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Evaluating teacher stress and its effect on student behaviors in an alternative school

Kimberly Nizolek

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**EVALUATING TEACHER STRESS AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENT
BEHAVIORS IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL**

by
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A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Psychology
College of Science and Mathematics
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at
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Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my son, Colin Costello.

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I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Roberta Dihoff and George Brandon Gordon for their guidance and help throughout this research.

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Abstract

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EVALUATING TEACHER STRESS AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENT
BEHAVIORS IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
2014-2015

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Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to evaluate teacher stress and its effect on negative student behaviors in an alternative school setting. Teacher stress is defined as a negative state held by a teacher that includes unpleasant emotions, such as anger or sadness, as a result of their work and it appears when events and responsibilities exceed one's coping mechanisms (Kyriacou, 2001; Lazarus, 1993). Teachers working in alternative schools may report a high level of stress based off of their working environment. When teachers feel stressed, they may not be able to provide the necessary support to their students to succeed in the classroom (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). It is important for students to have a high quality student-teacher relationship in order for them to achieve academic success (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Students' negative behavior in the classroom has been associated consistently with teacher stress and burnout (Blasé, 1986; Geving, 2007; Yoon, 2002; Borg and Riding, 1991; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Evers et al., 2004; Gable et al., 2009; Hastings & Bham, 2003; Kokkinos, 2007; Kyriacou, 2001; Lewis, 1999; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Although there is an abundant amount of research on how students' behaviors affect teachers' stress levels, there is not much research that deals with how teachers' stress affects students' behaviors in the classroom (Geving, 2007).

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Teacher stress may have a negative effect on students' behaviors in the classroom (Travers & Cooper, 1996; Schaubman, Stetson, Plog, 2011). Teacher stress is defined as negative emotions, such as anger or depression, experienced by a teacher as a result of their work (Kyracou, 2001). Some signs of teacher stress were related to absences, staff turnover, and early retirement (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). It is important for students to be able to receive the best education possible. Students obtained motivation to succeed academically from perceived support by others (Goodenow, 1993). It was beneficial for students and teachers to build a positive rapport so that students felt supported (Yoon, 2002). When teachers felt stressed, they were unable to provide the necessary support to their students to succeed in the classroom (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). Teachers working in alternative schools may report a high level of stress based off of their working environment. Teachers who reported high levels of stress may not be teaching at their fullest potential (Brock & Grady, 2000). It is important to discover if there is a correlation between teacher stress and negative behaviors displayed by students in the classroom. Negative behaviors displayed by students caused disruption in the classroom, interfered with learning, contributed to teacher stress, and made the school an unsafe place (Smallwood, 2003). If there is a correlation between teacher stress and negative student behaviors in the classroom, more research can take place on how to reduce the level of stress of teachers working in alternative schools so that they may better serve their students.

The goal of this study was to determine whether teacher stress had a negative effect on students' behaviors in the classroom. Teachers are mainly responsible for providing students with an education. However, teachers in alternative schools are responsible for managing students' behaviors and to also provide students with an education. Alternative schools house special education students who cannot receive the proper education that they need in mainstream education. Teachers working in alternative school settings may have to deal with a variety of behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric problems displayed by students. Dealing with such a population may lead to a high level of stress for teachers. In fact, working with students who are diagnosed with behavioral disorders may be the number one factor for experiencing stress and burnout as a teacher (Fore III, Martin, & Bender, 2002).

For this study, teachers and teacher aides working in an alternative high school with classified students diagnosed with behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric disorders were given a survey titled, the "Teacher Stress Inventory" (Fimian, 1988) to measure their stress levels. Positive and negative behavioral write-ups written by the teachers for students portraying positive or negative behavior were viewed and recorded. Data was collected from three separate programs within the school. One program consisted of students diagnosed with internalizing disorders. Another program consisted of students diagnosed with externalizing disorders. The last program consisted of students diagnosed with severe psychiatric disorders. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between teacher stress and positive and negative student behavior in the classroom.

It was predicted that there would be a significant relationship between teacher stress and negative student behaviors in the classroom. It was also predicted that there would be a significant relationship between teacher stress and positive behaviors in the classroom. Teachers who reported a high level of stress were predicted to have more negative student behaviors and less positive student behaviors in their classrooms. Teachers who reported a low level of stress were predicted to have less negative student behaviors and more positive student behaviors in their classrooms.

It was assumed that teachers recorded all negative behavior displayed by students in their classroom. It was also assumed that teachers correctly matched the behaviors displayed by the students to the correct behavior indicated on the behavioral write-up form.

In summary, this study investigated the potential relationship between teacher stress and negative and positive student behaviors in the classroom. It was predicted that teachers who report a high level of stress would have more negative behavioral write-ups and less positive behavioral write-ups for students in their classrooms. It was also predicted that teachers who reported a low level of stress will have less negative behavioral write-ups for students and more positive behavioral write-ups in their classrooms.

Operational Definitions

Stress: something that occurs when goals are threatened that are perceived as important to an individual (Kyriacou, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

Teacher stress: negative emotions, such as anger or depression, experienced by a teacher as a result of their work (Kyracou, 2001).

Teacher burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment resulting from working with difficult and non-compliant students (Cunningham, 1983; Farber, 1984; Malanowski & Wood, 1984; Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1984; McIntyre, 1984; Pierson-Hubeny & Archambault, 1985).

Negative behavioral write-ups: a document that lists 15 examples of negative behaviors with a section for comments

Positive behavioral write-ups: a document in which teachers record positive behaviors displayed by students within the classroom

Teacher efficacy: a teacher's belief in their ability to encourage and support student's learning, (Hoy, 2000).

Teacher Stress Inventory: an instrument developed by Michael Fimian that validly and reliably assesses the level of stress in teachers (Fimian, 1984).

Proactive classroom management: strategies utilized by teachers to prevent the students from displaying inappropriate behaviors (Schabuman, Stetson, & Plog (2011).

Reactive classroom management: teachers' reactions for student behaviors in the classroom (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Teacher Stress

Stress is a condition that has the ability to cause a number of problems for many people in everyday life. Stress is something that occurs when goals are threatened that are perceived as important to an individual (Kyriacou, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Stress is defined as “The non-specific response of a human body to any demand made upon it. The situation is considered stressful when the demands to cope exceed an individual’s ability to cope,” (Selye, 1978, pg. 1). Stress was known to have an effect on cognitive functioning and higher order thinking and it can cause learned helplessness and lower self-esteem (Gunnar & Cheatham, 2003; O’Neal, 1996; Johnson, 1986.)

Stress that occurs in teachers happening within a school setting is referred to as teacher stress. Teacher stress is defined as a negative state held by a teacher that includes unpleasant emotions, such as anger or sadness, as a result of their work and it appears when events and responsibilities exceed one’s coping mechanisms (Kyriacou, 2001; Lazarus, 1993). Teacher stress is common and universal across cultures (Harney, 2008). Teacher stress related to teacher absences, turnover, and early retirement (Kipps-Vaughn, 2013). Stress among teachers negatively affects the school climate, which leads to students’ negative academic and behavioral problems (Kipps-Vaughn, 2013). Student behaviors and overwhelming workloads are often mentioned as a major cause of stress in teachers, regardless of age, gender or seniority of the teacher (Wilson, 2002; Murphy & Claridge, 2000). Johnson et al. (2005) found that out of 26 stress-related occupations,

teaching has been ranked as one of the highest. Johnson et al. (2005) hypothesized that the emotional involvement of teachers with their students may be a cause for this finding.

Wilson (2002) labeled three aspects of teacher stress: 1) stress is a burden for teachers who are dealing with situations that are beyond their adaptive limits; 2) stress is the psychological and physiological symptoms arising in the teacher; 3) stress is situational and interactive in specific schools and can vary depending on the teacher's resilience and the availability of resources. Wilson (2002) identifies the first two aspects for teachers in passive teaching roles and the third aspect for teachers in active teaching roles.

Teacher Burnout

Teacher stress is often related to teacher burnout. Burnout was sometimes thought to be a strong reaction to stress (Cherniss, 1980). The term, "burnout," describes a condition that includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, resulting from helping unwilling or ungrateful individuals (Farber, 1984; Gold, 1984, 1985; Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981; Johnson, Gold & Knepper, 1984; Malanowski & Wood, 1984; Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1984; McIntyre, 1984; Pierson-Hubeny & Archambault, 1985; Schonfeld, 2001). Burnout was also explained as stress that individuals feel in their social and professional life (Gold & Bachelor, 2001), loss of direction and energy levels towards job (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980), and exhaustion and fatigue due to a decrease in physical and emotional energy (Maslach, Schoufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Maslach et al. (2001) described burnout in three dimensions, such as, exhaustion, depersonalization, and accomplishment. Depersonalization is explained as taking on a cold, cynical, detached attitude towards one's work and the people one comes into

contact with. When teachers depersonalize with their students, they decrease their emotional involvement in the classroom (Gastaldi, Pasta, Longobardi, Prino, & Quaglia, 2014). Zahn (1980) suggested that burnout was something that happened over time and did not manifest in teachers until their third year in the field.

Burnout rates were higher in special education teachers than in general education teachers (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1990). Special education teachers may experience more stress and burnout than regular education teachers because the population they serve requires more time and energy. The retention rate of special education teachers was very high among schools across the country (Fore III, Martin, & Bender 2002). The high retention rate was due to teachers leaving the job because of stressors, such as: being unsupported, being unprepared, becoming overwhelmed by students and job responsibilities, loss of power (Fore III, Martin, & Bender, 2002). Teachers working in different types of schools with different populations may have different levels of burnout (Koruklu, Feyzioglu, Ozenoglu-Kiremit, & Aladag, 2012). There have been studies done for special education groups measuring burnout and stress in a number of different populations. Thompson (1980) and Fimian (in press) have studied stress and burnout in a population of group home staff. Lawrence & McKinnon (1980) have studied teachers of the emotionally disturbed. Meadow (1981) studied stress levels for professionals working with deaf students. Johnson et.al. (1981), Zabel & Zabel (1981), and Fimian (1983) studied stress in teachers working with intellectually disabled and learning disabled students. McIntyre (1981) and Fimian & Santoro (1983) have studied stress in general education teacher populations. All studies have shown that there is a greater deal of burnout in special education populations. Working with students who

are diagnosed with behavioral disorders may be the number one factor for experiencing burnout (Fore III, Martin, & Bender, 2002).

Burnout was thought to be a physical condition as well as psychological, and it could have physical symptoms associated with it. Kennedy Paine (2009) explained that there are cognitive, physical, affective, and behavioral warning signs of burnout. The physical symptoms associated with burnout were headaches, fatigue, stomach problems, ulcers, restlessness, increase in heart rate, cardiovascular problems, and neurological problems (Black, 2003; Talmor, Reiter, & Fegin, 2005). Burnout was also associated with psychological issues like rage, depression, low self-esteem, hopelessness, substance abuse, and attention problems (Black, 2003; Sari, 2004; Talmor et.al. 2005). Examples of behaviors displayed by individuals with burnout would be deterioration of interaction with others, a mocking and sarcastic manner towards others, absent from work or acting ill to purposely be absent from work, decrease in the quality of service towards others, and procrastination for work (Koruklu, Kiremit, Feyzioglu, & Aladag, 2012). Teacher burnout directly effected teachers' physical, academic, and social performance (Sears, Urizar, & Evans, 2000). Situations that may cause burnout in teachers are students who misbehave, tension in the school climate, inadequate support and respect for work, lack of resources to perform their job, lack of social support from colleagues, lack of administrative support, and being overwhelmed by workload (Ozdemir, 2007; Cheuk & Sai, 1995; Brissie et.al; Sarros & Sarros, 1987).

When teachers become stressed out to the point of experiencing burnout, they may tend to lose all the qualities that attracted them to the profession originally (Whiteman, Young, & Fisher, 2001). Teachers that experienced burnout as a result of

stress were more likely to show less empathy towards students, become detached from students, and be less involved with their students interpersonally (Gastaldi, Pasta, Longobardi, Prino, & Quaglia, 2014). This attitude that a teachers took on due to burnout and stress can then have a negative effect on students' academic achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2004).

Pines and Aronson (1980) stated that caregivers become overwhelmed by constant emotional arousal with intense relationships with people over a long period of time. This statement applied to teachers because teachers were considered caregivers and they formed intense relationships with their students for an entire school year. For the stressed out teacher, dealing with the same intense students can create burnout in the teacher. As burnout became more apparent, teachers interpreted student behavior as more severe than it may actually be (Whiteman, Young, & Fisher, 2001). Teachers might discipline these students more seriously than they normally would because of the misinterpretation. This caused the quality of teaching to decrease because teachers were spending more time redirecting behavior than teaching. When teachers got off track to redirect behavior, it could be more difficult to pick back up where they left off and, as a result, lessons could become choppy and inconsistent. The quality of teaching also decreased as teacher's skills became diminished due to emotional or physical factors caused by burnout (Whiteman, Young, & Fischer, 2001).

Interpersonal Relationships Between Teachers and Students

The interpersonal relationship between teachers and students can be considered the most important factor when looking at stress and behavior. Student-teacher compatibility is defined by Greene, Abidin, & Kmetz (1997) as the level to which the

capacities, motivations, and style of behaving by students are compatible with the expectations and demands of the teacher. Many researchers believe that a teacher's personality and how teachers interact with students is sometimes more important for student success than the teacher's ability to teach (Whiteman, Young, & Fisher, 2001). It was important for students to have a high quality student-teacher relationship in order for them to achieve academic success (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Stress affected the quality of the relationships teachers had with their students (Yoon, 2002). Students' behaviors also affected teacher stress and student and teacher relationships (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). Students who had trusting, close relationships with their teachers were more likely to have a positive school outcome (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008). Negative student-teacher relationships that stemmed from conflict and mistrust and students who were involved in these negative relationships had poor outcomes in learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Vulnerable students sometimes had the highest need for support and guidance from teachers (Birch & Iadd, 1997). Special education students required a lot of attention from teachers. Students diagnosed with behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric disorders tended to be more vulnerable than mainstream education students. Teachers who had to spend time dealing with vulnerable students sometimes ended up giving most of their attention to these students. As a result, this made it harder for teachers to give attention to students who were acting positively and staying on task academically. When teachers constantly had to address negative behavior in the classroom, they missed out on rewarding positive behavior. Teachers were more likely to respond positively when students displayed appropriate academic behaviors, but teachers were less likely to respond when students displayed positive social behaviors

(Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). However, teachers responded negatively to students who displayed inappropriate negative behavior (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). Students who wanted attention from their teacher, but had trouble with academics, may portray negative social behaviors just to get a reaction from their teacher, whether the reactions from teachers were positive or negative.

A teacher has to have a healthy and positive wellbeing in order to be an effective aspect of the classroom. A teacher's wellbeing may become affected if teachers internalized their negative relationships with students (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). In order to build a rapport with students, teachers relate to their students. The personal experiences of the student might be overwhelming to the teachers, especially for those teachers working with students who come from traumatic backgrounds. Teachers sometimes internalized these experiences (Split, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011), which affected their relationships with that student and sometimes even their overall teaching performance.

Teachers are responsible for many aspects of their students' lives, and can therefore be considered one of the most important factors in a student's life. Therefore, a teacher's wellbeing can have significant effects on children's emotional adjustment in school and their academic performance (Hamre & Pianta, 2004); Malmberg & Hagger, 2009; Moolenaar, 2010; Roth et. al, 2007). If teachers were not personally happy with their interpersonal relationships with students, they may not be able to develop professionally as an educator (Day & Leitch, 2001; O'Connor, 2008). If there was a high amount of conflict between students and teachers, it could produce feelings of helplessness within the teacher (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). The teacher might be too

focused on trying to repair a negative relationship with a student that resulted from a teacher-student conflict. If the teacher was not successful in repairing the relationship, that teacher might experience a sense of failure and helplessness. The amount of negative student-teacher relationships perceived by the teacher within the classroom is associated with a higher report of stress and negative emotions by teachers (Yoon, 2002). Negative behavior displayed by students has an affect on teacher stress, but it was reported that repeated, constant negative behavior produces changes in the teacher's wellbeing (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

It is important to be aware that teacher perceptions can affect behavior portrayed by both the teacher and the student. If a student stressed a teacher, the teacher may develop a bias towards that particular student (Christenson, Ysseldyke, Wang, & Algozzine, 1983). The way a teacher interpreted the student's behavior may have had an impact on that relationship with the student (Greene, Abidin, & Kmetz, 1997). Teachers who were more satisfied with their job perceived a good relationship with their students (Lortie, 1975). When teachers had a high level of stress, they could sometimes direct their anger towards students, which resulted in a perceived negative relationship with that student by the teacher, which then led to more stress on both parties (Gastaldi Pasta, Longobardi, Prino, & Quaglia, 2014). Students may then display negative behavior because of the anger that the teacher directed towards them. A teacher's perception of a student's negative behavior was associated with emotional exhaustion, which is a key component for burnout (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Teachers spend a significant amount of time redirecting negative behaviors and this can also cause a high level of stress for the teacher (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). The teacher's perceptions of student's negative

behaviors had an influence on the teacher's mental representations of the student-teacher relationship (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). The teacher may view students' behaviors as disruptive or challenging without understanding the underlying meaning of the behavior (Axup & Gersch, 2008).

Teaching is a rewarding profession when teachers see positive outcomes in their students. Teachers often said that the positive teacher-student relationship is what drew and kept them in the teaching profession (Hargreaves 1998; O'Connor, 2008). In an interview conducted with teachers, 60 teachers reported that their relationships with their students were the most important factors to them in their job (Hargreaves, 2000). Data was collected from a 3-year project looking at school effectiveness in four urban middle schools. The purpose of the study was to examine teacher satisfaction. Interviews were conducted and questionnaires were given out that asked teachers to rank 14 variables that included school curriculum, job security, teacher autonomy, recognition of teacher achievement, and relationships at work. The data showed that student-teacher relationships were ranked as the highest for teacher satisfaction (Shann, 1998). According to past research, teachers receive intrinsic rewards by having close relationships with their students and experience negative emotions when there are conflict relationships present with students (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

Teachers looked for positive relationships with students, but it was also true that students wanted positive relationships with their teachers as well. Students said that it is important to them to have teachers that care for them (Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999). Students defined caring as sharing, emotional support, and talking with them about personal problems (Baker, Clark, Maier, & Viger, 2008). Teachers who are stressed are

less likely to share, give emotional support, and talk with students about problems. Building a trusting relationship with teachers is important for students to have a positive experience in school (Shaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). If students have a positive school experience, they are less likely to display negative behavior. Students displaying positive behavior may lessen the level of stress in the teacher because the teacher can then spend more time teaching and less time managing behavior. In order for students to develop caring relationships with their teachers, they need opportunities to interact with teachers (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). The interactions between students and teachers can develop into positive relationships and, as a result, students then show more satisfaction with school (Baker, 1999). Students rely on their relationships with their teachers and look to them for help (Kipps-Vaughn, 2013). High school students reported that they receive academic motivation from their teachers (Goodenow, 1993). Stressed teachers may be irritable, impatient, and easily frustrated by students (Brock & Grady, 2000) and may not be able to provide the support that the students need to achieve academically (Kipps-Vaughn, 2013).

Student Behavior and its Effect on Teacher Stress

When students misbehave during school, it had a negative impact on a teacher's stress level. Students' negative behavior in the classroom has been associated consistently with teacher stress and burnout (Blasé, 1986; Geving, 2007; Yoon, 2002; Borg and Riding, 1991; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Evers et al., 2004; Gable et al., 2009; Hastings & Bham, 2003; Kokkinos, 2007; Kyriacou, 2001; Lewis, 1999; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Tsouloupas et al., 2010). According to Kyriacou (1998), studies showed that 20% to 25% of teachers experienced a large amount of stress in their jobs. Teachers

are expected to teach lessons, social-emotional skills, attend staff meetings, provide supervision during students' recreational time, and perform miscellaneous tasks assigned by administration (Esteve, 2000). This added responsibility creates more stress on teachers (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). Some factors that contribute to teacher stress may include being overwhelmed with the work load, lack of success at work, too much time monitoring students and not enough breaks, too many students per teacher, school day not structured properly, and constantly being responsible for students throughout the school day (Weiskopf, 1980).

When teachers are stressed, they may not be as effective in enhancing a student's academic success in the classroom. Classrooms managed by an impaired teacher may have students that act out negatively and because the teacher is stressed, the teacher may not be able to enforce rules, which may lead to more stress on that teacher (Schonfeld, 1992). Teachers may believe that a lot of the causes for students' misbehavior are out of their control (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011), so they may be less likely to address the negative behavior themselves. Students, therefore, feel like they are not being cared for by their teachers and they then display even more negative behaviors because they are not satisfied in school (Baker, Grant, et.al, 2008).

It is especially challenging for teachers who are working with special education students with emotional, behavioral, and psychiatric disorders. The needs of some students are so great that the students make it difficult for even the most experienced school-based mental health professionals to understand and develop effective interventions (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). Expecting teachers to deal with these

students and teach a lesson while also managing behavior may cause teachers to develop a great deal of stress.

Students who portray negative behaviors are more likely to be targeted as challenging students when the teacher has negative feelings about the student-teacher relationship with that student. The teacher may then experience a higher level of stress when dealing with this student. If the teacher has to deal with this student for a long period of time, the teacher may develop chronic stress (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Student behavior is recognized as a major factor for correlating teacher's depictions of student-teacher relationships and of the conflict factor between students and teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre et al., 2008; Huges et al., 1999; Spilt & Koomen, 2009).

Negative behaviors portrayed by students are sometimes the most stressful aspects of a teacher's job. The most common type of negative behavior is low level disruption type behaviors, such as: speaking when it's not permitted, task avoidance, disrupting peers who are working, being disorderly in class, and making inappropriate comments (DES, 1989; Geving, 2007). These types of negative behaviors do not seem to be detrimental to a teacher's stress level, but these low level behaviors that happen constantly can be more exhausting to a teacher (Johnstone, 1993; Lazarus, 1976; Wilson 2002). Another factor that may influence negative behavior in the classroom is poor academic achievement (Geving, 2007). Students who are not performing well on academic tasks may become frustrated and take this frustration out on the teacher (Geving, 2007). Boredom in the classroom is another factor that may influence negative behavior. Students who are not motivated by teachers and classwork may be less likely to want to learn the material (Moles, 1990). If teachers show enthusiasm about their

lesson, the students may be more excited to take part and learn the material (Geving, 2007).

Special education teachers working with behaviorally, emotionally, and psychiatrically diagnosed children are sometimes more vulnerable to stress and burnout. Violent or aggressive behavior portrayed in students had a negative impact on the classroom and interfered with students' academic and social experiences, contributed to teacher stress and student stress, and threatened school safety (Smallwood, 2003). According to Smallwood (2003), "chronically violent or aggressive [children] may be defiant, start fights, push, kick, hit or grab, throw things, verbally threaten classmates or staff, or destroy property" (p. 1). Explosive behavior may be connected to a psychiatric diagnosis (Smallwood, 2003). This type of behavior is common in students diagnosed with behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric disorders. Teachers who work with this population are constantly addressing behavior. It is difficult and stressful for teachers because the negative behavior is constant and students diagnosed with these disorders are sometimes not available for learning and act out in class on purpose to avoid learning.

Some researchers suggested that psychodynamic concepts may be able to explain student behaviors in the classroom through transference and projection (Ademo Serpieri, Giusti, Tamajo-Contarini & Valerio, 2003; Greenwood, 2002; Hanko, 2003). Transference was explained as the student repeating negative behaviors that they utilized in early unsuccessful relationships that had an unbalance of power (Cairns, 1994). Greenwood (2002) explained projection as defensively pushing unbearable feelings onto the teacher. Students who had insecure infant attachment patterns may have them resurface when dealing with teachers and if the students are not capable of coping, have

difficulties during school (Greenwood, 2002). Teachers are dealing with challenging behaviors without a known cause or reason (Axup & Gersch, 2008). When students are projecting their behaviors onto the teacher, it can cause the teacher to experience feelings of anger, hurt, uselessness, frustration and fear (Greenwood, 2002).

Teacher Stress and its Effect on Student Behaviors

Teachers who are stressed can negatively affect their students and their students' behaviors. Teachers who are trying to meet the needs of their students while also trying to maintain a healthy learning environment need to be aware of their own stress (Kennedy Paine, 2009) and how their stress may affect students. Athanasiou et.al. (2002) explained that teachers may not be aware of their own contributions to negative behavior displayed by students. Baker's (1999) study reported that students who were reprimanded for negative behavior reported low school satisfaction twice as much than students who reported a higher level of school satisfaction.

Greene, et.al (1997) conducted a study that looked at teacher's experience of stress with students, their perceptions of relationships with those students, and whether their perceptions had an impact on their interactions with those specific students. The study found that the teachers behaved more negatively towards students with behavioral problems (Greene, et al., 1997).

Although there is an abundant amount of research on how students' behaviors affect teachers' stress levels, there was not much research that deals with how teachers' stress affects students' behaviors in the classroom (Geving, 2007). Students sometimes have many disturbances that can affect their learning and their behavior in the classroom. Some examples of this are parental upbringing, peer influences, and low self-esteem.

Although these situations and experiences play a huge part in a child's ability to learn and behave correctly in the classroom, teachers also have a huge role in affecting student behavior and learning (Geving, 2007). When teachers acted in a positive way, the students tended to behave more appropriately and model this behavior shown by the teacher (Geving, 2007). A study conducted by Bru, Stephens, and Torsheim (2002) involved sixth and ninth grade students and had these subjects complete a survey that asked questions about their teacher's emotional and academic support to students, the teacher's monitoring in the classroom, and how often the teacher had students participate in class and also had the students answer questions about their own misbehavior. It was found that the students' views on the teachers' emotional support related to a higher negative association with students' self-reported misbehavior. When teachers showed more emotional support towards students, students reported less negative behavior (Bru, Stephens, and Torsheim, 2002). This study showed that when teachers acted in a positive way, the students tended to behave more appropriately and model this behavior shown by the teacher (Geving, 2007).

Teacher resilience and self-efficacy are important for modeling behavior to students. Teachers who showed more self-efficacy were more likely to show positive behavior themselves in the classroom (Allinder, 1994), which could then affect the students' behaviors, making them show more positive behavior as well. Teachers who showed a low level of self-efficacy tended to show a high level of stress and have a more difficult time dealing with behavioral problems in the classroom (Gastaldi, Pasta, Longobardi, Prino, & Quaglia, 2014). Teachers who showed a high morale in the classroom often had students who performed more productively and also showed a high

morale (Owen, Mundy, & Harrison, 1980). Poulou and Norwich (2002) conducted a study that looked at teachers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to students diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders. The results of the study were that how teachers responded to students predicted how teachers responded emotional and behaviorally. Then, the teachers' responses to students predicted how students responded to teachers (Onchwari, 2010). This showed that the behaviors displayed by students starts with the teachers. If the teachers show a confident level of self-efficacy and self-esteem and have resilience to handle a challenging population of students, then the students have a better chance to succeed academically and emotionally in the classroom.

Classroom Management and its Effect on Behavior

It is important to look at classroom management styles and how they affect behavior. The way a teacher manages their classroom can alleviate stress on both the teacher and the student or create stress for the teacher and the student. A study by Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1990) showed that the level of order created by the teacher within the first few days of school can predict the behavior shown by students for the remainder of the school year. Teachers who clearly explained expectations of students behaviorally and academically, explained classroom rules thoroughly, and showed consistency in teaching and disciplining behavior had a better chance of having students that were more likely to show positive behavior as opposed to negative behavior. Teachers who were not helpful towards students' success in the classroom and who did not encourage and motivate them and who were not consistent in their discipline were more likely to have students who displayed negative behavior (Geving, 2007).

There are two major types of classroom management styles that teachers use. They are proactive classroom management and reactive classroom management. Schabuman, Stetson, & Plog (2011) defined proactive classroom management as teachers using strategies to prevent the students from displaying inappropriate behaviors. Researchers have found that it makes a positive impact on students when teachers held students accountable during class and provided them with enriching educational experiences, especially students diagnosed with mental illness (Catalano et al., 2004; Klem and Connell, 2004; Guetzloe, 2003). Reactive classroom management is explained as reacting after the student displays either positive or negative behavior (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011). Teachers who used reactive classroom management reported a higher level of stress than teachers who used proactive classroom management (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008). A study conducted by Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp (2008) found that students reported being less interested in the lesson and their on-task behaviors declined when teachers used reactive classroom management strategies.

Teachers who are not consistent and who enforce rules upon students but do not follow the rules that they enforce themselves sometimes lose respect from their students which can then cause students to misbehave during class. For example, if a teacher enforced a rule to not allow students to text message during class, but then text messaged themselves during class, the student might not feel as though the teacher is being effective in modeling what appropriate behavior should look like. In a study conducted by Geving (2007), it was hypothesized that ineffective teacher behaviors would be strongly related to stressful student behaviors. Geving (2007) found that teachers who reported more student misbehaviors also reported a higher level of stress. Geving (2007)

gave some examples of ineffective teacher behaviors: not respecting school policy, interrupting a student who is talking, and enforcing rules upon students that teachers do not follow themselves. Some examples of students' misbehaviors that caused more stress in teachers were: damage to school property, disrespect towards peers, not being prepared for class, disrespect towards teachers, not paying attention in class, hyperactivity, showing a lack of interest in the material, noisiness, and not following school rules (Geving, 2007).

Instruments Used to Measure Stress in Teachers

Teachers have a very important responsibility in educating their students. It is important to assess the level of stress in teachers in order to examine their maintenance and motivation in the classroom (Fimian, 1984). Fimian (1984) described an instrument known as the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) that validly and reliably assessed the level of stress in teachers. The TSI defined six factors that relates to stress in special education teachers: Personal/Professional Stressors; Professional Distress; Discipline and Motivation; Emotional Manifestations; Biobehavioral Manifestations; and Physiological-Fatigue Manifestations (Fimian, 1984). Fimian (1984) explained that each factor was measured for the perceived strength of stressful events and the frequency in which they occurred. Then, scores for the six factors for each of the two dimensions were totaled to determine the total strength and total frequency (Fimian, 1984).

Another instrument used to measure stress is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI, Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The MBI is 22-item questionnaire used to measure occupational stress in human service professionals (Aluja, Bianch, & Garcia, 2005). Emotional exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA)

are used as factors on the MBI (Aluja, Bianch, & Garcia, 2005). These factors measured fatigue, negative attitudes toward students, labor satisfaction, occupational success, and competency feelings expressed by human service professionals (Aluja, Bianch, & Garcia, 2005).

Criticisms of Measuring Teacher Stress

There were some criticisms of the current way teacher stress is measured. Job stressors and stress accrued from job stress are usually not measured independently (Schonfeld, 2001). Another criticism is that teachers sometimes may displace their feelings of stress onto other sources, when they are actually stressed about another source (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983; Schonfeld, 2001). There was also research that suggested that instruments used to measure teacher stress may be measuring depressive symptoms rather than stress (Dohrenwend, Shrout, Egri, Mendelsohn, 1980; Schonfeld, 2001). According to Hammen and DeMayo (1982), it was found that in a sample of Los Angeles high school teachers, the Teacher Stress Inventory (Bruno, 1979) correlated .63 with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977; Weissman, Scholomskas, Pottenger, Prusoff, Locke, 1977), which is a validated instrument that measures depressive symptoms (Schonfeld, 2001). The CES-D may be a better instrument to measure teacher's depressive symptoms (Schonfeld, 1992).

Another criticism was that a number of studies have been done assessing burnout levels in teachers, but they have not specifically looked at stress as a precursor for burnout (Fimian, 1984). More research should be conducted looks at stress and how it relates to burnout. Stress can be seen as a condition, and if it is not alleviated, it can lead

to a more serious condition, such as burnout. More research on this matter would be beneficial to alleviate both stress and burnout in teachers.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Participants

Surveys were passed out to approximately 42 special education teachers and teacher aides in an alternative school. Of the 45 teachers and teacher aides, 34 participants returned completed surveys. There were specifically 20 teachers and 14 teacher aides that participated in the study. Teachers were self-selected, as participation in this study was voluntary.

Out of the 34 participants, 43% were male and 56% were female. 35% of participants were between the ages 20-30 years, 29% were between ages 31-40, 26% were between ages 41-50 and 9% were 51 years and older. Participants were asked how many years of experience that they had working in a school either as a teacher or teacher aide. 50% of participants indicated that they had 0-5 years of experience, 32% indicated 6-10 years of experience, 12% indicated 11-20 years of experience, and 6% indicated 21+ years of experience.

The school used in this study was an alternative special education school for classified middle and high school students diagnosed with behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric disorders. The school is located in Central New Jersey.

Materials

The survey used in this study is titled “The Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI)” (Fimian, 1984), which validly and reliably assesses the level of stress in teachers. The TSI defined six factors that relates to stress in special education teachers: personal/professional stressors; professional distress; discipline and motivation;

emotional manifestations; bio-behavioral manifestations; and physiological-fatigue manifestations. Each factor was measured for the perceived strength of stressful events and the frequency in which they occurred. Then, scores for the six factors for each of the two dimensions were totaled to determine the total strength and total frequency (Fimian, 1984).

Negative and positive behavioral write-ups were used as a measure of negative and positive behavior in the classroom. Negative and positive behavioral write-ups are documents that teachers fill out when students display either positive or negative behaviors.

Negative behavioral write-ups have 15 behaviors listed with a section for comments. Teachers check off the behaviors that the student is displaying and fill out a comment if they deem it necessary. Negative behaviors are described as: inappropriate behavior; disrespect to staff or peers; not following directions; cutting class; disruptive in class; leaving class without permission; cell phone/electronics violation; sleeping in class; relationship issue; dress code violation; fighting; verbal threats to staff or peers; instigating a crisis; AWOL; excessive rule breaking; late to class; and bullying.

Positive behavioral write-ups are documents that are filled out if the teacher or teacher aide felt as though the student displayed positive behavior. The teacher would check off “positive” on the document and fill out a comment if they deemed it appropriate.

Design

This study investigated correlational relationships between teacher stress and positive and negative behaviors in the classroom. The variables were teacher stress and negative and positive behavioral write-ups.

The survey used was the “Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI)” (Fimian, 1984). TSI defined six factors that relates to stress in special education teachers: personal/professional stressors; professional distress; discipline and motivation; emotional manifestations; bio-behavioral manifestations; and physiological-fatigue manifestations. Each factor was measured for the perceived strength of stressful events and the frequency in which they occurred. Then, scores for the six factors for each of the two dimensions were totaled to determine the total strength and total frequency (Fimian, 1984).

The TSI had 49 questions in total broken into ten sections. The first section had eight questions related time management. Scores from section one were added together and divided by eight to come up with the score for that section. The second section had six questions related to work-related stressors. Scores from section two were added together and divided by six to come up with the score for section two. The third section had five questions related to professional distress. Scores from section three were added together and divided by five to come up with the total score for that section. The fourth section consisted of six questions related to discipline and motivation. Scores from section four were added together and divided by six to come up with the total score for section four. The fifth section had four questions related to professional investment. Scores from section five were added together and divided by four to come up with the

total score for that section. The sixth section consisted of five questions related to emotional manifestations. Scores were added together and divided by five to come up with the total score for section six. The seventh section had five questions related to fatigue manifestations. Scores for this section were added together and divided by five to come up with the total score for this section. The eighth section consisted of three questions related to cardiovascular manifestations. Scores for this section were added together and divided by three to come up with the total score for section eight. The ninth section had three questions related to gastronomical manifestations. The scores for these questions were added together and divided by three to come up with the total score for this section. The final section had four questions related to behavioral manifestations. Scores for this section were added together and divided by four to come up with the total score for this section. All ten section scores were added together and divided by ten to calculate the overall stress score for the participant.

Participants answered questions on a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning no strength, 2 meaning mild strength, 3 meaning medium strength, 4 meaning great strength, and 5 meaning major strength. An example of a question is “There isn’t enough time go get things done.” The teacher would answer 1 if they felt that that statement had no strength or 5 if that statement had major strength.

Positive and negative behavioral write-ups were analyzed and the number and type of write-up given was recorded for each participant. The number of positive and negative write-ups was correlated with the overall stress score for each teacher and teacher aide.

A Pearson correlation was performed in SPSS to measure the relationship between teacher and teacher aide stress with negative and positive behavioral write-ups. Then, teachers and teacher aides were grouped into four sections dependent upon population of students served. Group one included teachers and teacher aides who work with students diagnosed with internalizing, externalizing, and severe psychiatric disorders. Group two included teachers and teacher aides who work with students diagnosed with internalizing disorders. Group three included teachers and teacher aides who work with students diagnosed with externalizing disorders. Group four included teachers and teacher aides who work with students diagnosed with severe psychiatric disorders.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of sections where teachers and teacher aides worked on teacher and teacher aide stress levels were compared for teachers and teacher aides grouped in sections.

Procedure

Teachers and teacher aides were recruited on a voluntary basis to participate in the current study. The teachers and teacher aides who volunteered were given the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) (Fimian, 1984) to assess their stress level. Participants were given one week to complete the TSI. The TSI was scored and coded for each teacher and teacher aide who participated.

Negative and positive behavioral write-ups were analyzed for each participating teacher and teacher aide for a total of eight weeks. The amount of positive and negative behavioral write-ups that each teacher selected was correlated with the level of stress that each teacher measured on the Teacher Stress Inventory (Fimian, 1984). A Pearson

correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between teacher stress and positive and negative behaviors in the classroom.

Chapter 4

Results

The current study explored the relationship between teacher stress and positive and negative behavior displayed by students within the classroom. Stress levels were recorded for teachers and teacher aides using The Teacher Stress Inventory (Fimian, 1984). Negative and positive behavioral write-ups recorded by teachers and teacher aides were analyzed for eight weeks.

The hypothesis for the current study, first, was that teachers who reported a high level of stress would have more negative behavioral write-ups and less positive behavioral write-ups for students in their classrooms. Second, teachers who reported a low level of stress will have less negative behavioral write-ups for students and more positive behavioral write-ups in their classrooms.

Descriptive Analyses: Sample Population

Descriptive statistics were computed in SPSS and compared teacher and teacher aide stress scores with the amount of negative behavioral write-ups and positive behavioral write-ups given by teachers and teacher aides. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1. To summarize, the mean for teacher and teacher aide stress was ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .618$). The mean for negative behavioral write-ups was ($M = 36.88$, $SD = 42.44$), and the mean for positive behavioral write-ups was ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 8.93$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Populations

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Range	Variance
Overall Teacher Stress	34	2.58	.618	1.41	4.26	2.85	.382
Negative Write-Ups	34	36.88	42.44	1.0	186.0	185	1801.4
Positive Write-Ups	34	4.53	8.93	.00	44.0	44.0	79.83

Analyses Examining Teacher Stress with Positive and Negative Behaviors

A Pearson correlation was performed in SPSS to measure the relationship between teacher and teacher aide stress with negative and positive behavioral write-ups. As shown in Table 2, there was no significant correlation between stress and negative behavioral write-ups ($r = -.093$, $n = 34$, $p = .600$), (Figure 1). There was a statistical significant negative correlation at the .05 level (2 tailed) between stress and positive behavioral write-ups ($r = -.354$, $n = 34$, $p = .040$) (Figure 2). This explains that teachers and teacher aides who scored lower stress levels have more positive behavioral write-ups.

Table 2

Correlations Among Teacher Stress and Positive and Negative Behaviors

		Overall Stress	Negative Write-Ups	Positive Write-Ups
Overall Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	-.093	-.354*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.600	.040
	N	34	34	34
Negative Write- Ups	Pearson Correlation	-.093	1	.412*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.600		.015
	N	34	34	34
Positive Write- Ups	Pearson Correlation	-.354*	.412*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.015	
	N	34	34	34

*Finding is significant at $p < 0.05$.

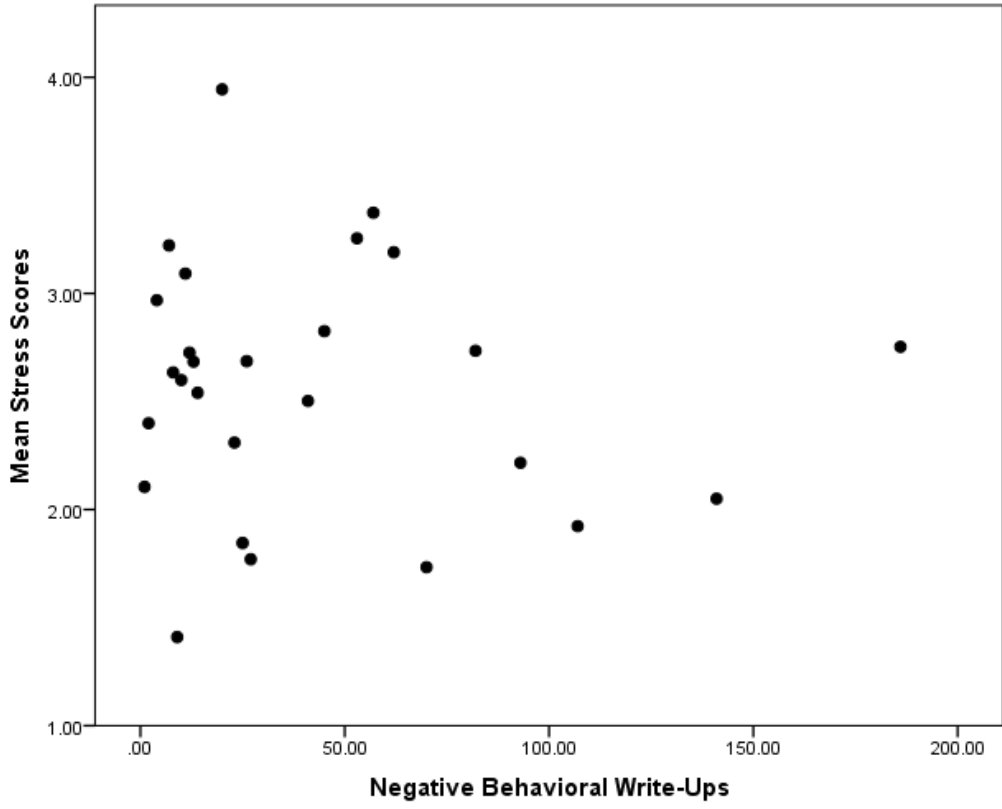


Figure 1. Comparing Teacher Stress Scores with Negative Behavioral Write-Ups

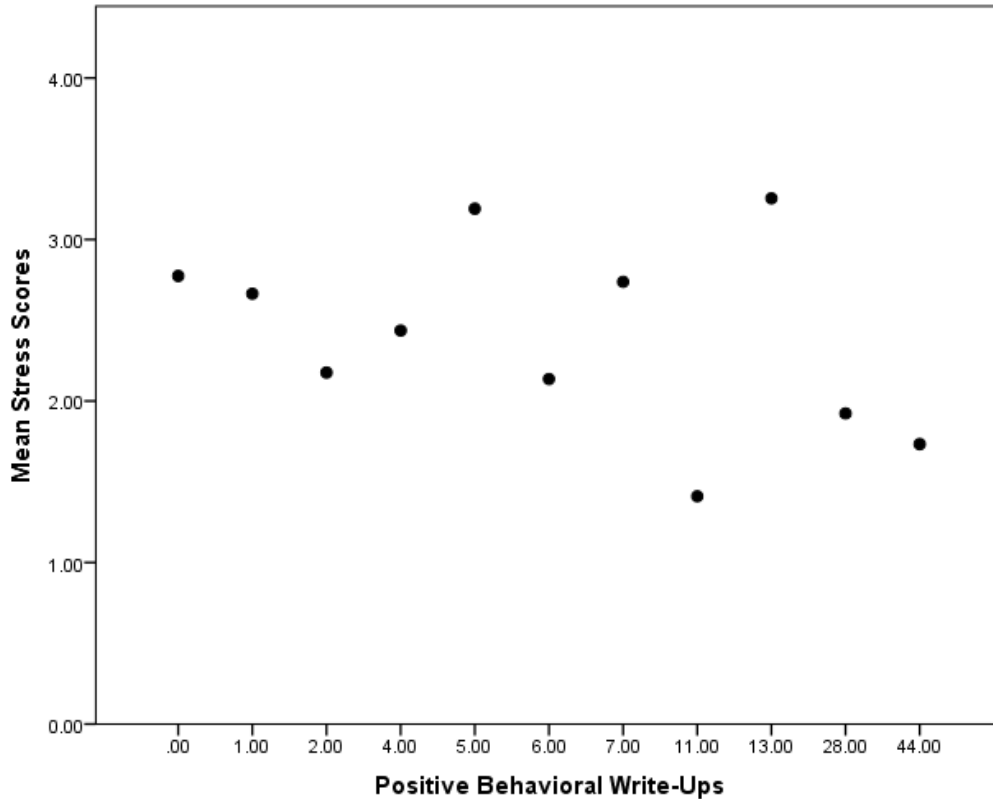


Figure 2. Comparing Teacher Stress Scores with Positive Behavioral Write-Ups

Analyses Examining Student Populations Served Relating to Teacher Stress Scores

Upon further analysis of the data, teachers and teacher aides were grouped into four sections dependent upon population of students served. Group one included teachers and teacher aides who worked with students diagnosed with internalizing, externalizing, and severe psychiatric disorders. Group two included teachers and teacher aides who work with students diagnosed with internalizing disorders. Group three included teachers and teacher aides who worked with students diagnosed with externalizing disorders. Group four included teachers and teacher aides who worked with students diagnosed with severe psychiatric disorders.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of sections where teachers and teacher aides worked on teacher and teacher aide stress levels were compared for teachers and teacher aides grouped in sections. It was found that there was a significant effect of student populations served on teacher and teacher aide stress at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(3, 30) = 3.493, p = .028$] (Figure 3).

Table 3

Variance of Teacher Stress on Student Populations Served

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	3	3.267	1.089	3.493	.028*
Within Groups	30	9.351	.312	1.0	
Total	33	12.618			

*Finding is significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Stress on Student Populations Served

Student Population	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Mixed	5	3.1884	.81923	.36637	2.18	4.26
Internalizing	9	2.7209	.55361	.18454	1.84	3.37
Externalizing	14	2.2827	.50858	.13592	1.41	3.22
Psychiatric	6	2.5774	.41280	.16852	2.11	3.19
Total	34	2.5839	.61834	.10605	1.41	4.26

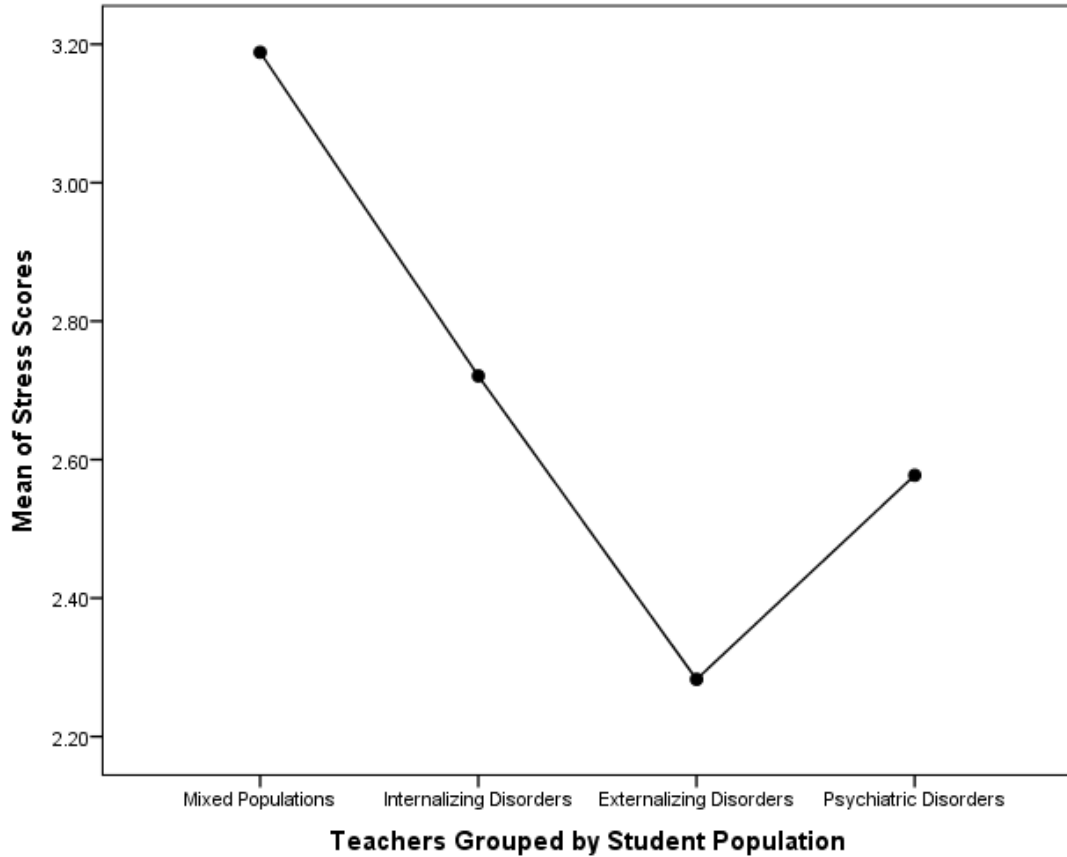


Figure 3. Analyzing Teacher Stress Scores Based on Student Populations Served

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test, as shown in Table 5, indicated that the mean score for the teachers and teacher aides from group one ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .819$) was significantly different from teachers and teacher aides from group three ($M = 2.28$, $SD = .509$). However, teachers and teacher aides from group two ($M = 2.72$, $SD = .554$) and from group four ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .413$) did not significantly differ from any of the other groups.

Table 5

Teacher Stress on Student Populations Served

Student Population	Student Population	Mean Difference	SD	Sig.
Mixed	Internalizing	.46748	.31140	.449
	Externalizing	.90572*	.29087	.020
	Psychiatric	.61098	.33807	.290
Internalizing	Mixed	-.46748	.31140	.449
	Externalizing	.43824	.23853	.276
	Psychiatric	.14351	.29425	.961
Externalizing	Mixed	-.90572*	.29087	.020
	Internalizing	-.43824	.23853	.276
	Psychiatric	-.29474	.27242	.703
Psychiatric	Mixed	-.61098	.33807	.290
	Internalizing	-.14351	.29425	.961
	Externalizing	.29474	.27242	.703

*Finding is significant at $p < 0.05$.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Conclusions Regarding Teacher Stress and Positive and Negative Student Behaviors

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between teacher stress and negative and positive student behaviors in the classroom. Specifically, this study determined if there was a correlation between teacher stress and positive and negative student behavior in the classroom.

The hypothesis for the current study was first; teachers who reported a high level of stress would have more negative behavioral write-ups and less positive behavioral write-ups for students in their classrooms. After reviewing the data retrieved from the Pearson correlation, it was determined that there was no significant relationship between teacher and teacher aide stress scores and negative behavioral write-ups. Although past research indicated that there was a relationship between teacher stress and negative student behaviors in the classroom (Blasé, 1986; Geving, 2007; Yoon, 2002; Borg and Riding, 1991; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Evers et al., 2004; Gable et al., 2009; Hastings & Bham, 2003; Kokkinos, 2007; Kyriacou, 2001; Lewis, 1999; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Tsouloupas et al., 2010), the results of this study found that the relationship between the two variables was not significant. This could be due to a number of factors; one being that teachers who were stressed did not complete behavioral-write ups for students portraying negative behaviors. Teachers could also be using negative behavioral write-ups as a coping strategy; teachers who were stressed recorded the negative student behavior on a negative behavioral write-up, and therefore felt less stressed once they wrote down the information.

Teachers may have felt as though writing up the behaviors did not do anything to change the behavior. As a result, they may have stopped filling out negative behavioral write-ups for their students. If there was a high amount of conflict between students and teachers, it could have produced feelings of helplessness within the teacher (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). When the teacher felt helpless, they may have had a high stress level, but they may not have recorded the negative behaviors in their classroom. Negative behavior displayed by students has an affect on teacher stress, but it was reported that repeated, constant negative behavior produces changes in the teacher's wellbeing (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). If students were constantly displaying negative behavior, but it was minor negative behavior, the teacher may not have felt that it warranted a write-up. They may have felt as though their write-up wouldn't do anything to address the behavior, and they might have see writing it up as a waste of time. However, the behavior was not being addressed, so the teacher may have still experienced a high stress level.

The second hypothesis was teachers who reported a low level of stress would have less negative behavioral write-ups for students and more positive behavioral write-ups in their classrooms. After reviewing data for this hypothesis, it was found that there was a significant negative correlation between teacher and teacher aide stress and positive behavioral write-ups. Meaning, as stress scores decreased, positive write-ups increased.

This data was supported by past research that discussed how stress affected the quality of the relationship that teachers had with their students (Yoon, 2002). When teachers were acting in a positive way, the students tended to behave more appropriately and model this behavior shown by the teacher (Geving, 2007).

Data has shown that student-teacher relationships were ranked as the highest for teacher satisfaction (Shann, 1998). Previous research has found that teachers often said that the positive teacher-student relationship as what drew and kept them in the teaching profession (Hargreaves 1998; O'Connor, 2008). Past research has found that teachers received intrinsic rewards by having close relationships with their students (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Teachers who were less stressed were more likely to develop interpersonal relationships with their students and therefore were able to teach interesting and effective lessons. Teachers who were spending more time with students were likely to have students who felt as though they were being cared for. Students said that it was important to them to have teachers that cared for them (Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999).

Teachers who were rewarding positive behavior by completing positive behavioral write-ups may have had better functioning classrooms, and therefore, those teachers had lower stress levels. When teachers rewarded positive behavior, students may have been more likely to behave positively in the future. Students displaying positive behavior can lessen the level of stress in the teacher because the teacher can then spend more time teaching and less time managing behavior. Students who have a positive school experience are less likely to display negative behaviors.

Conclusions Regarding the Effect of Student Populations Served on Teacher Stress

To further analyze the data, teachers and teacher aides were grouped into categories. The first category included teachers and teacher aides who interacted with students diagnosed with internalizing, externalizing, and severe psychiatric disorders. Category two included teachers and teacher aides who interacted with students diagnosed with internalizing disorders. Category three included teachers and teacher aides who

interacted with students diagnosed with externalizing disorders. Finally, category four included teachers and teacher aides who interacted with students diagnosed with severe psychiatric disorders.

While comparing stress scores between these different categories, it was found that there was a significant difference between the stress scores from teachers and teacher aides from categories one and three. Teachers and teacher aides in category one had a higher overall stress score than the teachers and teacher aides from category three. This could be due the fact that teachers from category one were teaching a mixture of all three populations within the school. Because of this, these teachers and teacher aides had to constantly change their lesson plans to match the type of students they were working with. Teachers and teacher aides in category one had to interact with a number of different students displaying a number of different behaviors throughout the day. Past research has found that teachers working in different types of schools with different populations may have different levels of stress (Koruklu, Feyzioglu, Ozenoglu-Kiremit, & Aladag, 2012). These teachers and teacher aides did not have to interact with students with externalizing disorders consistently like the teachers from category three. Therefore, the teachers and teacher aides from group one may have found it harder to work with that population.

Teachers who worked with the mixed populations were constantly moving around the buildings, and sometimes did not have their own classrooms. Not having their own classroom and not having time to set up and plan for their class meant that they may have had to use a reactive classroom management approach without even realizing it. In some cases, teachers from the mixed populations might have arrived to the classroom after the

students have already arrived. As soon as they walked into the room, they had to be reactive, rather than proactive. It has been found that teachers who used reactive classroom management, as opposed to proactive classroom management reported a higher level of stress than teachers who used proactive classroom management (Clunies-Ross, Littlee & Kienhuis, 2008). This could explain the significant difference between the stress scores from the teachers who worked with mixed populations and teachers who worked with the externalizing population. Classrooms managed by a stressed out teacher may have had students that acted out negatively and because the teacher was stressed, the teacher may not have been able to enforce rules, which may have lead to more stress on that teacher (Schonfeld, 1992). Teachers who worked with the externalizing population, for the most part, had their own classrooms and had the opportunity to use proactive classroom management skills throughout the day.

Teachers in category three worked specifically with students diagnosed with externalizing disorders. Students with externalizing disorders manifest their symptoms through their behaviors. Therefore, teachers who worked directly with this population saw a number of disruptive behaviors throughout the school day. Teachers in category three had the lowest stress levels in the study. This could be due to the fact that these teachers and teacher aides were so used to disruptive behaviors that these behaviors seemed insignificant to them and did not affect them as much.

Another factor that could have contributed to having lower stress scores was that teachers who constantly wrote up negative behaviors were using the behavioral write-up document as a coping strategy to deal with stress in the classroom. When the teachers wrote up the behavior, they were, in a way, dealing with the behavior. Once the behavior

was dealt with, they could let it go and move on, and therefore, not feel as stressed about it.

Teachers and teacher aides from categories two and four did not show a significant difference in their stress scores. This could be due to the fact that they were dealing with students on a consistent basis who were diagnosed with internalizing disorders and severe psychiatric disorders. Students diagnosed with internalizing disorders do not manifest their symptoms through behaviors that others can see as easily as students diagnosed with externalizing disorders. Their symptoms may be less obvious to others and harder for teachers and teacher aides to notice. Teachers and teacher aides from category four interacted with students diagnosed with severe psychiatric disorders. These students had a range of disorders that could have been either externalizing or internalizing. There were a smaller amount of students in this section of the school, and a higher number of teachers and teacher aides, along with behavioral staff. Teachers and teacher aides in this category may have felt that they had more support and consistency when dealing with negative student behaviors, and therefore did not have a significant difference in their stress levels.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. One limitation was the small sample size. This study only surveyed 34 teachers and teacher aides in one alternative school. It would be assumed that the stress levels would be different for teachers working with different populations of students in different schools.

Another limitation to this study was in the way the negative student behaviors were measured. Negative student behaviors were measured using negative behavioral

write-ups. Teachers and teacher aides wrote these documents about the student. Behavioral write-ups in this case might not have been a good measure for negative student behaviors. Since the teacher completed behavioral write-ups, it would make sense that these documents could have indeed been biased and could have been based on how the teacher felt about the negative behavior rather than the negative behavior itself. Teachers who were less stressed may not have been as affected by a behavior than a teacher who was more stressed. The behavior may still have been occurring in the classroom even if it was not being documented. If this study was to be recreated, finding another source to measure negative student behavior may show different results.

Future Research

Future research possibilities include the collection of data with a larger sample size of teachers and teacher aides using a number of different schools with different populations. This could include mainstream schools, alternative schools, and private schools. This would be able to show if stress levels vary depending on the type of population served.

Future research could also include a different way to measure negative behaviors in the classroom. Although using positive behavioral write-ups as a measure of positive behavior produced a significant correlation, negative behavioral write-ups have proved to not be a successful measure of negative student behaviors. A new method of measuring negative student behavior would be beneficial in future research.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE OF STUDY: Evaluating The Effect of Teacher Stress on Student Behaviors in Alternative Schools

Principal Investigator: Dr. Roberta Dihoff

This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you to decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study. It will help you to understand what the study is about and what will happen in the course of the study.

If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask them and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

The Principal Investigator, Dr. Roberta Dihoff, or another member of the study team will also be asked to sign this informed consent. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form to keep.

You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

SPONSOR OF THE STUDY:

Rowan University

Why is this study being done?

This study is being done to evaluate teacher stress in alternative schools to see if there is a relationship between students' behaviors and teacher stress.

Why have you been asked to take part in this study?

You have been asked to take part in this study because you directly interact with students in alternative schools.

Who may take part in this study? And who may not?

Teachers and Teacher Aides may participate in this study. Administrators and Behavioral Staff may not participate in this study.

How long will the study take and how many subjects will participate?

This study will take place over a six-week period. Roughly 50 staff members will be asked to participate in this study.

What will you be asked to do if you take part in this research study?

You will be asked to fill out a survey titled, “The Teacher Stress Inventory” if you take part in this research study.

What are the risks and/or discomforts you might experience if you take part in this study?

This study may trigger negative feelings.

Are there any benefits for you if you choose to take part in this research study?

By participating in this research study, you are contributing to a body of knowledge in this field. Your participation may improve research in this field.

What are your alternatives if you don’t want to take part in this study?

There are no alternative treatments available. Your alternative is not to take part in this study.

How will you know if new information is learned that may affect whether you are willing to stay in this research study?

During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you after the study or your follow-up is completed, you will be contacted.

Will there be any cost to you to take part in this study?

There is no cost to participate in this research.

Will you be paid to take part in this study?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

How will information about you be kept private or confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential. The information collected from the Teacher Stress Inventory will be coded so only the researcher knows who filled out the survey. Each Teacher and Teacher Aide will be given a number and only the researcher will know which number belongs to which teacher and teacher aide. After the surveys are completed, the information will be kept in a confidential place where only the researcher has access to them. The researcher will not share the names of the teachers or teacher aides with anyone else. Teachers and Teacher Aides' names will not be published in this study.

What will happen if you do not wish to take part in the study or if you later decide not to stay in the study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may change your mind at any time.

If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, your relationship with the study staff will not change, and you may do so without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also withdraw your consent for the use of data already collected about you, but you must do this in writing to Dr. Dihoff, Rowan University, 201 Mullica Hill Road, Glassboro, NJ 08028.

Any data that has already been sent to Rowan University or to the Data Coordinating Center cannot be withdrawn because there may not be any identifiers with the data.

At any time, the Principal Investigator can take you out of this study because it would not be in your best interest to stay in it.

Who can you call if you have any questions?

If you have any questions about taking part in this study or if you feel you may have suffered a research related injury, you can call the principal investigator:

Dr. Roberta Dihoff
Psychology Department at Rowan University
856-256-4500 x3783

What are your rights if you decide to take part in this research study?

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Subject Name: _____

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Teacher Stress Inventory

TEACHER CONCERNS INVENTORY

The following are a number teacher concerns. Please identify those factors which cause you stress in your present position. Read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. Then, indicate how strong the feeling is when you experience it by circling the appropriate rating on the 5-point scale. If you have not experienced this feeling, or if the item is inappropriate for your position, circle number 1 (no strength; not noticeable). The rating scale is shown at the top of each page.

Examples:

I feel insufficiently prepared for my job. 1 2 3 4 5

If you feel very strongly that you are insufficiently prepared for your job, you would circle number 5.

I feel that if I step back in either effort or commitment,
I may be seen as less competent. 1 2 3 4 5

If you never feel this way, and the feeling does not have noticeable strength, you would circle number 1.

	1	2	3	4	5
HOW	no	mild	medium	great	major
STRONG	strength;	strength;	strength;	strength;	strength;
?	not	barely	moderately	very	extremely
	noticeable	noticeable	noticeable	noticeable	noticeable

TIME MANAGEMENT

1. I easily over-commit myself. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I become impatient if others do things too slowly. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I have to try doing more than one thing at a time. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I have little time to relax/enjoy the time of day. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I think about unrelated matters during conversations. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel uncomfortable wasting time. 1 2 3 4 5
7. There isn't enough time to get things done. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I rush in my speech. 1 2 3 4 5

Add items 1 through 8; divide by 8; place your score here:

WORK-RELATED STRESSORS

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. There is little time to prepare for my lessons/
responsibilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. There is too much work to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. The pace of the school day is too fast. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. My caseload/class is too big. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. My personal priorities are being shortchanged
due to time demands. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. There is too much administrative paperwork
in my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Add items 9 through 14; divide by 6; place your score here:

PROFESSIONAL DISTRESS

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. I lack promotion and/or advancement opportunities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I am not progressing my job as rapidly as I would like. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I need more status and respect on my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I receive an inadequate salary for the work I do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I lack recognition for the extra work and/or good
teaching I do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Add items 15 through 19; divide by 5; place your score here:

DISCIPLINE AND MOTIVATION

I feel frustrated...

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. ...because of discipline problems in my classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. ...having to monitor pupil behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. ...because some students would better if they tried. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. ...attempting to teach students who are poorly
motivated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. ...because of inadequate/poorly defined discipline
problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. ...when my authority is rejected by
pupils/administration. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Add items 20 through 25; divide by 6; place your score here:

PROFESSIONAL INVESTMENT

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26. My personal opinions are not sufficiently aired. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I lack control over decisions made about
classroom/school matters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I am not emotionally/intellectually stimulated
on the job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I lack opportunities for professional improvement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Add items 26 through 29; divide by 4; place your score here:

EMOTIONAL MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. ...by feeling insecure. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. ...by feeling vulnerable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. ...by feeling unable to cope. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. ...by feeling depressed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. ...by feeling anxious. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Add items 30 through 34; divide by 5; place your score here:

FATIGUE MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35. ...by sleeping more than usual. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. ...by procrastinating. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. ...by becoming fatigued in a very short time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. ...with physical exhaustion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. ...with physical weakness. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Add items 35 through 39; divide by 5; place your score here:

CARDIOVASCULAR MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

40. ...with feelings of increased blood pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
41. ...with feeling of heart pounding or racing.	1	2	3	4	5
42. ...with rapid and/or shallow breath.	1	2	3	4	5

Add items 40 through 42; divide by 3; place your score here:

GASTRONOMICAL MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

43. ...with stomach pain of extended duration.	1	2	3	4	5
44. ...with stomach cramps.	1	2	3	4	5
45. ...with stomach acid.	1	2	3	4	5

Add items 43 through 45; divide by 3; place your score here:

BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

46. ...by using over-the-counter drugs.	1	2	3	4	5
47. ...by using prescription drugs.	1	2	3	4	5
48. ...by using alcohol.	1	2	3	4	5
49. ...by calling in sick.	1	2	3	4	5

Add items 46 through 49; divide by 4; place your score here:

TOTAL SCORE

Add all calculated scores; enter the value here _____.

Then, divide by 10; enter the Total Score here _____.

Demographic Variables

Your sex:

Number of years you have taught? _____

Your age: _____

How many students do you teach each day? _____

What level students do you teach? (circle the rest of your answers)

Elementary Middle School Secondary

With what type of students do you work?

Nonhandicapped Handicapped

Which is the most advanced degree you have?

Bachelors Masters Doctorate

Do you and your peers support one another when needed? Yes No

Do you and your supervisors support one another when needed? Yes No

Fimian, M. J. (1984). The development of an instrument to measure occupational stress in teachers: The Teacher Stress Inventory. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 57(4), 277-293.