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Investigating early childhood teachers' stress and social supports: a multi-methods approach

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INVESTIGATING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' STRESS AND SOCIAL SUPPORTS:
A MULTI-METHODS APPROACH

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science
in
The School of Human Ecology

by
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Abstract

Previous research has indicated that teaching is a high stress profession and that social supports may help to mediate teacher job stress. Ecological maps have been used in both research and other fields in order to study individuals' social networks. Using a sample of ten Pre-K teachers, this study aims to answer two questions of inquiry: 1) Is the amount of reported social supports for Pre-K teachers negatively associated with reported stress?, and 2) What information does the eco-map interview give us about teacher's social supports and stress? A multi-methods approach of both qualitative and quantitative techniques was used in order to study the research questions. There were null findings for research question one. For research question two, the eco-maps gave more information about the kinds of supports that were more and least common for teachers to report. Also, four qualitative themes emerged from the interviews: 1) multiple roles, multiple responsibilities, 2) profession of circumstance, 3) other educators as supports, and 4) students' progress as a means of enthusiasm through stressors. This research has implications for future research of the relationship between stress and social supports for teachers of young children as well as for implications for practice.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research indicates that the teaching is a high stress profession (Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Klassen, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001; Lambert et al., 2009; McCarthy et al., 2009). According to Jepson and Forrest (2006), 41% of teachers report having high stress, which is more than individuals in other professions such as nursing. While teaching in general is reported as highly stress, specific research regarding the context of early childhood education classrooms has suggested that teachers of young children face unique challenges (McCarthy et al., 2009). This job stress among children of young children has been linked to both individual factors (Jepson & Forrest, 2006) as well as environmental factors (Moriarty et al., 2001). Research has indicated that job stress among teachers is associated with mental effects such as low self efficacy (Betoret, 2006), physical effects such as job related illnesses (McGarth & Huntington, 2007), and can affect their job performance (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Research regarding job stress among teachers also indicates that prolonged stress can lead teachers to experience burnout, which can also have negative effects on teachers (Kyriacou, 2001).

Current research has studied ways in which individuals cope with stress. Through this research, social supports have been identified as useful in mediating stress. According to the literature, in general, individuals who report having more social supports are generally less likely to express psychological stress (D'ercole, 1988; Perrier et al., 2010). Specifically pertaining to education, teachers with more social supports may experience better physical and mental health (Betoret, 2006).

In spite of the large amount of information regarding the importance of adult social support, to date there is little research about the role of social support for teachers and how this might impact job stress. This project seeks to understand the relationship between teachers'

stress and use of social supports. Social supports for teachers may be used in multiple ways in which to alleviate job stress. Due to both individual and environmental characteristics of teachers' having been linked to stress, social supports may be used as a way in which to buffer and/or prevent these characteristics (Cohen & Wills, 1985). For example, for teachers undergoing curriculum changes within their school, a fellow teacher may be a social support in which collaborate with in order to teach lessons he or she feels to be more appropriate. This collaboration may buffer or otherwise prevent the possible stress from the curriculum changes.

Using a sample of ten Pre-K teachers, this project seeks to explore two questions: 1) Is the amount of reported social supports for Pre-K teachers negatively associated with reported stress?, and 2) What information does the eco-map interview give us about teacher's social supports and stress? Having social supports has been negatively associated with the reported stress of various individuals (D'ercle, 1988; Perrier et al., 2010). It is hypothesized that teachers who report less social supports will also report experiencing more stress. Also, in past studies, eco-maps have been useful in informing about the social networks of individuals in various fields and contexts (Curry et al., 2008; Ray & Street, 2005; Vodde & Giddings, 2000). It is hypothesized that eco-maps will inform the current literature on the social supports of teachers of young children.

A triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data will be collected during the study. The first research question will be explored by collecting data through the survey, which will include items from a) Role Strain (8 items) (Bohen & Viveros, 1981), b) Role Balance Scale (8 items) (Marks, 1994), and c) Perceived Stress Scale (14 items) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstien, 1983). The eco-map construction will also help in answering research question one. In addition to the survey, the qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured

interviews with all participants in order to move towards answering the second research question. During the individual interviews, the interviewer and participant will construct an eco-map of the teacher's social network. The interview will also serve to ask questions in four major inquiry areas: (1) description of stress in teaching, (2) description of supports, (3) professional models, and (4) coping. The second part of the interview will focus on establishing who is in the teacher's social network through completing an adapted teacher eco-map protocol. Descriptive statistics will be used to analyze the survey data. A combination of qualitative analysis methods will be used to understand the qualitative data and maps.

The following terms will be used in this paper:

- Social support: an individual who provides resources that may be abstract and/or tangible to another; the ways in which individuals exchange various types of resources (Berkman et al., 2000)
- Social network: the group and characteristics of the relationships of the group that an individual is within (Berkman et al., 2000)
- Job stress: negative reactions caused by job demands that are perceived by the individual as outside of their resources and coping (Dunham, 1984; Kyriacou, 2001).
- Burnout: prolonged stress that is characterized by exhaustion (McCarthy et al., 2009; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008)
- Eco-maps: a tool that graphically displays who is in an individual's social support network and the nature of the relationships (Curry et al., 2008)

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Job stress among early childhood teachers continues to be a great concern among many educators. The effects of job stress among teachers has both mental and physical effects (Bowers, 2004) that can affect their job performance (Howard & Johnson, 2004). The use of social supports has been shown to be an effective method in coping with job stress and maintaining a positive well-being for teachers (Pozo-Muñoz et al., 2008). Yet little is known about teachers' experiences of job stress and their use of social supports. In order to study how job stress and social supports are related among teachers of young children, it is vital to explore these areas of literature.

Job Stress Among Teachers

Stress refers to “a process of behavioral, emotional, mental, and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increasing, or new pressures which are significantly greater than coping resources” (Dunham, 1984, p.3). According to the transactional model of stress, stress occurs when an individual is faced with a situation or event that he or she perceives is outside of their resources or coping (McCarthy et al., 2009). While stress is a condition that is experienced by individuals in all professions (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006), teaching has been classified as a high stress profession (McCarthy et al., 2009). Within the teaching profession however, teachers within the context of early childhood education classrooms teachers may face unique challenges, such as high turnover rates and long consecutive hours with students, that can be additional sources of stress (McCarthy et al., 2009). In the following discussion I will outline what is currently known about teacher stress.

Individual Characteristics of Teacher Stress. Stress in the teaching profession has been linked to various individual characteristics such as personality factors (Jepson & Forrest, 2006), gender (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), mental health, role strains, and experience (Chen & Miller, 1997).

Personality Characteristics. Specific personality characteristics are associated with greater teacher stress. A study performed by Jepson and Forrest (2006), examined the occurrence of stress in primary and secondary teachers. Teachers completed the Bortner scale in order to determine their personality type as either Type A (characterized by “impatience, hostility, irritability, competitiveness, and achievement striving” (Jepson & Forrest, 2006, p.185)) or Type B behavior (generally easy going, relaxed, and calm). Results indicate that Type A behavior is positively related to personal achievement strivings and stress suggesting that high striving teachers may also experience more stress. The research also reported that commitment to the profession and stress has a negative relationship for teachers with Type A personality but suggested that this relationship could be bidirectional. Interestingly enough, primary school teachers reported more perceived stress suggesting that perceived stress varies across grade levels. This research suggests that the context and grade level that a teacher is servicing may affect the amount of job stress they experience. Also, this data suggests that there are individual and personality differences that may cause teachers to experience stress differently therefore all these factors should be considered when studying job stress among teachers.

Gender. Empirical evidence for the connection between gender and job stress among teachers is not clear. Jepson and Forest (2006) studied 95 male and female primary to secondary teachers in the UK and found no substantial difference between perceived stress of female and male teachers in various grade levels. Others however have suggested that females experience

greater amounts of stress (Klassen, 2010; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In their study of 1,430 male and female teachers ranging from elementary to high school grades, Klassen and Chiu (2010) surveyed teachers in order to study the associations between self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and job stress. Female teachers perceived themselves as having higher workload and classroom stress in comparison to male teachers. This research is also in accordance with Klassen (2010) who's data suggested that among 951 primary and secondary teachers, female teachers reported higher stress due to their workload and student misbehavior. The authors note that research suggests that higher perceived stress among female teachers may be due to outside stressors coupled with job stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). As a largely female profession, the impact of gender on job stress within early childhood profession should be considered.

Environmental Characteristics of Stress. Research has identified environmental characteristics contributing to the stress of teachers who serve young children such as working conditions, time constraints, administrative support (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Brenner et al., 1985; Chen & Miller, 1997; Geving, 2007; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Moriarty et al., 2001). In accordance with Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, the demands and environmental factors may include factors in one's specific or multiple contexts that individually or dynamically are associated with teacher stress. Environmental factors within the teaching contexts appear to be stressful to both new and experienced teachers (Clausen & Petruka, 2009). Research has identified both professional and personal environment factors that are stressful to teachers and specifically teachers of young children.

Professional Environment. Professional environmental factors that affect teachers of young children include working conditions (Baumgartner et al., 2009), pupil strain (or tension with students), workload (Lambert et al., 2009), lack of adequate resources and administrative

support, amount of students being served, and time constraints (Brenner et al., 1985; Chen & Miller, 1997; Geving, 2007; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Moriarty et al., 2001). A great deal of literature has identified specific policy changes and implementations that cause stress to teachers of young children.

Policy and Curriculum. There is evidence that policy and curriculum choices made by administration may cause stress. This is particularly true if the policy decisions are in conflict with the teachers' professional beliefs about teaching young children (Moriarty et al., 2001). In a study of 151 primary teachers and 208 year one teachers in England, participants answered open-ended questions regarding the stress and satisfaction of their profession (Moriarty et al., 2001). The researchers found that environmental factors such as curriculum changes and implementations were stressful for teachers of young children. The researchers identified three significant hardships regarding policy for the teachers interviewed. The teachers described feeling stress because they felt that the policies implemented at their schools were not valuable, took time away from their students, and conflicted with their professional philosophies (Moriarty et al., 2001). Policy level decisions can impact not only the teachers' practices but their stress as well.

Characteristics of Students. Student characteristics can impact on the stress of a teacher (Klassen, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001; Lambert et al., 2009). In today's classroom children may exhibit new behaviors some due to more exposure to technology as well as a change in parent involvement Lambert et al. (2009). These changes may lead to additional teacher stress, particularly if the teacher is not prepared to address them. In a study of 521 elementary school teachers, the researchers used the Classroom Appraisal of Resources and Demands (CARD) tool in order to investigate job stress among these teachers based on their self-reported demands and

resources (Lambert et al., 2009). Highly stressed teachers report that children with problem behaviors are among one of the most challenging parts of their jobs. Also, these teachers reported lower levels of primarily positive social behavior with their students than those teachers who were not considered stress. In their research McGarth and Huntington (2007), child behavior appeared to be largest cause of stress among early childhood education providers. Specifically for kindergarten teachers, the number of children that were being served was the most reported cause of stress among the participants (McGarth & Huntington, 2007).

Personal Environment. Research has also suggested specific personal environmental factors associated with the stress of teachers of young children. The demands from contexts outside of the teacher's job have been suggested as a source of stress for teachers of young children (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2009). Teachers may fulfill several personal and professional roles at the same time. When teachers have difficulty fulfilling conflicting roles, they may experience role conflict and even role overload that could eventually lead to burnout (Papastyliaou et al., 2009).

The Effects of Teacher Stress. Research has sought to investigate how stress affects teachers within different teaching contexts. Job stress can impact individuals' physical and mental well-being (Bowers, 2004; Gold et al. 2010; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Pianta et al., 2005; Tellenback, Brenner, & Löfgren, 1983). These effects can transfer in the teacher's professional context thus affecting his or her performance and practices (Bowers, 2004; Brophy, 1988; Kyriacou, 2001). Prolonged stress in human services professions, specifically teaching, has been linked to burnout (McCarthy et al, 2009).

The Affective Events Model. The Affective Events Theory (AET) and model may be useful to understand the short and long term effects of teachers' experiencing stress in the

workplace (Fisher, 2002). According to the AET, various environmental features of the workplace, such as the workload and administrative supervision, influence particular work events and work attitudes (Wegge et al., 2006). These events and attitudes cause a range of behaviors and reactions that may be short term or may accumulate to develop specific judgments about the workplace. For example, an environmental feature of a school may include a lack of collaboration among grade level teachers, which may elicit a conflict among teachers. This conflict could potentially cause a negative emotional reaction such as stress for the teacher that may be short or long term. An accumulation of this stress due to this work environment feature may lead to burnout (McCarthy et al., 2009).

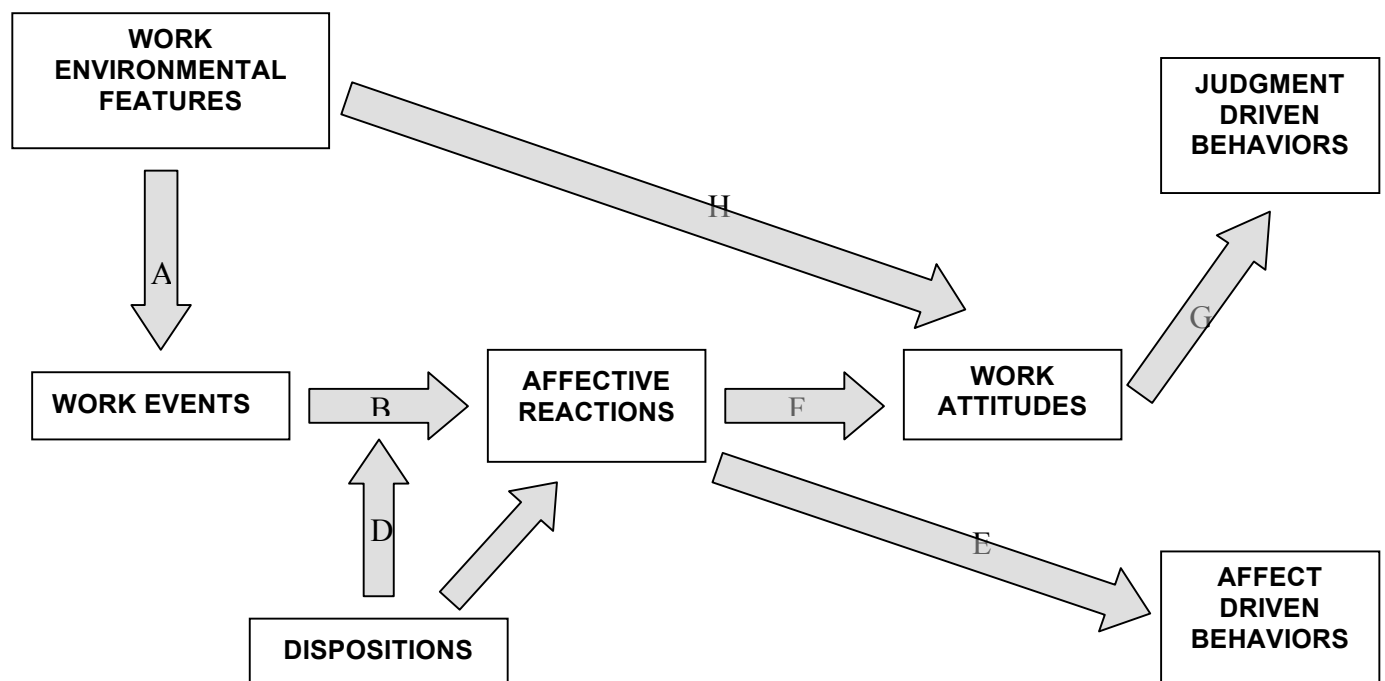


Figure 1. Affective Events Theory model (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p.12)

Mental and Physical. Teachers' mental physical health can be negatively affected by job stress (Bowers, 2004; Howard & Johnson, 2004). Studies have found that high work stress can result in low self-efficacy (Betoret, 2006), negative mental states, low job commitment and satisfaction, and depression to teachers experiencing stress (Gold et al. 2010; Pianta et al., 2005; Tellenback, Brenner, & Löfgren, 1983). In relation to physical health, teachers are likely to experience physical strain, illness, and other negative health consequences associated with stress (McGarth & Huntington; 2007; Sorenson, 2007).

Mental Effects. The mental effects of stress have been researched in great depth. Specifically in the teaching profession, research has identified several negative mental effects of job stress. As described in the Affective Events Theory, work environment characteristics can cause various attitudes and emotions among teachers (Fisher, 2002; Wegge et al., 2006). Klassen and Chiu (2010) found low self-efficacy to be related specifically to high classroom stress. Self-efficacy refers to an "individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to carry out a particular course of action successfully" (Klassen & Chiu, 2010, p.741). Teachers with higher classroom stress, referring to the stress felt specifically in the context of the classroom, also reported feeling less effective in classroom management and handling behavioral issues. Mental states, such as anxiety, frustration, and lack of motivation, are heightened when teachers are under stress (Betoret, 2006; Tellenback, Brenner, & Löfgren, 1983) and may impact job satisfaction and performance (see model). Research has also indicated that job satisfaction, "perceptions of fulfillment derived from day-to-day work activities", is associated with stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2010, p. 742). According to the research, when teachers are feeling stress due to their negative working conditions, they feel less satisfied with their job (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

Physical Effects. Physical effects of teacher stress have been suggested in current research. According to McGrath and Huntington (2007), the most common health risks to individuals working in the early childhood education field are “exposure to infectious diseases, musculoskeletal strain, accidental injuries, risks during pregnancy and occupational stress” (p. 33). Sorenson (2007) suggests that highly stressed teachers are more likely to develop negative dietary habits, experience high blood pressure, and express their emotions in unhealthy manners. In a study 168 early childhood education providers working in child care centers, in-home child cares, and kindergarten classrooms in New Zealand, McGrath and Huntington (2007) found that although participants perceived themselves as fairly healthy, the data indicated that the participants reported an increase in physical problems, such as headaches, muscle strain and backaches, since beginning to work with young children. These results may be related to the data from this study indicating that these teachers often lifted heavy items and sitting on child-sized furniture. Of teachers of all grades, kindergarten teachers reported using the greatest number of sick days as well as having the most on the job injuries and stress of all the groups participating. Lastly, 38% of the 23% of the sample who had been pregnant since working in the early childhood education field reported having pregnancy problems (McGarth & Huntington, 2007). Further investigating the well-being and behaviors of teachers, research has attempted to uncover more about how stress affects multiple aspects of an individual.

Brenner, Sörbom, and Wallius (1985) investigated the links between teacher sleep quality, pupil relations, mental and physical health, and general strain in order to better understand the relationships between these factors. The research suggests that the degree of pupil-related strain influences the amount of perceived strain, which in turn affects the stress reactions and sleep quality. When sleep quality is affected by stress, teachers are at risk for

experiencing fatigue and other physical effects (Brenner et al., 1985). The results of this study give more insight on how the contexts that a teacher is within affect their stress and reactions thus affecting their health and overall well-being. This research can be used to better understand how a teacher's performance can be impacted by stress.

Teacher Performance. A teacher's performance and behavior at school and in their classroom can be greatly affected by stress (Howard & Johnson, 2004). According to the Affective Events Theory, work environment characteristics can also cause various behaviors among teachers (Fisher, 2002; Wegge et al., 2006). Teachers that experience a high level of stress can experience burnout and decreased job commitment (Bowers, 2004; Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers experiencing a high level of stress are less likely to engage students in activities that result in higher student performances (Brophy, 1988). Decreased job commitment can lead to a lack of emphasis on recommended practices and preparation (Chen & Miller, 1997). Teachers with a higher report of depression, one of the effects of stress, are more likely to conduct activities, such as free choice centers, in inappropriate ways (Pianta et al., 2005). Although free choice centers is a recommended practice in early childhood education, the infrequent use of this practice among depressed teachers may be a result of a lack of motivation for engagement with students, a key component to effective free choice centers.

Burnout Among Teachers. Another crucial element to the research of teacher stress is a condition known as burnout. Burnout refers to "a chronic state of exhaustion due to long-term interpersonal stress with human service professionals" (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008, p.154). Burnout amongst professionals is usually measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory. This tool assesses an individual on three factors: "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment" (McCarthy et al., 2009, p.284). Symptoms of burnout include

withdrawal, helplessness, and alienation. Physical symptoms may also appear (PP, 2008).

Research has linked stress to burnout and implied that reoccurring unsuccessful attempts to handling stressful situations will eventually lead to burnout (McCarthy et al, 2009).

Depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment set burnout apart from stress alone (PP, 2008). McCarthy et al. (2009) found that burnout resulting from emotional exhaustion was predicted the teacher's experience in the school, their in class demands and stress, as well as their preventative coping strategies.

Research has uncovered several effects of burnout amongst teachers. Hanchey and Brown (1989) discovered that teachers experience the highest amount of burnout at the end of the school year. During their study, 136 kindergarten through eighth grade teachers were surveyed three times during the school year in order to determine the occurrence and level of burnout and other feelings they were experience at different times during the year. The results indicated that teachers experiencing higher levels of burnout, experience less commitment to their profession and less control over situations (Hanchey & Brown, 1989). Also, teachers with higher levels of burnout experienced negative attitudes towards teaching. The principal's lack of participatory management was the greatest predictor of teacher burnout (Hanchey & Brown, 1989). Research has also suggested that teachers experiencing more burnout feel role overload and conflict (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Teachers with characteristics such as low social support and over all well-being apply have also been associated with burnout (Cheuk, 1995; Pozo-Muñoz et al., 2008). In their review, McCarthy et al. (2009) suggested that current research should focus upon individual characteristics that lead to burnout because part research has mainly looked at environmental characteristics.

Resources and Coping with Teacher Stress

Researchers have sought to investigate ways in which a teacher can prevent future stress as well as handle current stress in hopes of preventing burnout. Current research literature shows that those teachers with more resources and coping mechanisms experience less stress thus leading to a lower chance of burnout (Betoret, 2006). Research has separated the resources for alleviating teacher stress into two categories: palliative techniques and direction action techniques (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006; Kyraicou, 2001).

Palliative Techniques. Palliative techniques indirectly deal with stress through physical and/or mental activities. Examples of palliative techniques include exercise and even alcoholic drinking or smoking (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Baumgartner and colleagues (2009) found that child care providers use palliative techniques such as “meditating, positive self-talk or praying” (Baumgartner et al., 2009, p.245). A palliative technique “aims to lessen the emotional discomfort triggered by the situation” rather than directly handling the stressor (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006, p.229). There have been mixed results regarding the effectiveness of these types of techniques because as a broad category of techniques, they do not solve the problem, but often serve as a technique to avoid the situation (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006). According to Howard and Johnson (2004) , when these types of techniques do not solve the problem teachers may leave their job or seek medical help.

Direct Action Techniques. Direct action techniques are proactive techniques aimed at alleviating stress and it is a “response aimed at eliminating a perceived threat” (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006, p.229). Baumgartner et al. (2009) identified consulting mental health professions, seeking advice from co-workers, and working directly students in the classroom as ways in which child care providers cope with the stress of working with young children. These

types of techniques have been noted by researchers as being associated with higher overall well-being for individuals as opposed to less directive techniques (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006).

The use of social supports, one type of direct action, has been suggested to have the main effect on teachers' well-being (Pozo-Muñoz et al., 2008). Research has shown that teachers with more social supports will experience better physical and mental health (Betoret, 2006).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a technique that is both direct actions and palliative, has been used to reduce the effects of stress (Gold et al., 2010). The technique aims at helping individuals cope with stress by training them to change the way in which they think and act towards stress. When Gold et al. (2010) used the technique with primary school teachers, the technique was effective in reducing some effects of stress such as anxiety and depression. Due to current research suggesting effective stress coping techniques as well as the importance of teachers' social supports in aiding to cope with job stress, it is essential to investigate the function of social supports for all adults.

Adult Social Supports

In order to explore the importance of teacher social supports, it is vital to understand the role of social supports for adults. In relation to teachers, satisfactory coping mechanisms paired with social support can affect how much stress the teacher perceives he or she is experiencing. Howard and Johnson (2004) conducted a study in order to explore how resiliency in teachers affects their levels of stress and susceptibility to burnout. The results suggested that the majority of resilient teachers indicated the importance of their social networks, specifically their support from colleagues and administrators (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Mawhinney's (2008) study reintegrated the importance of colleagues as social supports for teachers. The study suggested that teachers' social interactions with one another, especially pertaining to their similar

professional experiences, is a vital method to coping with stress (Mawhinney, 2008). As in childhood, social relationships in adulthood play an important role in multiple domains of development as well as in overall well-being for adults (Demir, 2010). Adults daily participate in several contexts that require them to socialize and work with other adults. Close social relationships for adults have important links to social and emotional support, instrumental resources, health and mortality, and overall happiness (Demir, 2010; Merz & Huxhold, 2010).

There are several changes in the role and importance of social supports that occur during the life span. Emerging adulthood, characterized as between the ages of around 18 to 25 years old, includes many transitions that not only alter an individual's environment but also his or her social context (Sturaro et al., 2008). As emerging adults graduate from high school, some will move away from home and/or begin college as well as new jobs. These new contexts will not only bring upon new responsibilities and roles, individuals will be within a new social context in which to work, socialize, and form new relationships with others. During adulthood, individuals will also experience changes in their social context possibly by beginning of their career, buying new homes, moving to new cities, and getting married. Middle life adulthood, ages 40 to 65 years old, brings its own unique challenges for adults. As Dziegielewski et al. (2002) noted, distinct changes within the family structure are responsible for much of the social context changes such as no longer having any children living at home, the birth of grandchildren, and the possibility of divorce and remarriage. Lastly, after the age of 65, older adults and the elderly experience changes in their social context as many are retired, may have lost relationships because of death, depend on some relationships for their well-being, live alone, or live in retirement or assisted living communities (Hippel et al., 2009; Merz & Huxhold, 2010; Potts, 1997). Considering the contextual and psychological changes that occur during adulthood is

essential to understanding the complexities of the influence of social relationships on adults.

Social Supports. The concept of social support has been positively linked to physical and psychological health outcomes for adults (Berkman et al., 2000; Devoldre et al., 2010; O’Leary, Murphy & Chen, 2009). Social support refers to the ways in which individuals exchange various types of resources (Berkman et al., 2000). For example, teachers may consider a co-worker as a social support that they use to exchange lesson plans or even emotional support in order to deal with job stress. In their review, Chronister et al. (2006) identified three dimensions of social supports: 1) structural dimension, 2) functional dimension, and 3) perceptual dimension. According to Chronister et al. (2006), the quantitative differences among social networks evaluate the structural dimension, meaning that the number of individuals and proximities of the social network makes up the structural dimension.

Research has identified several different people who are considered social supports for individuals, depending on the various contexts in which an individual is involved. Co-workers, parents, neighbors, community members, children, extended family members, friends and other peers, professionals, and even abstract figures such as a higher being, can all be considered types of social supports (Hale, 1999; Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Depending on the context of the various individuals, different resources are being exchanged as means of social support. The resources being exchanged in order to provide support can range from tangible to abstract. The types of social support one receives can be divided into the following domains: emotional, informational, and instrumental (Berkman et al., 2000; Wellmen & Wortley, 1990). The type of support is related to the functional dimension (Chronister et al., 2006). The perceptual dimension, a key component of this evaluation, addresses at how the individuals reflect upon and feels about the support they are receiving (Chronister et al., 2006). Wellman and Wortley (1990)

identified six possible causes of social support: 1) emotional aid, 2) small services, 3) large services, 4) financial aid, 5) companionship, and 6) job information. Their analysis of a subset of 29 individuals from a random sample of 845 participants suggested that stronger ties between individuals typically provide emotional aid, small services, and companionship. Immediate relatives usually provide financial aid and women typically provide emotional aid.

Social Networks. Berkman et al. (2000) defines a social network as “the web of social relationships that surround an individual and the characteristics of those ties” (p.847). This definition implies that not only are social networks distinguished by the group of individuals included but also by the nature of the relationships within the network. For teachers, professional social networks may not only include the individuals that work within their school, but also the teachers who work specifically in their grade level. Just as research on close social relationships has revealed, social networks have been shown to be extremely important for overall well-being of adults (Merz & Huxhold, 2010).

In their attempt to provide a conceptual model that displays the relationship of social networks and health, Berkman et al. (2000) identified characteristics of both social networks and the individuals in the networks. The number of individuals in the network, the connectedness of the individuals, the affiliation to one another, and the similarities to one another are all considered aspects of a network’s characteristics (Berkman et al., 2000; Chronister et al., 2006). Social networks provide a context through which individuals are able to socially function and engage. Social functioning refers to “the quality of intimate relationships and other relationships, work history and crime ” (Ronka et al., 2001). Social engagement can take place through various contexts but it allows individuals to participate in their social role and also fills an individual’s sense of belonging and value (Berkman et al., 2000). Individual characteristics of people in a

network have been identified as the amount of contact they have with others, the amount of support they transfer to one another, the amount of time they have known each other, and the amount of reciprocation between one another (Berkman et al.,2000; Chronister et al., 2006; Merz & Huxhold, 2010).

Romantic Relationships. There is no doubt that a large difference between the impact of social relationships on adults, as opposed to children, involves the relationship of romantic partners. Individuals who are casually and seriously dating, engaged, or married are all types of romantic relationships. Many emerging adults actively pursue relationships that will be long lasting, relationships which ultimately take new shape and meaning, especially because adults begin to spend less time with friends and more time with partners (Demir, 2010). Teachers may consider the relationship with their romantic partner has extremely or not very influential to their job stress. It has been suggested that relationships with spouses influence well-being more so than relationships with anyone else because spouses provide many varieties of support (Birditt & Antonucci, 2007). This suggests that a spouse fills many roles as a friend, romantic companion, and usually someone the adult lives with and has a great deal of contact with on a daily basis thus allowing for a variety of support to be offered.

Researchers have examined how romantic relationships compare to other close relationships in adulthood, as well as how these romantic relationships impact other close relationships. In a study of 152 single and 159 romantically involved emerging adults, Demir (2010) explored how close relationships affect happiness. The results suggested that for single emerging adults, their close relationships with their mothers and best friends were most predictive of their happiness. For emerging adults involved in romantic relationships, the relationship with their mother as well as their romantic partner was most predictive of their

happiness. Both the quality and conflict of the romantic partner was relevant to their happiness. Interestingly, even friendships were not able to act as a buffer for happiness when romantic relationship conflict was high which truly shows the importance of these relationships for adults. In other research, it has been suggested that individuals without a best friend, rely on their spouse for their well-being (Birditt & Antonucci, 2007).

Research has examined ways in which romantic relationships provide social support to individuals. Specifically for married couples, the more supportive the relationship and the less conflict, the more relationship satisfaction is reported (Cramer, 2006; Devoldre et al., 2010). Research has identified more supportive relationships as having more emotional depth, empathy, and constructive problem solving (Cramer, 2006; Devoldre et al., 2010). Interestingly, in a random study of 116 college students, it was found that relationship satisfaction was associated with both giving and receiving support which suggests that there is something gained for both processes of social support in a romantic relationship (Cramer, 2006).

Attachment Orientation. Another area of literature examines attachment behaviors and orientations in relation to later romantic relationships in adulthood. Mixed results have been found regarding these issues. It may be useful to consider teachers' history of attachment relationships in order to better understand their current social relationships. Attachment theory suggests that early attachment relationships influence and are somewhat comparable to an adult individual's ability to form and maintain later relationships with people, particularly with romantic partners. "For Bowlby, the capacity for intimacy in adult life is not given but is instead the result of complex dynamic forces involving attachment, loss, and reattachment" (Berkman et al., 2000, p.845). In 1987, Hazan and Shaver created a tool used for adults to self evaluate their attachment orientation based on their relationship behaviors. Using the tool, adults identify

themselves as secure, avoidant, or anxious/ambivalent (Pierre et al., 2010). Over the years, this tool has been used to study the continuity or discontinuity of attachment behaviors as well as partner preference into adulthood.

Research has found that early parent-child interactions are generally predictive of later attachment behaviors and preference in adulthood (Dinero et al., 2008; Holmes & Johnson, 2009). Many scholars have hypothesized and tested attachment orientations in relation to adult partner preferences. In their review, Holmes and Johnson (2009) analyzed 16 peer-reviewed articles pertaining to attachment and partner preference. The results of their analysis indicate that securely attached individuals are likely to prefer others who are securely attached but there were mixed results for insecurely attached participants. The authors note that the methodological approaches used in most studies in this area ask respondents to consider hypothetical partners rather than actual partners. Holmes and Johnson (2008) suggest that responses to partner preferences are substantially different for individuals who are in a relationship as opposed to those considering what they want in a future relationship. When someone is considering a hypothetical partner, he or she may be more inclined to consider the other person's desirable characteristics while someone in a relationship may be more likely to consider how they would like someone to make them feel based on their own internal working model (Holmes & Johnson, 2008). When considering the influences of various methodological approaches, more research should be done in this area.

Some research regarding attachment orientation continuity suggests that the role of attachment in handling various life events and relationships depends on the event and relationship (Perrier et al., 2010). Some researchers have suggested through their work that attachment behaviors can undergo change during adulthood regardless of the orientation. Dinero

(2008) conducted a study using the Family Transitions Project. In the study, the participants were observed interacting with their families during adolescence then later at ages 25 and 27 years old with their families and romantic partners. Although the results were mixed, the data indicated that both the family and romantic partner have an affect on attachment behaviors but as individuals age and relationships become more serious, original family attachment influences decrease. The authors note, “The association between family interactions and attachment security later in life is fully mediated by earlier security and romantic interactions” (Dinero et al., 2008, p.630). The research pertaining to the continuity and discontinuity of attachment orientation in adulthood clearly needs to be furthered.

Problems in Social Functioning. There has been some research in the field of social functioning that has suggested most problems that individuals experience with social functioning end after adolescence while other research states that these problems continue to accumulate into adulthood. Other research in this area clearly shows mixed results for the continuity of problems in social functioning. In their work on deviance over the life course, Sampson and Laub (1990) theorize that involvement in positive social institutions such as careers, marriage, and schooling, can cause an individual to digress from socially deviant behavior. In a longitudinal study done by Ronka and colleagues (2001) 145 women and 152 men from Finland, ages 27 to 36 years old, completed the Life-Situation Questionnaire. The results of this study suggested that men experience an accumulation of problems pertaining to their social functioning more so than women but women’s problems appeared to increase during the second wave of surveying. Problems of social functioning may include financial issues, negative romantic relationships, and substance abuse. Career stability had a positive relationship with the continuity of problems of social functioning for both men and women while the quality of partner relationships was a

moderator between social functioning problems. The results suggested that partner quality had a negative relationship with problems in social functioning for women (Ronka et al., 2001).

Social Relationships and Health Outcomes. Past and current literature has found several associations between social relationships and health outcomes. Berkman et al. (2000) identified three ways in which social networks influence individual health outcomes for adults: 1) individuals in social networks influence certain behaviors among one another than can cause positive or negative health outcomes, 2) individuals in social networks can impact cognitive and emotional functions such as depression and self esteem, and 3) networks can influence ways in which individuals cope with stress. Specifically pertaining to stress, much of the research on adults looks at the relationship of social supports and stress. This research has focused on several demographics, occupations, as well as contexts. According to the literature, individuals who report having more social supports are less likely to express psychological stress (D'ercle, 1988; Perrier et al., 2010). Research indicates that women generally use social supports more often than men in order to cope with stress (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006).

Although a great deal of research has linked early attachment, social relationships, and networks to health outcomes, some researchers would argue that these relationships are not the cause of health outcomes. Some research studies suggest that “adult social circumstances” contribute to health outcomes more so than the relationships (Berkman et al., 2000, p.852). Rather than taking a specific stance, other research has examined how early social experiences along with later life circumstances influence health outcomes.

Social isolation. The absence of social supports and connection can result in social isolation. Research has identified various health risk behaviors that are specifically associated with social isolation. This research may be useful in giving insight about the role of social

supports for teachers who are isolated and what the effects of this isolation may cause. Social isolation is defined as “living without companionship, social support, or social connectedness” (Hawthorne, 2006, p.521). Cornwell and Waite (2009) identified two types of isolation: social disconnection and perceived isolation. Social disconnection is characterized by low social activity and few relationships while perceived isolation pertains specifically to how the individuals recognize themselves outside of a social world. According to Hawthorne (2006), most research would agree that between 3-25% of individuals experience social isolation.

Individuals experiencing social isolation have lower quality of life and overall less desirable health and life outcomes. Many displays of social isolation such as having little or no social network and living alone are linked to negative health behaviors such as smoking and little physical activity (Cornwell & Waite, 2009). Using a nationally representative data set, the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project, Cornwell and Waite (2009) found that among older adults, ages 57 and up, both social disconnectedness and perceived isolation are associated with less desirable health outcomes. The results also suggest that the relationships between perceived isolation and mental health outcomes are linked to social connectedness and mental health. Therefore, older adults who perceive themselves as being isolated and are socially disconnected have worse mental health than those who are only socially disconnected.

Theoretical Perspective

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Systems Theory in order describes multiple influences within multiple systems that directly and indirectly affect an individual’s development. The ecological systems model displays the systems and the individual that is embedded within the systems. There are four systems represented on the model: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the

macrosystem. The individual is presented in the center of the model with the microsystem surrounding it. The microsystem includes the contexts and relationships that the individual is directly influenced by such as the immediate family, close peers, and places that the individual interacts with on a daily basis. For example, a child's microsystem would most likely include his or her guardian and school. An individual's mesosystem consists of the relationships between the components of the microsystem such as the interactions between an individual's family and school. The exosystem is comprised of relationships that indirectly influence the individual. Examples of possible components of the exosystem may include the individual's parent's workplace or educational history. Lastly, the macrosystem is the values, laws, socioeconomic status, and other cultural factors that the individual lives within (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The ecological systems theory and model can be used to better understand the ways in which teachers are impacted by their multiple contexts. For example, a teacher's stress level may be influenced by their microsystem, which may include their immediate family as well as co-workers. Just as the teacher's microsystem may be influencing the teacher's stress, the microsystem may also be influenced by the teacher's exosystem, which may include their mother and father's previous education. By using the theory to understand the contexts of a teacher, the stress that a teacher is experiencing from their multiple contexts can also be better understood. The social network theory and analysis is also another way in which research has sought to study how individuals interact with one another in a multi-dimensional way.

Social Network Theory and Analysis. Social network theory and analysis is a way in which to dynamically study society by how individuals interact through their connections with one another (Mizruchi, 1994). By using the social network theory and analysis, researchers take on the network perspective. According to Quatman and Chelladurai (2008), the network

perspective considers two essential factors. This perspective emphasizes “a consideration of the concrete relationships between entities over the relationships between their attributes” and “ a focus on concrete social structure rather than isolated individual entities or dyads” (Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008, p.342). Relationships are seen as a product of the network’s structure rather than the individuals’ personalities or characteristics (Mizruchi, 1994). One of the main strengths of the social network analysis is its precise measurement of specific network characteristics such as size, connectedness, and openness (Streeter & Gillespie, 1992). When using social network analysis, researchers often use graphic models to display networks as well as specific quantitative data due to the specificity of this analysis (Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008; Streeter & Gillespie, 1992).

Overall, this approach can be useful in studying social relationships, specifically social networks among informal and professional contexts. As opposed to the Ecological Systems Theory, this perspective allows for us to view teachers in relation to the strength and size of his or her social networks in a more objective, quantitative manner. This perspective also allows for one to pay close attention to the characteristics of the teacher’s network and influence of that network rather than on each individual’s characteristics.

Assessing Adult Social Support Networks

Eco-Maps. In 1978, Dr. Ann Hartman introduced the ecological map, or eco-map, as a way in which to visually map supports in the clinical context of social work. Since, eco-maps have been used in fields such as education, nursing, practicum, and other service fields with several different protocols (Coleman & Wallinga, 2000; Curry, Fazio-Griffith, & Rohr, 2008; McCormick et al., 2005; Ray & Street, 2005; Vodde & Giddings, 2000). The structure and uses for eco-maps have been identified in several different ways throughout different domains of

literature. Curry et. al (2008) described using eco-maps with nurses as, “a technique that provides visual representation of individuals, groups, and organizations that are within a given environmental context” (p.234). A common theme found in much of the literature on eco-maps emphasizes problem solving to be an important function of the eco-mapping tool in multiple contexts such as families, occupations, and other settings for relationships (Curry et al., 2008; Ray & Street, 2005; Vodde & Giddings, 2000). Due to eco-maps being used as a problem solving mechanism, the tool may be used with teachers in order to find possible gaps in their social networks that could be leading to a greater report of stress.

Teaching has been identified as a high-stress profession having several environmental characteristics associated with stress (Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Klassen, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001; Lambert et al., 2009; McCarthy et al., 2009). Stress has significant effects on a teacher’s mental and physical well-being as well as job performance (Betoret, 2006; Bowers, 2004; Gold et al. 2010; Howard & Johnson, 2004; McCarthy et al., 2009; Pianta et al., 2005; Tellenback, Brenner, & Löfgren, 1983). There is evidence that adults’, specifically teachers’ health and stress, is positively affected by having social supports (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Mawhinney, 2008; Pozo-Muñoz et al., 2008). In spite of the large amount of information regarding the importance of adult social support, to date there is little research about the role of social supports for teachers and how this might impact job stress. Further investigation of how social supports affect teachers can be beneficial in preventing stress and burnout among early childhood educators. Eco-maps have been used in multiple fields in order to study social networks of individuals (Coleman & Wallinga, 2000; Curry, Fazio-Griffith, & Rohr, 2008; Ray & Street, 2005; McCormick et al., 2005; Vodde & Giddings, 2000). Through eco-map interviews, researchers may learn more about how early childhood teachers experience stress and utilize social supports.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

This project examines the job stress among pre-kindergarten teachers as well as their social supports. This study aims to answer two research questions: 1) Is the amount of reported social supports for Pre-K teachers negatively associated with reported stress?, and 2) What information does the eco-map interview give us about teacher's social supports and stress? In past research, eco-maps have been useful in informing about the social networks of individuals in various fields and contexts (Curry et al., 2008; Ray & Street, 2005; Vodde & Giddings, 2000). It is hypothesized that eco-maps will inform the current literature on the social supports of teachers of young children. Having social supports has been negatively associated with the reported stress of various individuals (D'ercole, 1988; Perrier et al., 2010). It is hypothesized that teachers who report less social supports will also report experiencing more stress. Gaining knowledge about how teachers describe their social supports will give additional insight on social supports as a significant impact on teachers as well as on how useful eco-maps can be for describing social supports in teaching. This research will also give more insight on the reported stress of early childhood educators so as to give future implications for school policies and practices aimed at supporting teachers. In order to provide a more accurate and holistic picture of the studied variables, qualitative and quantitative data was collected during the study (Jick, 1979).

Reflexivity Statement

In presenting the methods in which this project was conducted, I feel that it is necessary to share my journey that led me to study this research area. As an undergraduate, I studied Early Childhood Education and became certified to teach Pre-K to third grade. As part of my course

work, I spent two semesters interning in local public elementary schools and another two semesters working as a student teacher. During my own observations of the teachers and contexts of the schools as well as in building relationships with my mentor teachers, I became very concerned about my future in the profession. I observed the stresses of working with young children and heard from teachers about their frustrations and concerns of their well-being. Prior to working in the schools, I was thinking about continuing my schooling to get my masters. After these experiences, I decided that I was definitely going to go to graduate school, not only to learn more about the field that I wanted to work in but also to secure some sort of “back-up” plan for myself in case I experienced this great amount of stress which could eventually led me to being burnt out and unhappy with my profession. When the opportunity to study job stress among teachers of young children arose, it became very evident to me that further exploration of this area was not only significant to academia and practice, but also to my own interest in the subject due to my concerns about my future.

Sample

Ten female pre-kindergarten teachers participated in the study. Half of the sample is a convenience sample of teachers participating in Project Recoveryan Early Reading First Initiative. These teachers work at two elementary schools in a large urban school district. The other five teachers teach at three elementary schools located in a suburban/rural school district. All of the participating teachers teach at public elementary schools. All participants received a \$50 stipend after the completion of their participation. Although the sample is not random, all of the teachers teach Pre-K in low socio-economic school sites. The teachers have been teaching for an average of about 16 years, 30 years being the longest and 5 being the shortest amount of time. Due to current literature that suggests lack of resources among other economic variables

are contributing factors to teacher stress, this sample may also contribute to the knowledge of the characteristics that make up a stressful environment for teachers.

Large Urban School District. Of the ten participating teachers, five were located in two schools located in a large urban school district: West Elementary School and Sky Elementary School. School pseudonyms are being used to protect the privacy of the participants.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey, about 350,000 individuals populate this urban area. Of all individuals living in the area, 31.8% are Caucasian, 63% are African American, 2.8% are Asian, and 4.3% are Hispanic. The mean household income is \$59,880. In 2009, 12.5% of individuals were unemployed in the area. It is estimated that 23.4% of individuals were living below the poverty line within 12 months of the survey while 18.9% of all families were living at this status. According to the survey, 38.1% of individuals under the age of 18 are living below poverty. In 2009, 31% of households were headed by married couples and 25% were of other types of families. It is estimated that 82% of individuals 25 years old and over have at least a high school diploma while 29% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The survey suggests that 18% of individuals were high school dropouts in this urban area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Early Reading First Initiative. The five participating from the large urban school district were also participating in an Early Reading First Initiative. The project was designed to implement research-based practice in low socio-economic pre-kindergarten classrooms in order to increase literacy for at-risk students. All of the schools participating in the project are considered low socio-economic because the majority of the students qualify for free or reduced cost lunch. 98-100% of the students are African American. As a result of the project, teachers participating are exposed to multiple instructional strategies, professional development, and

materials in order to convert their pre-kindergarten classrooms into environments in which to facilitate positive literacy development. In addition to participation in professional development sessions as well as other activities with parents and coaches, teachers are required to participate in several types of training and are often evaluated and are assessed on their teaching and their students' performance. Due to factors such as workload, time constraints, and role strain being suggested as possibly contributing to job stress among teachers, the content, time, and requirements of this project should be considered when studying the stress of the teachers in this study.

Large Urban School District Teachers. All participating teachers located in the urban school district were asked to identify their educational history as well as specific factors of their current classroom and students. Because research has discussed stress in relation to experience and educational attainment as well as specific classroom and school features, this information may be important to consider in the present study. The following paragraphs describe the five teachers from the urban school district. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' privacy.

Rachael. Rachael is a Pre-K teacher at West Elementary School. At the time of her interview she was teaching 10 girls and 10 boys in her classroom, with all of her students qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she had her class for instruction or activities was 2 hours. She has been teaching for 30 years with 4 years in her current school. She has been teaching in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms for 6 years. She explained that she originally wanted to be a pediatrician until she got pregnant for her daughter as a senior in college. She states, "I wanted to raise my baby so I decided not to go to med school at that time so I could devote my time to my baby." She completed her Chemistry degree in the pre-med program and taught at a local university in a chemistry lab for a year. She then

started working as a substitute and went back to school to get her Master's degree in Education once a principal recognized her "unique way of working with children". She describes her present work, compared to her original aspiration as, "I'm a pediatrician in the classroom instead of in the medical field". Rachael describes herself as "energetic and independent" and knew that she always she loved "young and old people". Currently, Rachael suffers from poor health and was hospitalized for a short period of time during the course of the study.

Sarah. Sarah is Pre-K teacher at West Elementary School. At the time of her interview she was teaching 10 girls and 10 boys in her classroom, with all of her students qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities was 2 hours. She has been teaching for 6 total years with 3 of them in her current school. She has been teaching in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms for 4 years. Also, Sarah has been teaching children with disabilities for 2 years. Sarah decided to get her Master's degree in Education after having her daughter. She explains, "I wanted her to know the things she needed to know because I know that the early years are the most important." Sarah is married with a 6 year old daughter. She also has a stepson from her husband's previous relationship.

Mary. Mary is a Pre-K teacher at Sky Elementary School. At the time of the study, she was teaching 9 boys and 11 girls, with all 20 children receiving free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities is 2 hours. She has been teaching for 18 years in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms. Also, she has been teaching in her current school for 3 years. Mary has a Master's degree in Education with specializations in both Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. She always knew she wanted to be a teacher. "It's actually something I've always desired. Even as a child, my mother is a teacher and as a child, I had a roll book, I made up test papers, and I had a class roll, so it's always something

I've dreamed of being a teacher". Mary describes herself as, "quiet, dependable, and hardworking". At the time of the study, she was not married but was living with her daughter, sister, and niece.

Lauren. Lauren teaches at Pre-K teacher at Sky Elementary School. Her current class has 9 boys and 11 girls, with all of those children qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities is 45 minutes. She has been teaching for 28 years and 17 of those years were taught in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms. She has been teaching in her current school for 2 years. Also, she has been teaching children with disabilities for 2 years. She has a Bachelor's degree in Education specializing in Elementary Education. When asked to describe herself, Lauren says she came from a "strong family of educators". During her interview, Lauren spoke extensively about her younger brother's recent unexpected death.

Sharon. Sharon is a Pre-K teacher at Sky Elementary School. During the study, her current class had 8 boys and 12 girls with all children qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities was 2 hours. She has been teaching for 8 years with 4 ½ of those years in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms. She has been at her current school for 2 years. Sharon has a Bachelor and Master's degree in Education, specializing in Biology. She has a minor in Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Both Sharon's grandmother and mother were also teachers. Although she originally did not want to be a teacher because of all the difficulties she saw her mother and grandmother go through, her friends convinced her to get an alternative certification for teaching once she had her daughter. She describes herself as, "a mom, a teacher, and an overall caring person." Sharon is married with two children.

Suburban/Rural School District. Five of the teachers in the study worked in three schools in a suburban/rural school district: Dewey Elementary School, Adams Elementary School, Staring Elementary School. School pseudonyms were used in order to protect the participants' privacy. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey, about 105,000 individuals populate this area. It is estimated that 76% of individuals are Caucasian, 21% are African American, and 4% are Hispanic. The mean household income is \$73,382. In 2009, 4.4% of individuals were estimated to be unemployed. The percentage of all people living below the poverty level within 12 months of the survey is 11.8% with 9.4% of all families. It is estimated that 17.3% of children under the age of 18 years old are living below the poverty level. In 2009, 61% of households in this area were headed by married couples and 17% were of other types of families. It is estimated that 89% of individuals 25 years old and over have at least a high school diploma, 24% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 11% are high school dropouts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Suburban/Rural School District Teachers. The participants from the suburban/rural school district were recruited for the study through a mass email of teachers in the area, calling for individuals to volunteer to participate in a study. A university professor who frequently worked with teachers in the area obtained the email addresses. The following paragraphs describe the five teachers from this area. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' privacy.

Dawn. Dawn is a Pre-K teacher at Dewey Elementary School. Her current class has 9 boys and 3 girls, with 10 students qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities was 30 minutes. She has been teaching for a total of 6 years with 3 of those years being in her current school. Dawn has been

teaching in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms for 3 years. She has taught children with disabilities for 6 years. At the time of the study, Dawn is currently in her last semester of graduate school. She is seeking a Master's degree in Special Education with a specialization in Elementary Education. Her bachelor's degree is in Early Childhood Education. She is certified to teach both Elementary and Early Childhood Education. She comments that she always knew she was going to be a teacher. She describes herself as an "overachiever" who is "passionate" and "always doing something". Dawn is married with two young children. Her son is currently in Kindergarten while her daughter is in a Pre-K classroom at her school.

Jean. Jean is a Pre-K teacher at Adams Elementary School. Her current classroom has 7 boys and 3 girls with all children qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities was 1 hour. She has been teaching for a total of 7 years with 4 years being in her current school. Also, she has been teaching in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms as well as in classrooms with children with disabilities for 7 years. Before she became a teacher, she worked in the juvenile justice system. Jean has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology. She is certified in Special Education and Early Intervention. When asked to describe herself to a stranger she says that she is "caring", always "read into things", and a "perfectionist". Jean indicates during her survey that a cause of stress in her life was that her cousin had recently been killed in the last month. During the study, Jean is married with two daughters. Her oldest daughter is 5 years old and the youngest is almost 2 years old.

Terry. Terry is a Pre-K teacher at Staring Elementary School. Her current class has 5 boys and 3 girls in her class with 6 of her students qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities is 1 hour. At the time of

the study, she has been teaching a total of 7 years in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms and 2 years in her current school. Also, she has been teaching students with disabilities for 6 years. Terry has a Bachelor's degree in Human Ecology with a specialization in Early Childhood Education and a minor in Special Education. She is certified to teach both Early Childhood Education and Special Education. Terry explains that her mother is a teacher and although she promised herself she would never become a teacher, after taking an early childhood course in college as an interior designer major, she decided to become a teacher. Terry describes herself as "peppy" and that she is family centered. Terry is married with children.

Renee. Renee is a Pre-K teacher at Staring Elementary School. Renee's class has 4 boys and 4 girls. Half of her class qualifies for free or reduced cost lunch. Renee's longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities is 2 hours. She has been teaching for a total of 5 years, having spent all 5 years in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms. She has also been teaching children with disabilities for 5 years. At the time of the study, it was Renee's first year at her current school. Renee has a Bachelor's degree in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Special Education. When asked to describe herself in three phrases, Renee says that she is "caring" and "passionate" and that she prays and meditates daily. Renee is married and living with her husband and children.

Denise. Denise is a Pre-K teacher at Dewey Elementary School. At the time of the study, she has 11 boys and 9 girls in her class with 18 of her students qualifying for free or reduced cost lunch. The longest uninterrupted time she has her class for instruction or activities is 30 minutes. She has been teaching a total of 18 years in her current school with 17 of them being in early childhood (PK-K) classrooms. Denise taught children with disabilities for 8 years in a Special Education resource class prior to her current position as a Pre-K teacher. Denise has a Master's

degree in Special Education in Speech Pathology. During her interview, Denise explains that she “always felt like a nurturer” because she is the oldest of 8 children and this influenced her to teach. When asked to describe herself to a stranger, she says she is, “busy, fun, and loving”. She has no children of her own and lives with her husband.

Measures

Participants completed a survey packet and semi-structured interview that included the eco-map protocol. The survey packet included items from a) Role Balance Scale (8 items) (Marks, 1994), b) Role Overload Scale (8 items) (Reilly, 1982), c) Perceived Stress Scale (13 items) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstien, 1983), and d) Job-Family Role Strain Scale (16 items) (Bohen & Viveros, 1981). Role strain, overload, and balance have both been characterized as factors that contribute to teacher stress. These items along with the Perceived Stress Scale items contribute to the researcher’s knowledge of the teachers’ self-reported stress

Role Balance Scale (8 items). The Role Balance Scale (Marks, 1994) includes eight items that were scored from 1 to 5 (1 =strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). This scale was used to examine the multiple roles in an individual’s life and how they interact with one another. Higher scores on the scale were associated with a higher perceived ability to balance the roles in one’s life. Scores could range from 8 to 40, with higher scores indicating greater role balance. Two items on the scale were reverse scored.

Role Overload Scale (8 items). The 8 items from the Role Overload Scale, were adapted from the original 13 item scale, designed by Reilly (1982) which was based off of role-conflict and role-ambiguity scales (Beere, 1990). The highest score possible was 40 (extensive role overload) and the lowest was 8 (no role overload). The eight items were scored from 1 to 5 (1 =strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Perceived Stress Scale (13 items). The Perceived Stress Scale, designed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein in 1983, was used in order to measure an individual's perception of their stress. As described by the creators of the tool, "perceived stress can be viewed as an outcome variable- measuring the experienced level of stress as a function of objective stressful events, coping processes, personality factors, etc." (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983, p.386). The 13 items on this scale measured the frequency of events in individuals' lives that are "unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloading" (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983, p.387). Each item on the scale was scored by the occurrence as 0= never, 1= almost never, 2=sometimes, 3= fairly often, and 4= very often. Six items on the scale were reverse scored. The highest possible score on the scale was 52 and the lowest was zero. Higher scores indicated a higher perceived stress among the participant.

Job-Family Role Strain Scale (16 items). The Job-Family Role Strain Scale, created by Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981), included 16 of the 19 items that measured the participants' role strain. The items were used in the survey in order to examine the participants feelings about their multiple life and work roles and demands. The scale is scored as 0=never, 1=almost never, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often, and 4=very often. Three items on the scale were reverse scored. The highest possible score on the scale was 64 and the lowest was 0. Higher scores indicated greater role strain among the participant.

Teacher Interview. The interview served to ask questions in four major inquiry areas: (1) description of stress in teaching, (2) description of supports, (3) professional models, and (4) coping. The second part of the interview focused on establishing who is in the teacher's social network. The researcher took anecdotal notes during the audio-recorded interviews. The interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes. After the interview, the researcher constructed

the eco-map. The researcher returned to each teacher's classroom prior to the construction of the eco-map so that it could be discussed and approved. Any necessary changes requested by the teacher were made at this time.

Teacher Eco-Map Protocol. Since Ann Hartman's (1978) creation of the ecological map, eco-maps have been used in fields such as education, nursing, practicum, and other service fields with several different protocols (Coleman & Wallinga, 2000; Curry, Fazio-Griffith, & Rohr, 2008; McCormick et al., 2005; Ray & Street, 2005; Vodde & Giddings, 2000). The teachers' eco-maps were created through an adapted eco-map protocol (Baumgartner & Buchanan, 2010). The interviewer asked the teacher eleven questions probed the teacher to think of people in their social network. For each person named, the teacher described their relationship with that person. During this description, the interviewer sought to discover what type of support the person provide to the teacher (i.e., instrumental, informational, or emotional), what type of primary and secondary professional development support the person provides (i.e., educational, social, emotional, language/communication, physical, and creativity), the strength of the relationship, and whether the relationship is primarily positive, negative, or mixed. After the interview, the interviewer constructed an eco-map based off of the description of the social network given by the teacher during the interview. The eco-map displayed the teacher in the center of the map with the social supports they described surrounding them. The social supports were connected to the teacher with various types of lines. The type of support was recorded as a shape on the eco-map. The type of professional development support was marked by a color on the eco-map. The strength of the relationship for each person was displayed by the thickness of the line that connects the teacher to that person on the eco-map. The type of line that is connecting the teacher to the person on the eco-map illustrated whether the relationship is

primarily positive, negative, or mixed. Debriefing occurred after the interview in order to discuss the accuracy of the constructed eco-map. Appropriate changes to the eco-map occurred at this time.

Procedures

A mixed methods approach was used in the study by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. By using mixed methods, this research aims to provide information about job stress and social supports among the participating teachers that is both accurate and holistic. By using multiple methods, the researcher assumes that, “beyond the analysis of overlapping variance, the use of multiple measures may also uncover some unique variance which otherwise may have been neglected by single methods” (Jick, 1979, p. 603). The large urban school district teachers were recruited through Project Recovery. Teachers were given the chance to volunteer to participate upon hearing a brief introduction of the project at a professional development session. The suburban/rural district teachers received an email calling for teachers to participate in the study. They were also given a short explanation of the project. Teachers who were interested in participating responded to the email. Every teacher signed an informed consent form prior to the survey and interview completion. The five teachers from the urban school district received paper copies of the surveys during a Project Recovery professional development session. The other five teachers from the suburban/rural district were sent electronic versions of the survey. All surveys were given to the participants prior to the interview, to be finished in their leisure. The majority of surveys were returned when the researcher and participant met for the interviews but some were also returned electronically.

The participants chose convenient places to meet inside or outside of school during a break hour or after school for the interview. Nine interviews took place in the teachers’

classrooms during either nap time or during the teachers' breaks. One interview took place at a near by coffee shop. Debriefing occurred after the construction of eco-maps at the school sites. Two of teachers were not able to be debriefed.

Analysis

Each survey was coded and inputted into SPSS software. From the survey data, each teacher's scores were documented on a table and scores were totaled. Score ranges were set for "High Stress", "Medium Stress", and "Low Stress" by subtracting the lowest possible score on the four sets of items (16) from the highest possible score (136). A median for the difference between these two scores (120) was set in order to determine the median of the middle range. From there, three equally distributed ranges were set. "Low Stress" scores ranged from 16 to 75. "Medium Stress" scores were computed as 76 to 136. Lastly, "High Stress" scores were 137 to 196. Teachers were classified into one of the three categories as based on their overall scores from the survey data.

The interviews were analyzed using a combination of qualitative analysis techniques. All of the interviews were transcribed. Once all of the interviews were transcribed, the researcher read the transcriptions and engaged in the process of open coded in order to find major themes. Open coding allowed the researcher to mark sections, by naming or using the participants' words, of the participants' interviews that pertain to a specific subject or theme or their reality that they are discussing (Daly, 2007). As described by Daly (2007), these similar sections allowed for concept building and eventually the creation of specific categories and themes. Because the participants were answering generally the same questions, the frequency of each concept was counted in order to identify the major themes. As major themes were established, the researcher documented relevant evidence by marking quotations for each theme from the

interviews. These themes were examined for meaning in relation to the project and participants.

The eco-maps were used to count the number of social supports and types of social supports, the frequency of various developmental relationships, the number of the various professional developmental relationships, the frequency of positive, negative, and mixed relationships, and the frequency of the strengths of the relationships. The contents of each teacher's eco-map were used to construct a table. The table listed every support that named as well as each type of support, every type of professional developmental support, the strength of the relationship, and the type of the relationship. Totals for each category were calculated for each teacher. Then, tables were constructed for both areas which gave the totals for every category that was listed in the eco-maps. Totals were also calculated for each area. Final tables were constructed for each category that combined totals of both areas.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Introduction

This study addressed two research questions: 1) Is the amount of reported social supports for Pre-K teachers negatively associated with reported stress?, and 2) What information does the eco-map interview give us about teacher's social supports and stress? In order to study these areas, the ten teachers completed surveys in order to measure their stress as well as participated in semi-structured interviews. Research question one was studied through calculating stress scores for each teacher taken from the four measures on the surveys as well as through the analysis of the eco-maps, which were constructed by asking name-generating questions to the participants during the interviews. Research question two was studied through both the construction of the eco-maps as well as the interviews. Qualitative themes were found from the interviews. The following sections report the results the collected data according to the research questions. These results for each research question are also discussed in the sections.

Research Question 1: Is the Amount of Reported Social Supports for Pre-K Teachers Negatively Associated with Reported Stress?

In order to study research question one, the participants' reported stress was measured based off of their completion of four survey scales: Role Balance Scale, Role Overload Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, and Job-Family Role Strain Scale. With an overall highest stress sum score of 196 and lowest of 16, the teachers had a mean sum score of 94.8. Based on the sum of the scores on the four measures, each teacher was classified as "Low Stress", "Medium Stress", or "High Stress". Sarah, Mary, and Renee were classified as "Low Stress" teachers. Rachael, Lauren, and Sharon, Jean, Dawn, Terry, and Denise were classified as "Medium Stress". Based on the ranges for each classification, no teachers in the study were classified as "High Stress".

The amount of reported supports was determined through the construction of the eco-map. Rachael and Dawn reported the greatest number of supports at 13. Mary reported 11 supports in her social network. Lauren, Terry, and Sharon reported having 9 social supports. Sarah and Renee reported 8 supports. Denise reported 6 social supports. Jean reported having 5 social supports, the least amount of supports for all of the teachers. The suburban/rural district teachers had the largest variation in the number of social supports with there being a difference of 8 social supports between the greatest and least amount reported from the teachers in the area. The large urban school district teachers had a difference of 5 social supports between the greatest and least amount reported from the teachers in the area.

Table 1. Participant Stress Information and Report of Supports

Participant	Location	Stress Score	Classification	Total Number of Supports
Dawn	Suburban/rural district	95	Medium Stress	13
Denise	Suburban/rural district	128	Medium Stress	6
Jean	Suburban/rural district	113	Medium Stress	5
Lauren	Large urban school district	109	Medium Stress	9
Mary	Large urban school district	65	Low Stress	11
Rachael	Large urban school district	76	Medium Stress	13
Renee	Suburban/rural district	71	Low Stress	8
Sarah	Large urban school district	54	Low Stress	8
Sharon	Large urban school district	118	Medium Stress	9
Terry	Suburban/rural district	119	Medium Stress	9

Discussion. There were mixed results in the comparison of the reported stress scores and the reported number of social supports. Individually, it did not appear that the amount of reported stress was significantly related to the amount of reported social supports. While Sarah scored the lowest on reported stress among all the teachers, she also reported having the least amount of social supports among the large urban school district teachers. Among the teachers classified as “Low Stress”, there was a mean of 9 social supports while the “Medium Stress” teachers were similar with a mean of 9.1 social supports. When comparing of the two areas, large urban school district teachers reported more social supports and less stress. Large urban school district teachers reported an average of 1.8 more social supports per teacher than those of the suburban/rural district. When comparing the areas total mean scores for reported stress, large urban school district teachers reported 20.8 less than the suburban/rural district teachers. It may also be considered that large urban school district teachers more often reported social supports giving multiple types of support. Using a larger sample, these findings could be explored in greater depth in order to determine if the differences between the stress scores and report of social supports are related and generalizable to larger populations. Also, it would be valuable to greater explore the quality of the relationships that are described by teachers in relation to the quantity. It may be revealed through this exploration that the quality of the relationships may be more significant than the quantity in relation to the reported stress, which could explain the null findings on the individual basis of stress in related to the report of supports.

Research Question 2: What Information Does the Eco-Map Interview Give Us About Teacher's Social Supports and Stress?

Teacher interviews included both the development of an eco-map that outlined teachers' social networks as well as teachers' description of four major inquiry areas: (1) description of stress in teaching, (2) description of supports, (3) professional models, and (4) coping. Analysis of the data provides insight into teachers' social supports and stress. First, I will review what is learned from the eco-maps themselves and then describe the themes that emerged from the teachers' interviews.

Contributions From Eco-Map Data. During the second part of the interviews, name-generating questions were asked to the teachers in order to reveal individuals that they considered supports in their lives. After the interview, an eco-map was constructed of their social network. The ecological maps revealed multiple similarities among all of the participants. In total, there were a total 91 supports reported by all of the teachers with 20 of those reported consisting of multiple individuals grouped as one support. All of the teachers reported single individuals as well as grouped individuals together as social supports. The participants identified both the type of support an individual provided to them as well as the area of professional developmental support that was provided from this person's support. For example, an individual may have been identified as providing emotional support (type of support), which supported the teacher's social professional developmental support (area of development). According to the eco-maps, about 60% of the supports reported were giving primary emotional support. Primary informational support was reported for 34% of the supports. Less than 6% of the social supports were reported as giving primary instrumental support. Emotional support was the most consistently reported primary as well as secondary developmental type of support, along with

language and communication. About 37% of the social supports reported were giving primary emotional professional developmental support. Primary social professional developmental support was reported for about 23% of the social supports. Next, primary educational professional developmental support was reported for about 19% of the teachers. About 12% of supports reported by the teachers were giving primary language and communication professional developmental support. About 8% of the supports reported were giving primary creativity professional developmental support to the teachers. Lastly, primary physical professional developmental support was not reported for any of the social supports. Physical professional developmental support was consistently the least reported type of support for all of the teachers.

Revealing the kind of developmental and professional developmental support that individuals provide to teachers of young children may be valuable to establishing how these types of support facilitate stress and/or coping as well as how they reflect what type of support teachers perceive they need. The teachers most often reported receiving primary developmental emotional support as well as primary emotional professional developmental support. Physical professional developmental support was not reported as a primary professional developmental support for any supports. Research has identified negative physical characteristics of highly stressed teachers such as negative dietary habits and high blood pressure (Sorenson, 2007). Also, previous studies have indicated that teachers of young children may experience poor sleep quality and overall poor mental and physical health from job related stress (Brenner, Sörbom, & Wallius, 1985). This research that indicates no primary physical professional developmental support provided by people in the social network may be related to previous research indicating physical effects and health implications of teachers of young children. The reports of the frequency of the various domains of development can have implications for how teachers can

improve their social networks and job stress.

Because some research suggests that perceptions, rather than actual realities, of adult relationships are important to consider when studying social supports (Chronister et al., 2006), it is essential to consider the perceptions of the teachers in the study. Another explanation that may illuminate why certain types of support and areas of development were highlighted often while others were not may be connected to the perceptions of the teachers. Teachers could be more likely to report a type of support or an area of development when they perceived themselves as needing it more than others. For example, a teacher could believe emotional support to be extremely useful and needed while instrumental support may be less of a concern. Also, a teacher could perceive having language and communication developmental support as needed in her profession while physical support is not perceived by her as vital. When considering their perception, certain types of support and areas of development could be reported less often not necessarily because they were lacking but because they may not be seen as needed by the teachers.

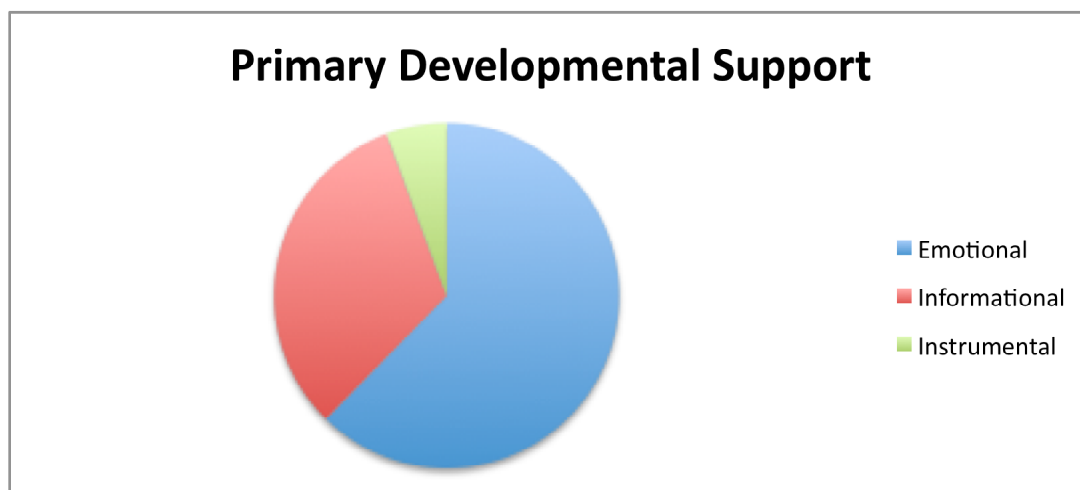


Figure 2. Primary Developmental Support

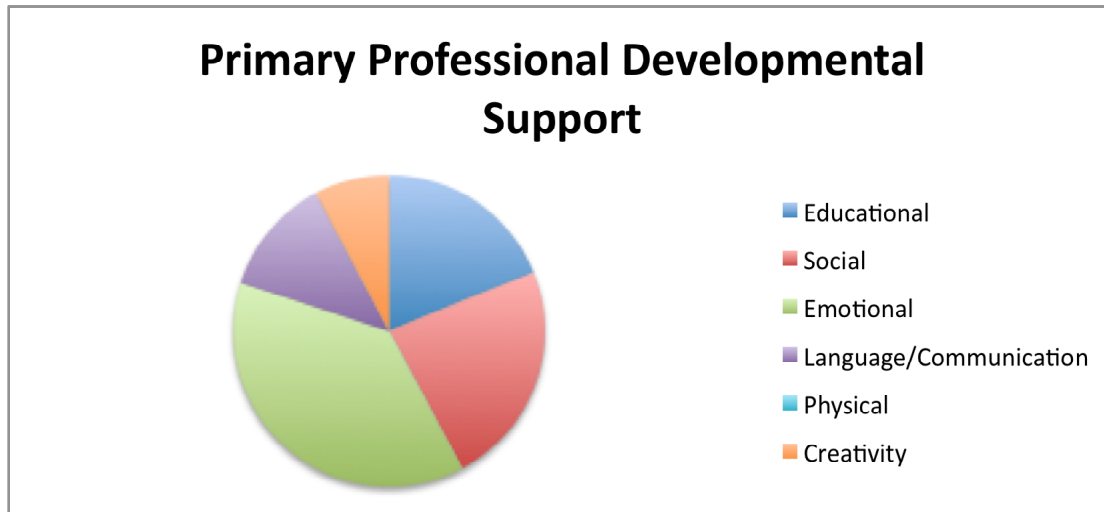


Figure 3. Primary Professional Developmental Support

Qualitative Themes. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews: 1) multiple roles, multiple responsibilities, 2) profession of circumstance, 3) other educators as supports, and 4) students' progress as a means of enthusiasm through stressors. The following sections describe the findings for each theme that emerged from the interviews with the participants. Qualitative evidence for each theme is also presented along with discussions.

Theme 1: Multiple Roles, Multiple Responsibilities. The interviews with the teachers revealed the stress they felt about the multiple responsibilities they had to fulfill for the multiple roles the teachers took on in their lives. Teachers spoke about the personal and professional roles that they have. Many of the teachers agreed that the multiple responsibilities they had to fulfill in their multiple roles affected one another. Renee stated that it was discouraging to her that her responsibilities at work often carried over to her role at home, "The amount of work and things we need to perform in little time [is discouraging]. Because when you are here you are expected to be in the trenches and teaching, so we take so much home with us." When asked

about the most stressful part of their lives, many teachers commented that balancing the multiple roles and responsibilities in multiple contexts was a challenge. When asked this question, Dawn commented,

I think just trying to balance everything professionally and personally. You know having two kids kindergarten and pre-school, so kind of being around that age all the time sometimes in itself just lends itself to a lot of stress...I think mostly for me, its just those times when I feel really overwhelmed [that are most discouraging]. I'm in grad school finishing my masters. I'll graduate in December and our school has started the TAP program and I'm a mentor teacher for that so, it's been interesting just trying to balance and juggle all those different really big responsibilities you know? You can't just let anything go you know? And like I said, I tend to be the overachiever and I tend to want to do everything the best that I can so, its just those times that I feel like I have just too much to do and it's not so many hours in the day.

Terry spoke about the challenge of specifically balancing her energy among her multiple professional and personal roles,

I think it is trying to balance my energy between my students and my own children because by the time I leave here I am pretty much done and have to muster up in order to spend time with my own kids.

While discussing the multiple responsibilities the teachers were trying to fulfill among their roles, teachers emphasized that this strain was not only inter-contextual, between home and school, but also professionally intra-contextual.

Within the School. During these conversations, teachers spoke specifically about the multiple responsibilities they had especially within their school. Rachael explained how she

viewed her role in her classroom based on all the responsibilities she had with her students,

I'm your teacher. I'm your doctor. I'm your lawyer. I'm your grandmaw, your pawpaw, your daddy. I'm your everything. When you're in this classroom with me for six hours, I'm everything that you need.

Not only did the teachers recognize the stress of having multiple responsibilities in their classroom, other sources within her profession demanded responsibilities to be met. When asked what was the most stressful part of her life, Denise said, "It's work [laughs]. Its just having many hats, being a teacher, being a mentor teaching, having a paraprofessional to teach so that is a lot." The teachers spoke about the multiple sources within their schools that demand certain responsibilities to be met. Both the administration and districts are sources of stress for the teachers. Additional stress rises due to specific curriculum and mentoring programs that were present in the school. Sharon spoke about the things that discourage her about her job,

That's part of my frustration, we're supposed to be in here packing up the room but it's always something more important than what I need to do. My para is pulled, I'm pulled because I am a mentor teacher too, so not only am I doing the grant not only am I'm teaching a classroom, and I'm responsible for that, but I have to do professional development once a week, I have to observe teachers, I have to coach teachers, you know what I mean? Its just... not only doing my job of like a literacy facilitator or a master teacher through Cap, I don't know if you are familiar with the Cap program, but to be a mentor teacher is just... to me.... it shouldn't be a classroom teacher, a homeroom teaching. It's just too much. It really is because the requirements that the program calls for and the way our school has worked it doesn't really align so its kind of a lot. I'm just thankful this year is ending. [laughs]"

Terry summed up this reoccurring source of stress by stating, “[I get discouraged about teaching because of] all the demands that are placed on you from all the different areas. You have parents, staff, the district, the state, and it feels like things are constantly being added to the workload.”

Similar to previous literature, the stress of fulfilling multiple roles appeared to present itself several times during the interviews with the teachers. Other researchers have found that many teachers of young children experience role strain as well as role overload (Papastylianou et al., 2009) due to the professional and personal roles they must take on (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2009). Research has also explored how policy and curriculum choices can cause stress for teachers of young children (Moriarty et al., 2001). The teachers from this study not only expressed the stress of policy and curriculum choices made by their school, but also the multiple roles they must take on within their school due to these choices. For many of the role that the teachers described, they also described the conflicting responsibilities that each role required, especially within their schools.

Theme 2: Profession of Circumstance. While some of the teachers in the study commented that teaching was something they always felt compelled to do, mostly due to their love of children from an early age because they either came from a large family or babysat often, many teachers expressed a different path into the profession. The teachers described this alternate path as not their original plan for a career. Although the participants articulated a great passion for teaching young children, surprisingly, being a teacher is somewhat of a “profession of circumstance” for many of them. Rachael spoke about her journey to become a teacher,

My first career path was to be a pediatrician, to work with young children and my senior year in college I got pregnant and had a baby and I wanted to raise my baby so I decided not to go to med school at that time so I could devote my time to my baby.

Sharon spoke extensively about how she never wanted to be a teacher, mostly because both her grandmother and mother were teachers. She observed their challenges in the profession her entire life. When she got older, circumstances led her to the profession.

I got married really young and we started a family right away and, when my oldest daughter was three, I had two girlfriends who were teachers, one was in education major, and one was in psychology major who ended up doing alternative certification and they were both like one summer, “You really need to just go and become a teacher because you like little kids. You really have a creative side to you so just do it.” So, I decided to become a teacher and I went to an alternative certification at the university and I got my MAT, my master of arts in teaching.

Also commenting that own child led her to the profession, Sarah spoke about teaching benefitting her daughter.

I had my child early in my years and I decided that I wanted to make sure that she was going to be all that she could be. I decided I would like to get my early child education because I wanted her to know the things she needed to know because I know that the early years are the most important.

Although it was revealed that half of the teachers had not originally intended to pursue a career in education, most of them commented that they did always know they wanted to work with children. Jean discussed her journey to teaching,

It was a long one actually. I have a degree in Criminal Justice. I started to do juvenile justice and I did that here in Louisiana then I moved to Texas and I couldn't do that there because I couldn't speak Spanish and I didn't want to work 24 hour shift work. That's when I kind of looked at what I really enjoyed in life and I felt like I wanted to work with

kids and that's when I got my alternative certification. The opportunity presented itself so I took it.

It could be taken from these conversations that a passion for children may lead an individual to pursue a job in human services but that the convenience of the teaching profession is highly appealing. Even among all of the well-known and documented stressors and challenges, the "goodness of fit" of the profession may override these concerns for many individuals. The advantages of teaching, especially for a mother, include having similar hours to your children, having summers off, and having a profession that facilitates your own ability to parent.

These findings are consistent with previous research that has attributed much of female motivation towards the teaching profession to the career's ability to work well with life's circumstances such as parenthood and family (Butt, MacKenzie, & Manning, 2010; Raggl & Troman, 2008). In a study of 47 individuals (40 female, 7 male) who eventually changed their career to teaching, the researchers found that similar results among female parents (Raggl & Troman, 2008). The female participants noted that turning to the teaching profession fit their family life. The reasons the profession fit their family life included the flexibility, the practicality of working at their children's schools, the emphasis of prioritizing family, and the ability to improve their child's education and their own parenting skills through their job. The authors described these participants as experiencing "family-related turning points" in their careers (Raggl & Troman, 2008, p. 590). Similarly to this previous research, many of the participants expressed that specific events or turning points led them to teaching especially when they related to having a family, indicating that there are important links to characteristics of the profession and its ability to fit well with these events.

Theme 3: Other Educators as Supports. Relationships with other educators who were either friends or family members was a reoccurring theme during the interviews. While a small amount of teachers spoke about having very strong relationships with other educators in their own school, the teachers also deeply value the relationships their had with educators outside of their school. Seven of the nine teachers spoke about these relationships in great detail. These other educators included both family members and friends. Renee shed light on why these relationships may be so vital. When asked how she coped with the stresses of teaching she stated, “Talking with other teachers, listening to their struggles, talking to veteran teachers, and finding out how they got through their struggles and why they stayed.” Having supports that are also educators appears to be important to the teachers because they are able to understand the difficulties of the profession. Sharon spoke about her husband who became an educator later in their marriage, “Before he started working in a school system he was not as supportive until he got in to it and really saw what I was dealing with.”

Another reason educators appear to be important supports for other educators is for the exchange of teaching strategies and materials. Sharon explained how she and her two best friends who work as teachers help one another,

We bounce ideas off of each other a lot and C is a kindergarten teacher and R is a Pre-K teacher. So like they understand and know.... ‘Oh this is a good idea!’ ‘Oh you should try this!’ so we are constantly are going back and forth almost everyday about that.

The teachers spoke enthusiastically about how these exchanges with other educators kept their teaching new, exciting, and even constantly improving. Denise commented that her relationship with a teacher kept her motivated, “We teach the same subjects so we share ideas so we’re always looking, so we’re kind of competitors. We’re always looking for better things to

show off. [laughs]” Some of these exchanges were explained to be valuable because teachers were able to share strategies that have been shown to be affective in their classrooms. Sharon also spoke about how her friend, who was more of a veteran teacher, supported her as a less experienced teacher.

She has talked to me a lot about like things how I can handle the situations at school and just different strategies to use because I’m the computer person who searches. I would do internet searching for everything, but she has tried and true strategies that she used year after year in her classroom.

The emphasis on relationships with other educators from the participants of this study revealed a great importance and many functions. Teachers view their relationships with other educators as supportive, reassuring, and motivating. The teachers also expressed that these relationships make them better teachers by the exchanging of ideas and materials as well as keeps them challenging themselves to be better. The teachers in the study described the importance of veteran teachers who can share their experiences.

Prior research pertaining to educators’ relationships with their co-workers has suggested that educators at the same school rely on one another to provide support when there are issues specifically in workplace (Pozo-Munoz et al., 2008). In a study of 158 female and male primary school teachers, it was found that support from co-workers has a “buffer effect on both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization” (Pozo-Munoz et al., 2008, p.137). According to Pozo-Munoz et al. (2008), relationships with other educators are strengthened when they can identify with each other’s experiences and feelings, which leads to the exchange of advice, information, and other resources. These findings may explain why educators may not need to be working at the same school to have an effective and strong relationship. Because the value of these

relationships were not determined by whether the teachers were at the same school, it may be concluded that there is some mutual understandings and stressors amongst teachers that allow for supportive relationships, regardless of location. Ultimately, most teachers did not indicate why the relationships with educators at their current school were not as emphasized. In fact, they often replied simply “No.” or “Not really.” when asked if they considered people within their school as part of their social network. During the interviews, a couple teachers did suggest that there may be some reasons for being closer to educators outside of their school. As Denise stated, other educators in their schools may be seen more as “competitors” than as confidants. Teachers in the same school may view themselves as competing with other teachers for preferred classes, higher scores, better esteem, etc. As a result of this competition, these relationships may be more susceptible to conflict than relationships with educators outside of their school. Although Renee did not specify what position the colleagues held in her school, she spoke about two people she worked with that were negative. She stated,

[They help teach me how to be a better teacher by] how to talk to people with dignity and respect and not talk about people behind their back. You should talk to people with a smile on your face. How to say positive things and not negative things about teachers and students.

As Renee’s comments indicate, it is possible that relationships within the school are more prone to conflicts of views about teaching as well as how to work with others because they are working together more often with sometimes competing ideas and philosophies. Relationships among educators in different schools may provide more of a safe space to share opinions and experiences. The relationships with other educators, mostly outside of their school, provide a comfort and mutual understanding about the difficulties of being in the profession. From these

discussions, it is obvious why these relationships are so important. Having an individual who can empathize and relate with their struggles allows the teachers to cope with job and life stress as well as maintain a passion for their profession.

Theme 4: Students' Progress as a Means of Enthusiasm Through Stressors. When exploring the stress that many teachers of young children experience, one may wonder how teachers are able to maintain their enthusiasm for their profession. During the interviews, the teachers spoke about this subject. Several times during these discussions, teachers regarded their students and their students' progression as the reason why they are able to maintain their enthusiasm for teaching through their largest stressors. After explaining her frustrations with her profession, Sharon spoke about how she is able maintain her enthusiasm for teaching,

When you see a child that came to you at the beginning of the year and would not even sit in a class, they would run behind their mom. And when you see them come to school and smiling, and come and express, "Oh! Read this book to me! Look what I learned!" That's just the best feeling in the world to see little ones learning and that's why I like this age so much because the growth that you see from the beginning. I have children who couldn't even finish my initial testing for our grant, the ERF grant, they could not sit through the six tests that they give them at the beginning. To finish all at the end, and not only finish but really show supreme growth. I mean, that's just the best feeling in the world.

Many of the teachers regarded this growth as a means of not only allowing them to continue feeling enthusiastic about their job but that this growth made them feel successful. According to the teachers, when they saw this growth and felt successful, it enabled them to feel enthusiastic. Sarah explained,

When I see that they're excelling especially when they come in and they're basically blank slates and I see that this is something that I've done, this is something that I've helped them achieve that ...that makes you feel good.

Dawn, working in the suburban/rural school district, had similar feelings about how she maintains her enthusiasm for teaching. After discussing the difficulties of all the roles she has to fulfill in her life she commented that the child's learning allowed her to keep her passion for teaching young children and feel successful,

You know and that "Aha" moment, too. When a kid has just been working on something for a long time or you know? That in itself it's really rewarding, when I look back and see your kids are from where they started and think, "I had a part in that."

It may be difficult for someone to understand why individuals go into a profession that has been classified as a high stress profession and is also known to produce lower paying careers. During the interviews, the teachers spoke about their stress they experience in the multiple contexts of their lives. Many of the teachers expressed that their students' progress allowed them to maintain their enthusiasm for teaching through all of the stressors as well as feel successful. It can be concluded through these acknowledgements that when teachers felt they were fulfilling their responsibilities as a teacher, they were able to maintain their enthusiasm even amongst all of the difficulties. Previous research has explored how stress is relieved by work and what specific aspects of work are most effective in relieving stress (Knoop, 2001). A study of 607 elementary teachers and administrators completed two questionnaires in order to determine how much their experience various types of stress and the amount that they value various characteristics of their job (Knoop, 2001). The results of this study suggest that specific work characteristics can help to relieve stress. According to the results, when teachers are

experiencing stress and increased effort into their job, the occurrence of “meaningful stimuli” can help to relieve stress (Knoop, 2001, p.834). Also, when aspects of the job that are valued by the individual are met, the stress of not meeting other values can be decreased. These results are consistent with the finding that when work is perceived as meaningful and accomplished to the individual, stress can be alleviated. Unique to teaching young children, especially for Pre-K children, teachers often refer to the students as “blank slates” because the students are at the beginning of their education and experiencing the school context for the first time. This “blank slate” outlook allows for teachers to see great strides in the children’s learning and development. According to the teachers, these strides are significant to facilitating an eagerness to their job and rewarding as a professional because it makes their work meaningful. When teachers do not feel successful, it is difficult to maintain that enthusiasm.

Conclusion

This study addressed two research questions: 1) Is the amount of reported social supports for Pre-K teachers negatively associated with reported stress?, and 2) What information does the eco-map interview give us about teacher’s social supports and stress? For research question one, there were mixed results when comparing the stress scores from the surveys and the eco-maps. Individually, the amount of reported stress was not significantly related to the amount of reported social supports therefore there were null findings. When comparing the two areas total mean scores for reported stress, large urban school district teachers reported less stress than the suburban/rural school district teachers and also reported social supports. Because the sample is small, these findings cannot be considered significant but by using a larger sample, these findings could be explored in greater depth in order to determine if they are generalizable to larger populations. In researching question two, the eco-map interviews were able to give more

information about teacher social supports. Primary emotional support as well as primary professional developmental support were the most consistently reported types of support. Physical professional developmental support was the least reported type of support reported by the teachers. Also, four themes emerged from the interviews, which gave more information about both the social supports of the teachers as well as their stress: 1) multiple roles, multiple responsibilities, 2) profession of circumstance, 3) other educators as supports, and 4) students' progress as a means of enthusiasm through stressors. First, the participants described experiencing multiple roles and responsibilities in relation to their personal and professional lives. Second, many teachers explained that different life circumstances led them to becoming a teacher rather than originally knowing they would enter the profession. Next, the teachers spoke a great deal about the importance of having relationships with other educators for various reasons. Lastly, the teachers described their students' progress as a means of enthusiasm through their multiple stressors. Several implications can be suggested for future research and practice from these results.

Chapter 5: Implications and Practice

Introduction

This study investigated ten early childhood teachers' experiences of stress and use of social supports. Two research questions were addressed: 1) Is the amount of reported social supports for Pre-K teachers negatively associated with reported stress?, and 2) What information does the eco-map interview give us about teacher's social supports and stress? In relation to question one, there are null results when comparing the stress scores and number of social supports. In studying question two, analyses of the ecological maps contribute to knowledge about what type of developmental support is most often and least often reported by the teachers. Also, qualitatively themes find that the teachers have similar experiences with their difficulties in fulfilling the multiple roles and responsibilities in their lives. Many of the teachers also expressed having had life circumstances that lead them into the teaching profession. The qualitative data reveals the importance of relationships with other educators for the participants in the study. Lastly, the interview conversations consisted of evidence that many of the teachers feel successful due to their students' progress and this in turn allows them to maintain their enthusiasm for teaching. The findings of the study have implications for future research as well as for practice.

Implications for Future Research

This present research has implications for possible future research. First, although current research has explored stress in the context of teaching, little is known about teachers' experience of stress, especially within the unique context of early childhood classrooms. This project is an initial step in addressing this deficit in the current literature. Early childhood teachers experience stressors different from other teachers. Characteristics of the early childhood

education field such as high turnover rates among teachers as well as having to spend a considerable amount of time with the students in a day can cause high levels of stress (McCarthy et al., 2009). Given the importance of these early experiences for young children's development and preparation for future schooling, as well as the potential negative impacts of stressed teachers on both, future research should explore in greater depth how teachers of young children experience stress as well as the specific unique stressors of early childhood education that affect teachers. This research should also consider ways in which stress affects teacher performance and student success.

Second, the present project sought to understand teachers' experience of stress and their use of social supports. The qualitative data suggests that teachers do utilize their social supports to address and cope with work related stress. What is less clear is if those teachers with more social supports actually experience less stress. The effectiveness of utilizing social supports to handle stress is somewhat supported in the empirical literature (Betoret, 2006), however, coping researchers also suggest that other methods of coping with stress, such as using other direct action techniques (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2006). Direct action methods such as mental health professions and working directly with students in the classroom have been identified as ways in which child care providers cope with the stress of working with young children (Baumgartner et al., 2009). Future research should investigate methods for coping with job stress in the early childhood classroom environment that are most effective and why these techniques work specifically for teachers of young children.

Third, although ecological maps have been used in other fields such as counseling and nursing, the use of the eco-map interview to investigate social supports of teachers of young children is a new step. In past research, much of the literature on eco-maps emphasizes problem

solving to be an important and effective function of the eco-mapping tool in multiple contexts (Curry et al., 2008; Ray & Street, 2005; Vodde & Giddings, 2000). The eco-map enables individuals to evaluate their relationships with others as well as see where there are substantial strengths and weaknesses among the types of supports they receive from others. Future research should consider the tool's use and effectiveness specifically how it can be used to problem solve in the school context.

Fourth, previous research has indicated that a teacher's performance and behavior at school can be greatly affected by stress (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Teachers experiencing stress and burnout are more likely to experience decreased job commitment (Bowers, 2004; Kyriacou, 2001) and are less likely to engage students in appropriate activities (Brophy, 1988; Pianta et al., 2005). This data explored the various stressors that teachers experience. The results of this study suggest that students' progress is a means of maintaining enthusiasm through all of their stressors. Future research should also explore how student progress affects teacher performance.

Finally, although research has indicated that social supports can have the main effect on teachers' well-being (Pozo-Muñoz et al., 2008), this study specifically revealed that relationships with other educators were important to the teachers. The teachers described utilizing these relationships as a means of motivation, comfort, and professional inspiration. Future research should further explore this topic in order to learn more about what factors contribute to this relationship and how these relationships specifically aid in coping with job stress.

Implications for Practice

This study makes aims at making contributions future practice. First, eco-maps have been used in previous research but this study used the tool with early childhood teachers. By

using eco-maps, the study gives more information about how useful eco-maps are for exploring social networks. The tool was useful for teachers to explore their social networks' strengths and weaknesses that may be contributing to stress. By using the eco-maps with teachers in professional development and other professional settings, teachers can identify what their social networks may greatly contribute to their development as well as what their social network may lack. Because having social supports has been linked to better health outcomes (Betoret, 2006), having more knowledge about their own supports can lead teachers to improve their social networks thus improving their health and ability to work in their profession.

Second, the results from this study indicate that the participants were experiencing role strain not only in multiple contexts of their lives, but particularly within their schools. These findings are consistent with past research that has indicated that teachers experiencing job stress as also experiencing role strain (Chen & Miller, 1997). These findings point out there may be a need for administrators to consider the strain that is possible causing and/or contributing to the stress the teachers are experiencing. Administrators should consider the multiple roles and multiple responsibilities they are asking teachers to fulfill within the school so as to determine how these roles interact and can affect the teachers.

Third, the findings of this study indicated that many teachers did not initially choose teaching as a career. Many of their reasons for entering into teaching was consistent with previous literature which emphasizes the profession's ability to work well with life's circumstances such as parenthood and family (Butt, MacKenzie, & Manning, 2010; Raggl & Troman, 2008). By knowing this information, there are implications specifically for teacher training. Future teacher training should highly consider the motivations of individuals entering into the profession as well as additional necessary skills that may be needed by these individuals.

If individuals have different motivations for entering into the career besides originally wanting to be a teacher, they should also have clear expectations of what the career will entail. Also, there may need to be additional necessary coping and management skills added to teacher training if many individuals are becoming teachers for various reasons.

Fourth, the study gives insight on how teachers qualitatively describe their social supports. The participants in the study spoke in great depth about the importance of having other educators as supports for various reasons. By learning this knowledge, it is important to consider how these relationships can be encouraged and maintained. Gaining this insight could lead to future implications for schools to provide policy resources and professional development that facilitate a more supportive environment for teachers. Also, the participants described very strong relationships with other educators that were not necessarily in their school yet were still very supportive and helpful. Policy resources and professional development should consider working at not only the school level but also district and state.

Lastly, a theme emerged within the data that students' success was a means for teachers to feel both enthusiastic through stressors and successful. In light of recent attempts by officials to link teacher pay to student performance, this finding should be highly considered for the possible affect it can have on teacher stress as well as their job performances. If teachers' pay is being determined by the success of their students, this may work against its function of a means of helping teachers cope with job stress. Teachers may begin to feel more stress when their pay depends on this factor. Added stress may occur when the teachers' feelings about how students' success is measured conflicts with how policymakers view students' success.

Limitations

Due to several contributing factors, there are limitations that can be found in the design of the study. First, the sample of teachers was a convenience sample from a grant and from volunteers in a specific district therefore it is not a random. Because the sample is a convenience sample, it may not be as generalizable to a larger population. A larger, random sample could better represent the population thus increasing the generalizability.

Second, another limitation is that all measures in the study are self-reported and not observed by the researcher. The surveys were completed by the participants in order to report their stress. Also, the account of the teachers' social supports was based on their report rather than by observing the relationships. Due to the multi-methods approach to this project, a holistic view of the data aims to be sought despite there being only self-reported data.

Third, it could be a limitation that the participants completed the study at different times. The five teachers from the urban school district were surveyed and interviewed during the Spring of 2010. The five suburban/rural school district teachers were later surveyed and interviewed during the Fall of 2011. The time of the school year may have an affect of the amount of stress the teachers are experiencing thus making the data less comparable. Although the participants completed at different times, the protocols and methods in which to collect data were closely replicated so as to give similar experiences of participation to all teachers.

Lastly, two of the teachers in large urban school district were not able to meet for a debriefing session after the eco-maps were constructed. One of the teachers suffered illness during this period of the study and another, who was no longer a part of the Early Reading First grant, was not able to meet to debrief. Because these teachers were not debriefed post construction of the eco-maps, the information about their social supports may not have been

valid. Although these participants were not debriefed, the eco-map interviews were audio-recorded in hopes of providing the most accurate account of their social supports.

Conclusion

The present study, which explored reported teacher stress and social supports among Pre-K teachers, made several contributions to the field both for future research. First, this project aimed to study more about job stress specifically for teachers of young children. Future research should continue to explore this topic for early childhood education as well as the unique stressors that teachers experience in this field. Second, this research looked at teacher job stress and the use of social supports. Future should investigate other effective coping methods for teachers of young children. Third, although eco-maps have been used previously in research, future research should continue to explore its effectiveness in early childhood education. Fourth, although this project explored job stress and social supports for teachers of young children, future research should also see how these factors interact with teacher performance. Lastly, this study uncovered an importance of relationships with other educators for teachers. Future research should seek to learn more about these relationships and their usefulness in coping.

This study also has several implications for practice. First, schools should consider using eco-maps in professional development and other school settings with teachers. Second, role strain, specifically within the school, appeared to be an issue for the teachers in this study. Administrators should consider the role strain that their teachers are experiencing when appointing multiple roles and responsibilities. Third, the results from the study suggest that many teachers do not originally choose the profession of teaching. Teacher training should consider this factor in creating a curriculum for individuals seeking to enter the field. Fourth, the teachers expressed the importance of relationships with other educators. School officials should

work to create policies and opportunities that facilitate a supportive environment where educators can communicate together. Lastly, by obtaining the knowledge that students' success is a means for maintaining enthusiasm among stressors for teachers, policy makers should highly consider this factor when determining teacher pay by student success. Hopefully, these contributions will improve the field of education and the current status of job stress in the profession.

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Appendix A

Teacher Consent Form

LSU Consent Form Teacher Stress and Support

Dear Teacher,

Your class has been selected to participate in a study conducted by Louisiana State Researchers, Dr. Jennifer Baumgartner, Dr. Renée Casbergue, and Dr. Teresa Buchanan. The study is designed to find out about the lives of teachers. For this, we will ask you to complete a short survey packet and participate in an interview. During the interview you will be asked to help us create a picture of your social network - people who are important to you. The principal of your school and the Parish School Board office have given their support and approval for this project.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you indicate on this form that you would rather not participate, that is fine. There are no known risks of participating in this project outside those of everyday life. Completing the questionnaire may benefit you by giving you an opportunity for reflection. If you agree to participate but change your mind and want to stop at anytime, that is also fine with us.

If you choose to participate, please return this permission form to us by _____. (One copy of this is for you to keep, the other is for us.) We will be able to give you \$50 as our thanks for your help with this project. If you have any questions about any of this at any time, please call or write one of us. Our phone numbers and e-mail addresses are listed below.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Baumgartner	225-578-0312	jbaum@lsu.edu
Renée Casbergue	225-578-6660	rcasberg@lsu.edu
Teresa K. Buchanan	225-578-6867	tbuchan@lsu.edu

'The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about my rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.'

Teacher Signature

Date

(Check one of the statements below)

- ☐ No, I would not to participate in this project.
☐ Yes, I will participate in this project.

Study Approved By:

Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/jrb
Approval Expires: 12-20-2010

**One copy of this is for you to keep.
We can't begin the study until you return the other copy to your child's teacher so please return it soon.
Thank you for your help!**

Teacher Survey

This Survey was designed to measure the concept of DAP as presented by S. Bredekamp and C. Copple (Eds.) (1997), *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs: Revised Edition*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. This version of the survey was created by Diane C. Burts, Teresa K. Buchanan, Kyung-Ran Kim, Joan H. Benedict, Sheri Broussard, David Dunaway, Stephanie Richardson, & Mary Sciaraffa at Louisiana State University. The questionnaire was originally conceptualized and developed by Rosalind Charlesworth, Craig Hart, Diane C. Burts, Sue Hernandez, & Lisa Kirk at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1990.

Section I

Researchers will be careful to keep your answers to this survey confidential.

Reports of findings will not use names of respondents or schools.

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF:

1. I have completed the following:

(Check all that apply)

____ Bachelor's degree⁽⁴⁾

____ Master's degree (5)

____ Master's degree plus (6)

If you graduated from college, please complete questions #2 - #5. If not, please skip to #6.

a. Degree-granting Department HUEC* EDUC Sp Ed Other _____
(Circle one) 1 2 3 4

b. Major/Area(s) of Specialization Ed ECE Sp Ed Other _____
(Circle all that apply) 1 2 3 4

c. Minor/Area of Specialization	El	Ed	ECE	Sp Ed	Other
(Circle one if appropriate)	1	2	3	4	

d. Certification/Licensure EI Ed ECE Sp Ed Other _____
(Circle all that apply) 1 2 3 4

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR TEACHING CAREER:

2. How many total years have you taught? _____ years

3. How many years have you taught in your current school?(including this year) _____

years

4. How many years have you taught in an early childhood (PK-K) classroom? (including this year) ____ years

5. How many years have you taught children with disabilities? ____ years

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT TEACHING POSITION:

6. How many children are in your morning/all day class?

____ boys ____ girls ____ total

How many children are in your afternoon class? *(if applicable)*

____ boys ____ girls ____ total

* Human Ecology/Home Economics/Child Development & Family Studies

7. Please check the longest block of uninterrupted time you have in your class for instruction or activities. *(check one)*

____ 15 minutes (.25) ____ 1 hour, 15 minutes (1.25)

____ 30 minutes (.50) ____ 1 hour, 30 minutes (1.50)

____ 45 minutes (.75) ____ 1 hour, 45 minutes (1.75)

____ 1 hour (1.00) ____ 2 hours (2.00)

8. Of the ____ children in my class, ____ qualify for free or reduced cost lunch.

Total #

that qualify

Section II

FOR THE **FOLLOWING** PART,
PLEASE THINK ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS
IN GENERAL AND YOUR CLASS IN PARTICULAR

- a. Rank the following (1 - 6) by the amount of influence you believe that each has on the way you plan, or will plan, and implement instruction, ***after considering children's needs.***

	No Influence	Little Influence	Some Influence	Moderate Influence	A Lot of Influence
1. parents of children you teach	0	1	2	3	4
2. school system policy	0	1	2	3	4
3. principal/director	0	1	2	3	4
4. yourself (as classroom teacher)	0	1	2	3	4
5. state regulations	0	1	2	3	4
6. other teachers	0	1	2	3	4

- b. Circle the number (1-6) you believe is the most influential. Next, place a star next to the least influential number.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES SURVEY
PRE-KINDERGARTEN VERSION
FOR THE **FOLLOWING** QUESTIONS,

PLEASE THINK ABOUT **HOW OFTEN** CHILDREN IN YOUR CLASSROOM DO THE
FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES

Section III

Please circle the number that best represents the average frequency of each activity.

Almost Never (less than monthly)	Rarely (monthly)	Sometimes (weekly)	Regularly (2-4 times a week)	Very Often (daily)
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HOW OFTEN DO CHILDREN IN YOUR CLASS:

1. build with blocks	1	2	3	4	5
2. select from a variety of learning areas and projects (i.e., dramatic play, construction, art, music, science experiences, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
3. have their work displayed in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
4. experiment with writing by drawing, copying, and using their own invented spelling	1	2	3	4	5
5. play with games, puzzles, and construction materials (e.g., Tinker Toys, Bristle Blocks)	1	2	3	4	5
6. explore science materials (e.g., animals, plants, wheels, gears, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
7. sing, listen, and/or move to music	1	2	3	4	5
8. do planned movement activities using large muscles (e.g., balancing, running, jumping)	1	2	3	4	5
9. use manipulatives (e.g., pegboards, Legos, and Unifix Cubes)	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that best represents the average frequency of each activity.

	Almost Never (less than monthly)	Rarely (monthly)	Sometimes (weekly)	Regularly (2-4 times a week)	Very Often (daily)
10. use commercially-prepared phonics activities	1	2	3	4	5
11. work in assigned ability-level groups	1	2	3	4	5
12. circle, underline, and/or mark items on worksheets	1	2	3	4	5
13. use flashcards with ABCs, sight words, and/or math facts	1	2	3	4	5
14. participate in rote counting	1	2	3	4	5
15. practice handwriting on lines	1	2	3	4	5
16. color, cut, and paste pre-drawn forms	1	2	3	4	5
17. participate in whole-class, teacher-directed instruction	1	2	3	4	5
18. sit and listen for long periods of time until they become restless and fidgety	1	2	3	4	5
19. have the opportunity to learn about people with special needs (e.g., a speaker or a character in a book)	1	2	3	4	5
20. receive rewards as incentives to participate in classroom activities in which they are reluctant participants (e.g., group time)	1	2	3	4	5
21. see their own race, culture, language reflected in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that best represents the average frequency of each activity.

	Almost Never (less than monthly)	Rarely (monthly)	Sometimes (weekly)	Regularly (2-4 times a week)	Very Often (daily)
22. get placed in time-out (i.e., isolation, sitting on a chair, in a corner, or being sent outside of the room)	1	2	3	4	5
23. experience family members reading stories or sharing a skill or hobby with the class	1	2	3	4	5
24. engage in child-chosen, teacher-supported play activities	1	2	3	4	5
25. draw, paint, work with clay, and use other art media	1	2	3	4	5
26. solve real math problems using real objects in the classroom environment that are incorporated into other subject areas	1	2	3	4	5
27. get separated from their friends to maintain classroom order	1	2	3	4	5
28. engage in experiences that demonstrate the explicit valuing of each other (e.g., sending a card to a sick classmate or creating a group mural for the classroom)	1	2	3	4	5
29. work with materials that have been adapted or modified to meet their individual needs	1	2	3	4	5
30. do activities that integrate multiple subjects (reading, math, science, social studies, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

Section IV

Please circle the number that best represents your degree of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Nowadays, I seem to enjoy every part of my life equally well.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am pretty good at keeping the different parts of my life in balance; I generally don't let things "slide".	1	2	3	4	5
3. Some things I do seem very important, but other things I do are a waste of my time. (reverse-scored)	1	2	3	4	5
4. Everything I do feels special to me; nothing stands out as more important or more valuable than anything else.	1	2	3	4	5
5. There are some parts of my life that I don't care much about, and there are other parts I care deeply about. (reverse-scored)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Work time, classes and study-time, partner time, friend time, family time, leisure time- I find satisfaction in everything I do.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I try to put a lot of myself into everything I do.	1	2	3	4	5
8. There are some things I like to do so much that I often neglect other things I also care about.	1	2	3	4	5

Section V

Please circle the number that best represents your degree of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have to do things which I don't really have the time and energy for.	1	2	3	4	5
2. There are too many demands on my time.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I need more hours in the day to do all the things which are expected of me	1	2	3	4	5
4. I can't ever seem to get caught up.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I don't ever seem to have any time for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I seem to have to overextend myself in order to be able to finish everything I have to do.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel I have to do things hastily and maybe less carefully in order to get everything done.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I just can't find the energy in me to do all the things expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5

Section VI

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate *how often* you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of time you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	0	1	2	3	4
4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?	0	1	2	3	4
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	0	1	2	3	4
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4

Please circle the number that indicates *how often* you felt or thought a certain way in the last month.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?	0	1	2	3	4
13. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

Section VII

Please circle the number that best represents your average frequency of each statement.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
1. I worry that other people at work think my family interferes with my job.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I worry whether I should work less & spend more time with my children.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I worry that other people feel I should spend more time with my children.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I worry about how my children are while I am working.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I am comfortable with the arrangements for my children while I'm working.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Making arrangements for my children while I work involves a lot of effort.	0	1	2	3	4
7. My job keeps me away from my family too much.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I have a good balance between my job and my family time.	0	1	2	3	4
9. My time off from work does not match other family members' schedules well.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I find enough time for my children.	0	1	2	3	4

Please circle the number that best represents your average frequency of each

statement.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
11. I feel I have more to do than I can handle comfortably.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I wish I had more time to do things for my family.	0	1	2	3	4
13. I feel physically drained when I get home from work.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I feel I have to rush to get everything done each day.	0	1	2	3	4
15. I feel I don't have enough time for myself.	0	1	2	3	4
16. I feel emotionally drained when I get home from work.	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Part I: Teaching- Profession, Resources, and Stress

1. If you were to introduce yourself to a stranger, how would you describe yourself in three phrases?
2. How did you decide to become a teacher?
 - a. How did you initially decide to be a teacher?
 - b. What has encouraged you along the way?
3. When are the times of the day/year that you are most/least excited about teaching.
 - a. What, in your opinion, is the most important part of your work?
4. Sometimes people get discouraged about teaching. Has that ever happened to you? Explain.
 - a. What happened to help you?
5. How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?
6. What are the main sources of stress in your life?
 - a. On a scale of 1-5, with one being a slight stress to 5 being severe stress, how would you rank this?
7. How do you know you have been a successful teacher?
 - a. What helps you to be successful?
8. Who is your model of a professional?
 - a. Tell me about them.

Appendix D

Adapted Eco-Map Protocol

Interviewer: *I'm going to ask you the following questions to help you remember people who you might want to put on your eco-map. Some of the questions might sound repetitive. We are asking everyone the same questions so that everyone can remember as many people as possible to include on their map.*

Name Generating Questions-Teachers (modified from Mollenhorst, 2008)

1. Who helps you?
2. If you have a problem with school or at home, who usually helps you?
3. Are there people who come to you for advice or help?
4. Who are the people that you do things with most frequently?
5. Who do you like to work or play with?
6. Who is really close to you?
7. Who are the people in your family?
8. Who are the people in your school?
9. Who do you live with?
10. Who do you see frequently?
11. Sometimes people have good relationships and sometimes people bother one another. Who do you sometimes fight or quarrel with?

For each person (or source of support) named above, the following questions are asked:

- A. What type of support does this person provide? [Instrumental (for example,

provide food, clothing, shelter); Informational (for example, can help find out interesting things); Emotional (for example, listens when the teacher needs someone to talk to)]

You can give two different types but what is primary and what is secondary?

B. What part of your professional development is most supported by this person?

[Educational (for example, learns things from them); Social (for example, goes places and does thing with them); Emotional (for example, is comforted by them); Language/Communication (for example, talks a lot to them and allows for them to learn about how to communicate with others); Physical (for example, works out with them, takes physical care); Creativity (for example, supports creative projects, helps with making new lessons)]

You can give two different types but what is primary and what is secondary?

C. How strong would you say that this relationship is? (weak, moderate, strong, very strong)

D. How would you describe this relationship? [Positive (primarily affectionate and supportive; Negative (primarily marked by conflict); Mixed or Ambiguous (equally marked with support and conflict)]

Vita

Ashley Romero was born in May 1987 in Lafayette, Louisiana. She graduated from Acadiana High School in 2005 and received a Bachelor of Science in early childhood education (Pre-K to 3rd certification) at Louisiana State University in 2009. As an undergraduate, she interned and student taught in various locations and grade levels. During graduate school, she worked as a graduate assistant in the College of Education Office of Sponsored Programs. She looks forward to teaching young children after receiving a Master of Science in human ecology with a concentration in family, child, and consumer sciences.