education	124	69
Special Education	23	13
Other	32	18

Table 2

Means for Teachers' Perception of Personal Experience of Stress and Attribution of

Stress

Variable	Mean	Std Dev.	Variance
Personal Experience			
14. I feel burned out from my work.	3.55	3.21	10.34
15. I feel a great deal of stress from my job.	2.32	1.39	1.95
18. My job frustrates me.	2.96	1.42	2.02
112. I feel I am at the end of my rope.	3.96	1.30	1.70
115. I'm sad a lot, and I don't know why.	4.05	1.26	1.61
121. I have more trouble feeling happy.	3.68	1.40	1.98
Perceptions of Administrators			
125. The administrator of the building is in general very supportive of my efforts	4.02	1.33	1.77
126. If I have a problem, I know my administrator will listen to me with honest concern.	3.96	1.40	1.96
129. My administrator is successful in generating a positive atmosphere in my school.	3.47	1.49	2.22
Parent-Teacher Relationships			
131. Parents are appreciative of my efforts.	3.22	1.10	1.22
133. Parents are beginning to seem more "pushy."	2.75	1.31	1.73
135. Interactions with parents are incurring significant stress for you.	3.41	1.27	1.62
Expectations of Teachers			
136. As teachers, we are expected to do more and more.	1.10	1.47	2.17
137. The expectations for teachers are unrealistic.	1.81	1.43	2.06
139. Our role as teachers has taken on responsibilities other than teaching.	1.09	1.34	1.80
Changes/School Reform			
141. The teaching profession is constantly undergoing change current legislation (NCLB) is having a	1.18	1.32	1.75
positive impact on education	1.47	1.31	1.73
144. Changes that have occurred recently are not based upon sound reasoning.	1.57	1.40	1.97
145. Current legislation (NCLB) is having a positive impact on education.	1.47	1.31	1.73
147. NCLB is helping to positively impact children's education.	1.61	1.27	1.63
149. NCLB is partly responsible for my stress.	2.16	1.47	2.16

Note: I=Item

Table 3

Coping Strategies of Teachers

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Mental Health Days		
0 Days	127	71
1-3 Days	51	28
4-7	1	.6
Counseling		
No	170	94
Yes	8	4
Medication		
Current Antidepressant	11	6
Current Antianxiety	3	2
Past Antidepressant	8	4
Past Antianxiety	1	.6
Other	3	2
None	146	81

Table 4
Thematic Summary of Teacher Comments

Documentation
- Paperwork, record keeping, etc. Not enough time to get it all done.
- Nothing matters except doing paperwork and documenting it.

Parent Issues
- Lack of parent control at home (discipline / expectation)… Lack of parent support… Disrespect of the profession…
- I feel that parents are depending on teachers and schools to provide their children with morals and values that used to be taught at home. Also, parents are more permissive at home and want the schools and teachers to be the same. In some cases, parents don't want their child disciplined in any way.
- Parents should care for and raise their children. The school and teacher are now expected to do this. We provide breakfast, lunch, after school care, snacks, school supplies, clothes, medical care, have kids brush their teeth, comb their hair, etc. No wonder test scores are down. Who has time to teach?

Expectations for Teachers
- Rising expectations for teachers are unrealistic when dealing with students, parents, and society…, who do not value education and intellectual pursuits.

No Child Left Behind/Legislators
- Legislators are often clueless! Especially when special education students and NCLB are concerned.
- NCLB has been detrimental to students. The stress of increased testing leaves less instructional time and is unrealistic.
- Worries about what our "Knuckleheaded" legislators are going to do next to try and "fix" the educational system
- NCLB has unrealistic expectation. It stereotypes children into "cookie-cutter" molds that we try so hare to break them out of. Not every child will achieve the expected levels…, through no-ones fault.
- NCLB is not realistic for all kids with special needs. Therefore, we are having to teach things that don't make sense, like geometry…, We should be teaching real-life skills!
- NCLB goals as explained to me seem unrealistic. The education system is being forced to re-evaluate who needs help and how much help they need. Any new program will need to be in place several years in order to see if it is working or causing more problems.
- Unrealistic goals (NCLB or work schedule) cause stress, because I'm battling something beyond my control. Lack of funding (promised funding) from the state and recent changes in retirement causes stress.

Stress/Burnout
- I have a quote that states "Burnout is what happens when there is no limit to expectations." It's where most of us are headed. Many wonder, "Why do I work so hard?" Students used to be held accountable for remembering assignments, grades, etc. Now we are accountable for informing parents of assignments, grades, etc.
- I feel that my lack of stress is due to an intelligent, capable, and caring principal. He is energetic and deals with problems immediately as they occur. He also is great for backing up the teachers and supporting them!
- We all have stress due to our profession. Certain times of the year/month/week, it is worse. I experience a lot of stress when I have a student and their parents who are always at school to complain.

Time/Resources
- Too little time to do what I need to do in the classroom… TEACH!
- Teaching without adequate resources

Note: Teacher comments are organized following the theme found in the current literature.

Appendix A

Dear Administrator,

I am conducting a study in affiliation with Eastern Illinois University (EIU), and I am contacting you to ask for your help. Specifically, I am asking for permission to distribute a teacher's survey questionnaire that is designed to sample teachers' views regarding job stress and the potential for "burnout." The name of the study is The Changing Landscape of Teaching and Teachers' Stress.

Specifically, the study seeks to understand the following issues associated with the teaching profession: (1) Is there high teacher stress? (2) Is there a relationship between teacher stress and the current educational reform, NCLB? (3) How do teachers manifest their stress? (4) How do teachers cope with stress? The answers to these questions will help to understand the current teaching environment as well as help to provide future research direction. In addition, the study can help to provide current information to legislators who are directly involved with education policy.

I will be contacting you in the near future to ask for permission to distribute the questionnaire as well as to answer any questions you may have. Further, I will be glad to provide you with a sample questionnaire for your consideration. Acquiring data through questionnaires can be difficult to obtain, therefore, any help you can provide to this study would be greatly appreciated. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me through my home phone, e-mail, or through Eastern Illinois University psychology department.

Thank you,

Mike DeVillez

1655 Union Grove Road   Or

Harrisburg, IL. 62946

Phone: (618) 273-8354

E-mail: devillez@accessus.net

Eastern Illinois University

Psychology Department

600 Lincoln Avenue

Charleston, IL. 61920

Phone: (217) 581-661

Appendix B
Research Agreement

I hereby agree not to examine any completed research questionnaire pertaining to the study at hand (Teacher Stress and the Changing Landscape of Teaching). Any questions pertaining to the study will be directly addressed to the researcher and those involved with its development. If permission is granted, pleases sign and return this agreement in the self-stamped envelope provided.

Signed_____

Study Contact:

Mike DeVillez

Wabash Ohio Valley Special Education District

P.O. Box 320, 800 South Division Street   Or

Norris City. IL. 62869

Phone: (618) 378-2131

Eastern Illinois University

Psychology Department

600 Lincoln Avenue

Charleston, IL. 61920

Phone: (217) 581-6615

Appendix C

Dear teachers,

I am conducting a research study in association with Eastern Illinois University to assess the current teaching environment for presence of stress. Specifically, I am interested in the presence of stress and the possible association with four factors that have been identified as possible contributors to teacher burnout. The teaching profession is constantly changing, and some of these changes may be leading to development of significant stress for teachers. A questionnaire has been developed in order to obtain your responses, thoughts, and feelings regarding the current teaching environment.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right of refusal. If you choose to help in this study, you will remain completely anonymous. There is no reason to identify anyone who participates. The information is strictly for research purposes only. There will be a number assigned to each questionnaire; this reference number is only for the purpose of distinguishing one completed questionnaire from another.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the questionnaire or the study, you are invited to contact me at any time. I will be happy to provide any information that I can associated with this study.

Thank you,   Eastern Illinois University
Mike DeVillez   Psychology Department
1250 Whitlock Road   Or   600 Lincoln Avenue
Raleigh, Illinois 62977   Charleston, IL. 61920
Telephone: (618) 273-8354   Phone: (217) 581-6615

Instructions for Completing Questionnaire:
1. Complete questionnaire (please try to complete within 10 days)
2. Put questionnaire in envelope and seal
3. Return envelope to office at your school

Appendix D

Teacher Questionnaire

I. Demographics: (please circle appropriate answer)

1. Male / Female

2. How many years teaching? 1-5   5-10   10-20   20-30   over 30

3. Current age: 21-30   31-40   41-50   51-65   over 65

4. Marital status: Single / Married

5. Teaching assignment: Regular ed class   Special ed class   Other

6. Please indicate grade taught: _____

Instructions: Please circle the appropriate number that most represents your opinion. **Caution**: Please pay special attention to the rating scale (e.g., strongly agree / strongly disagree); some question ratings begin with strongly agree, with the following sequence of numbers 0 1 2 3 4 5. However, other question ratings may begin with strongly disagree with the same following sequence of numbers 0 1 2 3 4 5. Errors in scoring can easily occur if attention is not paid to the scoring sequence for every question.

II. Personal Experience

1. I have nothing left to give at the end of the day.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

2. When I get up in the morning, I am feeling refreshed and ready to start the day.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

3. I enjoy working with people.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

4. I feel burned out from my work.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

5. I feel a great deal of stress from my job.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

6. I am not as emotionally connected with people as I used to be.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

7. I am very effective in working with my students.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

8. My job frustrates me

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

9. I am working too hard.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

10. I deal effectively with my students' problems.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

11. I experience stress from working with people.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

12. I feel I am at the end of my rope.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

13. I feel a sense of purpose from working with students.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

14. I am working harder and harder, and I don't feel that I deal with emotional issues calmly.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

15. I'm sad a lot, and I don't know why.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

16. I feel that I am accomplishing something worthwhile.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

17. I have become more forgetful.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

18. I am spending less time with my friends and family.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

19. In my interpersonal relationships, I feel that I deal with emotional issues calmly.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

20. I seem to get sick more often now.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

21. I have more trouble feeling happy.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

22. People seem to like me.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

23. I am less likely to laugh about a joke about myself.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

24. I don't seem to have as much to say to people as I used to.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

III. Perceptions of Administrators:

25. The administrator of the building is in general, very supportive of my efforts.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

26. If I have a problem, I know my administrator will listen to me with honest concern.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

27. My administrator is sympathetic to my concerns as a teacher.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

28. My administrator will help me find solutions to my problems.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

29. My administrator is successful in generating a positive atmosphere in my school.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

Comment area:

IV. Parent / Teacher Relationships

30 In general, parents are very supportive of your efforts.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

31. Parents are appreciative of your efforts

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

32. In general, the parent / teacher alliance is positive for you

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

33. Parents are beginning to seem more "pushy."

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

34. Parents seem to be more adversarial in nature.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

35. Interactions with parents are incurring significant stress for you.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

Comment area:

V. Expectations:

36. As teachers, we are expected to do more and more.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

37. The expectations for teachers are unrealistic

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

38. We as teachers are expected to provide services to children that are not specific to teaching

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

39. Our role as teachers has taken on responsibilities other than teaching.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

40. We should provide services for our students other than teaching.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

Comment area:

VI. Changes / Political Rhetoric

41. The teaching profession is constantly undergoing change.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

42 Sometimes, those who are responsible for change do not understand teaching

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

43. Those that are responsible for change are usually qualified to make judgments for change.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree

44 Changes that have occurred recently are not based upon sound reason.

Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree.

45 Current legislation (No Child Left Behind) is having a positive impact on education.

Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree

46. NCLB is helping to make me a better teacher.
Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree
47. NCLB is helping to positively impact children's' education.
Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree
48. NCLB is good for education.
Strongly disagree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly agree
49. NCLB is partly responsible for my stress.
Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree
50. Because of NCLB, I am being told what to teach.
Strongly agree 0   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly disagree
Comment area:

VII. Coping Strategies: Please circle the answer that best describes you.

51. I have taken a mental health day due to stress (occasional day off from school) during an academic year.
Days   0   1-3   4-7   8-9   10 or more
52. I have received or I am currently receiving counseling services for stress or depression.
Current.   Yes   No
53. I am currently using or have in the past used the following medication because of work related stress.
Current: Antidepressant   Antianxiety   Other_____   None
In Past   Antidepressant   Antianxiety   Other_____   None
54. I presently have adequate coping skills for stress.
Yes / No

VIII. Personal Comment Area

A number of attributions (causes) have been offered for their possible contribution to teacher stress and burnout. These attributions were selected due to the frequency that they were encountered during research. However, it cannot be supposed that they are all-inclusive. According to your own personal experience, you may have other factors that you feel contribute equally or perhaps even more to stress. Therefore, you are invited to provide your own observations and experiences for teacher stress in this area.
Comments: