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Threats to Teaching: An Investigation Into the Constructs of Compassion Fatigue in the Classroom

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Threats to Teaching: An Investigation into the Constructs of Compassion Fatigue in the Classroom

by

April M. Steen

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Special Education Department of Teaching & Learning College of Education University of South Florida

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Keywords: educators, burnout, secondary traumatic stress, teacher stress

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Abstract

A group of suburban/rural general and special education teachers ($n = 260$) responded to an electronic survey. The survey was designed to measure the prevalence of an under researched area of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction among teachers working in suburban/rural public schools. The current study hypothesized that the relationship among compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, demographic variables, and teacher stress factors (time management, discipline, motivation, professional distress, and professional investment) would correlate with an increase in compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) for general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools; furthermore, it predicted a positive correlation among burnout, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction. Findings indicate that both burnout and compassion fatigue have a negative impact on general education or special education teachers (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Koenig, Rodger, & Specht, 2018; Kokkinos, 2007). The results also indicate a positive correlation between compassion fatigue and teacher burnout, which are negatively related to compassion satisfaction. Implications and future research are discussed.
Chapter One

Introduction

Human beings interpret the world through their own perspectives. Each generation has a responsibility to pass knowledge on to the next generation. Freire (2000) stressed that the outcomes of education serve a purpose: the function either bring the next generation into the current thought and upholds the status quo, or it allows them to challenge the status quo and create new thoughts that ultimately change the world.

Individuals enter helping professions for the intrinsic value of helping others. Some examples of helping occupations include teaching, social work, and nursing. People who work in helping occupations face critical challenges. While there are many intrinsic rewards for individuals working in these fields, human service professionals also experience high levels of occupational stress, which can lead to attrition. The classroom teacher exemplifies the inherent tension between stress and satisfaction within the occupational landscape of schools. The teacher remains a critical component of the classroom and the learning process.

Teachers continue to leave the classroom at alarming rates. In the 2004-2005 school year, nearly 10% of Florida's public-school teachers left their classrooms, leading to an escalated teacher shortage in the state (Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability [OPPAGA], 2007), and there remains a growing teacher shortage problem across the nation, especially in the field of special education. According to Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2006), there are approximately 54,000 vacant positions for special education teachers throughout the country.
The U.S. Department of Education, through the Office of Special Education Programs, has spent about $490 million annually on recruitment and retention of special education teachers (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2008, 2009). Through numerous policy changes on federal and state levels, changes in education go beyond one-room schoolhouses to improve the performance of students. Notoriously referenced for school reform, *A Nation at Risk* remains as the first government report to call attention to the decline in our nation’s schools (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

The regulation of teachers and how they teach continue to be addressed, not only through legislation, but also through the court of public opinion. Due to federal legislation, a tremendous amount of pressure remains for teachers to raise the academic achievement of all students. This is best illustrated through the reauthorized No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the Every Student Success Act (ESSA) of 2015, which solely placed the focus on student academic achievement with high-stakes testing, and has introduced the accountability component of school quality.

Throughout the United States, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) comply with federal mandates for increased transparency, quality assurance, and public accountability by developing and later participating in state assessment systems, based on state curriculum standards, that measure how well schools (and teachers) perform according to how their students perform on standardized tests (Baker et al., 2010). Furthermore, state departments of education (and by extension LEAs and schools) are required to establish performance standards for public schools (i.e., school rating systems), based on disaggregated student performance data via standardized assessments, which allow parents and other members of the public to evaluate how their public schools (and school teachers) perform over time. Ultimately, LEA and school-level
administrators, who are responsible for establishing and maintaining program evaluation systems based (to a large extent) on the results of high-stakes, standardized assessments, will emphasize the importance of improving student performance on these assessments to their instructional staff (i.e., teachers). The focus on teacher performance is further emphasized through an expanded array of teacher evaluation systems (e.g., Charlotte Danielson, Tom Marzano) that allow administrators to incorporate student performance data on teachers’ annual performance evaluations. In summary, teachers must find ways to cope with an expanding array of performance-based, job related pressures; particularly, the need to improve student performance and the overall stress of being evaluated, to a large extent, by their ability to “create a classroom environment where all learners' needs are addressed” (Koller & Bertel, 2006, p. 199).

Researchers continue to examine the critical factors surrounding attrition and retention not only in general education but also specifically in special education (Billingsley, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; Kyriacou, 2001).

**Statement of the Problem**

Consistently, policymakers seek ways for the public education system to demonstrate accountability. Teacher shortages continue to be a national concern, and public school employees face mounting pressure to meet the educational needs of all students. At the federal as well as the state level, public policies, such as the ESSA and IDEA, attempt to reform schools by promoting student achievement through transparency and public accountability (U.S. Government, 2009; ESSA, 2015). As the pressure for public accountability increases, school districts must address the critical and costly issue of attrition. In addition to teacher attrition, other factors such as increasing enrollments (particularly in special education) and dwindling financial and classroom
resources limit a school’s capacity to provide their instructional staff with the training and resources they require to meet the needs of all their students.

It is critical to have the necessary number of teachers to staff schools efficiently. In 2018, 182,586 teachers were employed in Florida, but schools were unable to fill nearly 3,000 teaching positions. The Florida Department of Education (2018) predicted that this staffing shortage will increase to 10,300 vacancies the following year. Exceptional student education (ESE) remains a critical shortage area with 866 current vacancies. These numbers speak volumes when one takes into consideration that Florida is the 4th largest United States public school system (Florida Department of Education, 2018). Unfortunately, teacher retention remains a daunting challenge for schools, especially for those seeking to recruit and retain new personnel, as research suggests that nearly 30% of these teachers will leave their schools or the occupation itself within their first year of teaching (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Reasons for their departure include salary, instability of the school environment, involuntary movement between schools due to contracts not being renewed, and after the fifth year, remaining in education but no longer working as a K-12 classroom teacher (Gray & Taie, 2015).

These numbers paint a grim picture for the future of our nation’s public schools, as staffing shortages are further compounded by those leaving the profession due to retirement and those leaving in search of greener pastures. While public policies aimed at improving schools emphasize the need to build, develop, and maintain a knowledgeable and effective teacher workforce, it is questionable whether schools have the capacity to achieve this goal. Recruitment and retention issues affect the occupational culture of the school itself, especially in terms of its expertise; human capital as it relates to practical knowledge, the translation and transformation of theoretical knowledge into practice (i.e., praxis), is an incremental, recursive process that
develops over the course of many years. Teacher attrition impacts all students, but students with disabilities in particular, on a deeper level (Billingsley, 1993).

The literature on teacher burnout focuses primarily on causation; factors that lead to burnout affect the ecology of the school, simultaneously on several levels (e.g., micro, mezzo, macro). Farber (2000) identified a trend in teacher burnout; a pattern of recurring characteristics emerged that fomented into a well-defined category of teacher likely to experience burnout: secondary school teachers, naive or enthusiastic about their work, who tend to be influenced by external events rather than internal feelings or cues. Other factors associated with burnout include prominent stressors such as excessive paperwork, large classes, and students exhibiting indifferent or disorderly behaviors. In addition, teachers who work in large, urban schools are more likely to associate stress-related phenomena with their work environments. These schools lack a number of important resources, experience staffing shortages, and have outdated equipment and facilities. The paucity of resources is often exacerbated by an overabundance of students, as enrollment can substantially exceed a building’s capacity. Teachers describe their work environment as excessively bureaucratic and unsupportive, this lack of administrative support contributes to a pervasive sense of isolation and an absence of meaningful support on any level (Farber, 2000).

Other research (e.g., Billingsley & Cross, 1992) points to more specific reasons for teacher burnout, such as low pay, long hours, administrative pressures, unhappy or uninvolved parents, and student behavior issues (e.g., excessive absences, makeup work, disciplinary referrals). In summary, teachers are affected by their work environments, and schools frequently lack the resources that teachers need to serve the needs of their students. Schools are not monolithic, and the availability or scarcity of resources can vary significantly among institutions;
however, most teachers are willing to spend their own resources (e.g., money, personal time) when their schools are unable to provide them. Unfortunately, this altruistic tendency can contribute to an increase in job-related stress, and factors such as administrative support and student behavior can greatly enhance work-related stress levels, which can lead to compassion fatigue or burnout (Adams, Boscarino, & Figley, 2006; Cherniss, 1980; Gray & Taie, 2015).

The phenomenon of burnout impacts teachers both individually and collectively. Public perceptions often dictate the types of work deemed more valuable. Careers in child care face repeated misjudgment as being easy or not valuable. In the same way, work largely completed by women is devalued, contributing to circumstances that create overworked and unappreciated teachers (Adams et al., 2006; Wisniewski, 1997).

Although there is no certainty as to what the cause, teachers abandon the classroom; subsequently, their students are left at risk for failure, particularly vulnerable students. Simple burnout is a suggested cause for teachers who choose to leave the classroom. Farber (1991) proposed three types of burnout: (a) “worn-out,” wherein an individual essentially gives up or performs work in a perfunctory manner when confronted with too much stress and too little gratification; (b) “classic” (or “frenetic”), wherein an individual works increasingly hard, to the point of exhaustion, in pursuit of sufficient gratification or accomplishment to match the extent of stress experienced; and (c) “underchallenged,” wherein an individual is not faced with an excessive degree of stress (i.e., work overload), but instead with monotonous and unstimulated work conditions that fail to provide sufficient rewards (p. 40).

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), an office of the Florida Legislature, examined reasons Florida teachers left the field (2007). Legislators commissioned the report to better understand why teachers chose to exit the
profession, and if these data could explain the increase in teacher shortages that districts report across the state each year. Of the teachers who left the profession, 35% exited due to retirement, 30% departed because they were dissatisfied with working conditions, and 23% left for personal reasons (e.g., having children) (OPPAGA, 2007). The results of the OPPAGA report indicated that approximately three in ten teachers decided to leave the classroom because they were unhappy with aspects of their school’s work environment. These include mezzo-level factors like administrative policies, practices, procedures, and other school-level factors that limit their capacity to perform essential job functions, participate in meaningful in-service training activities, or to recognize their potential for advancement as career educators. Other school-level factors provide an impetus for teachers to leave the classroom; for example, they may be dissatisfied with students’ behavior or the perception of how building-level administrators handle their problems (OPPAGA, 2007).

Regardless their specific reasons for leaving the profession, occupational stress plays a critical role in what teachers ultimately decide to do. Occupational stress affects how much satisfaction professionals derive from their careers and their interactions with other associates. Thus, occupational stress has a direct impact on the level of attachment people have to their careers, how committed they are to their colleagues, and how involved they are in their occupational communities; in short, high occupational stress levels directly correspond to high rates of attrition among helping professionals (Cherniss, 1980). Occupational stress levels influence a teacher’s level of commitment to a particular career and to the field of education in general. Specific sources of occupational stress for teachers include: excessive paperwork resulting from bureaucratic overregulation; educational policies that contribute to expanded
instructional accountability; unstable and insufficient school budgets, and lack of recognition and appreciation from school leaders.

Maslach (1982) found that high levels of personal and work-related stress likely contributes to teacher burnout. Teachers face long days that never seem to end. Moreover, they must contend with increased pressure from building-level administrators to demonstrate a direct causal link between their instructional practices and improvement in student outcomes on distal performance measures; in particular, the gain scores on standardized district and state assessments. Stress affects teachers in various ways; however, high levels of occupational stress consistently lead to physical and emotional fatigue. Among helping professionals, this fatigue typically manifests as emotional indifference, and it is often directed towards their clients, patients, or students depending on their occupational roles and responsibilities (e.g., psychologists, nurses, and teachers).

Teachers who fail to attain and maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives, and those who struggle to reconcile their personal needs with their professional obligations, are at an elevated risk for developing compassion fatigue, which can lead to burnout; ultimately, compassion fatigue and burnout significantly increases the likelihood that teachers will leave their schools or the occupation altogether. Stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue are inherently interrelated constructs, with each construct building upon the others. Stress and burnout factors can have a direct impact on teacher attrition, especially in special education. Studies across multiple disciplines, which conceptualize burnout as a recurring process that disrupts an individual’s professional identity, support the notion that they are related constructs and consist of interrelated factors (Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2005). Thus, it is essential to appreciate them as dynamic, interrelated concepts, while simultaneously acknowledging their
distinctive features. Ultimately, occupational stress, compassion fatigue, burnout, and attrition represent both distinctive and interrelated elements of a larger process with the potential to disrupt the professional identities of human service professionals, including general and special education teachers. It is likely that the disruptive potential of this process is greater for those teachers in the early stages of professional identity formation, highlighting the important role of high quality teacher induction programs and administrative practices for retaining new teachers.

Several models have emerged from literature that examines how the constructs of stress and burnout impact the individual (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006; Cherniss, 1980; Maslach, 1982). More specifically, established models address how burnout directly impacts the individual's behavior. Cherniss' (1980) model described burnout as a shift in attitude where teachers adopt defensive strategies for achieving work goals by lowering expectations for their work products while simultaneously reducing their personal responsibility for attaining these outcomes—work goals and take less responsibility for work outcomes, as well as an increase in self-preservation/interest and emotional detachments.

In Maslach and Jackson's (1981, 1996) model, the focus was primarily on increased levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalizations. The chance for teachers to experience symptoms of emotional exhaustion greatly increases when considering the uncertain environment that classrooms present. Furthermore, teachers are in essence, on their own from the start of their career (Kokkinos, 2007).

There are multiple resources of time and money which factor into an investigation of the impact burnout has on educators (Billingsley, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; OPPAGA, 2007). Furthermore, research has supported four variables—current certification, noticed stress, perceived school conditions, and chronical age—as the most
significant aspects to distinguish if teachers are going to stay in the classroom (Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). To stay or not to stay in the discipline of education relies on the essential role teachers' perceptions play.

Numerous studies have supported a direct connection between stress and teacher burnout (Schnorr, 1995; Wisniewski, 1997). There is further need to carefully define teachers' roles, reduce legislative requirements, and ensure the necessary resources are in place for teachers to do their work to reduce stress and enhance retention (Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002).

From a research perspective, while individuals desire to complete their job to the best of their abilities, burnout in the workplace can overwhelm and impact completing work tasks effectively due to feelings of hopelessness. Such negative emotions are slow to develop, but can be powerful when felt. A lack of support and insurmountable workload may exacerbate negative emotions, especially when individual efforts do not lead to any discernible change (Stamm, 2010b). Figley (1995) coined the term compassion fatigue, or secondary traumatic stress, to describe “the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (p. 7). It is important to note that Figley and others have suggested that burnout is a constituent of compassion fatigue and can occur after a single episode of exposure to trauma and or stress (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006).

The combination of primary and secondary trauma creates work-related trauma (Stamm, 2010b). Falasca and Caulfield (1999) and Richards and Bates (2000) supported that traumatic experiences reported in schools are rising at an increasing rate. These reports include car and bus accidents, accidental deaths of students on a school-sponsored trip, house fires, sinkholes, domestic violence, murders, suicides, community disasters, and school shootings. Furthermore, these incidents do not discriminate and can impact people of any culture, race, gender, and
socioeconomic status. Teachers work in schools and clearly are at risk for these traumatic events entering the classrooms.

Nevertheless, little effort has been made to uncover the extent to which educators suffer from compassion fatigue or how compassion fatigue impacts instructional staff on a professional and personal level (Kyriacou, 2001). Adverse effects of caring, recognized as compassion fatigue, include burnout as a factor. People generally have an intuitive idea of what burnout is versus the concept of compassion fatigue. A call to action exists surrounding the need to change attitudes about the elements of burnout and compassion fatigue. Just as educators face pressure from high expectations of stakeholders, veterinary nursing and veterinary medicine professionals are equally impacted. Compassion fatigue and burnout are often generated by such high expectations or pressure. Both veterinary professionals and teachers remain susceptible because they frequently face the inability to achieve resolution to necessary situations (Hunt, 2017; Rank, Zaparanick, & Gentry, 2009; Sharp Donahoo, Siegrist, & Garrett-Wright, 2018).

The secondary trauma and stress literature have described compassion satisfaction as the constructive betterment gained by individuals in helping professions which work with traumatized or suffering individuals (Adams et al., 2006; Bakker et al., 2006; Figley, 1995; Stamm, 2002; Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2005). Upon further examination, compassion satisfaction throughout the literature appears to support the reduction of undesirable symptoms of burnout and compassion fatigue (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006; Stamm, 2002). This may ease the high costs associated with teacher turnover.

In sharp contrast to the comprehension of the causes of teacher burnout in the literature, missing models of treatment continue to be prevalent. To date, the construct of compassion fatigue has applied the teacher burnout phenomenon in only a few studies. On a daily basis,
teachers make essential decisions for students that impact their experiences, attitudes, and learning experiences. If occupational stress threatens a teacher's performance, absenteeism, professional composure, and personal feelings toward students, then it is critical that teacher stress is controlled to maximize the educational experience of students (Farber, 2000; Fore et al., 2002). The purpose of this study was to examine (a) the prevalence of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction among teachers working in suburban/rural public schools; (b) the correlation between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction with this demographic; and (c) work-stress-related variables that have relationships with compassion fatigue and burnout.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Do special education teachers experience higher compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction than general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

2. Is there a relationship between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public school?

3. Is there a relationship between the demographic variables (general education and special education), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), and compassion fatigue in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

4. Is there a relationship between the demographic variable (gender), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and
professional investment), and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

5. Is there a relationship between the demographic variable (number of years), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

**Significance of the Study**

This study sought to contribute to the knowledge base related to general and special education teacher burnout, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction. The knowledge from these studies has been examined thoroughly in other helping professions, and the knowledge gained has successfully assisted those professions (Adams et al., 2006; Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006). In particular, this knowledge has helped create awareness in preparation and professional development arenas. These thoughts indicate that helping professions may benefit from a reduction of burnout and compassion fatigue while increasing compassion satisfaction, which in turn directly impact the teacher performance in the classroom productivity levels (Radey & Figley, 2007). Minimized compassion fatigue for general and special education teachers, when paired with increased compassion satisfaction, can have a positive impact on their passion for the field and lead to student achievement and success.

**Definition of Terms**

**Burnout.** Burnout focuses on either a physical or mental health disintegrate caused by an individual's feelings of being overwork or stressed (Figley, 1995).

**Compassion fatigue.** This entails a gradual lessening of compassion over time. Sufferers can exhibit several symptoms, including hopelessness, a decrease in experiences of pleasure,
constant stress and anxiety, and a pervasive negative attitude. This can have detrimental effects on individuals, both professionally and personally, including a decrease in productivity, the inability to focus, and the development of feelings of incompetence and self-doubt. Individuals who are expend a great deal of energy and compassion to others over a prolonged period may experiencing compassion fatigue, as they unable to get enough back to offer reassurance that the world is a hopeful place. It is this constant output of compassion and caring over time without mutual benefit which can lead to these feelings (Figley, 1995).

**Compassion satisfaction.** This pertains to the contingent of positive feelings or satisfaction derived from doing one’s job. In helping professions, it is essential to gain satisfaction from assisting individuals to reach their goals (Figley, 1995).

**Special educator.** Classroom teachers with certification in exceptional student education working in a K-12 public school system (Billingsley, 1993).

**Teacher attrition.** The reduction of teachers as a result of resignation, retirement or death (Billingsley, 1993).

**Teacher retention.** Efforts made to keep or retain teacher’s workforce (Billingsley, 1993).

**Limitations**

Steps taken to address the threats to internal validity included: historical effects and selection bias, random selection, and random assignment. To address statistical regression, step taken consisted of omitting extreme scores and utilizing randomization. Because there was a risk of a low response rate, the researcher attempted oversampling of the population. Self-reported data can be limited if individuals conceal answers or give perceived correct answers. This survey was confidential, meaning that participants’ responses remained anonymous. Other factors that
impacted this study beyond the response rate included the time of school year, as some parts of the year are busier than others and staff may or may not be more agreeable to participate. Lastly, participants were volunteers and therefore may not be representative of the population.

**Delimitations**

Participants were selected from one suburban/rural school district in Central Florida via the district provided email list. Moreover, the survey instrument was online and used closed-ended Likert scale questions, which may have impacted the participation. The results of this survey were intended to be generalizable to general and special education teachers in a suburban/rural school district in Central Florida.

**Reflexivity Statement**

Reflexivity is an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Although these statements are typically found in qualitative research (Malterud, 2001) due to the nature of my background with schools it is imperative that I am transparent with my thinking. "A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (Malterud, 2001, p. 483-484).

For me, it was not necessarily my childhood experiences. No one in my family were social workers or teachers. My experiences that drove my preconceptions come from my professional training as a licensed clinical social worker. I have both my bachelors and masters degree in social work and have worked in a variety of settings. When I began this journey, I was working as a school social worker primarily serving students with disabilities. Having several
years of experiences serving teachers, students, families, administrators and the community, I saw firsthand the challenges happening in the school district I was employed by.

Almost daily I would have teachers in my office expressing their concern that they “feel angry or irritable, have no desire to participate in social settings, feel fatigued (chronically) or suffering from bouts of insomnia.” These experiences along with my prior knowledge of compassion fatigue is what drove my desire to pursue my doctorate. It was a natural fit that my study would be designed around using my prior knowledge of Charley Figley (1995) and Beth Stamm’s (2002) work in the field of compassion fatigue.

There is an assumption among researchers that bias or skewedness in a research study is undesirable. As Malterud (2001) writes: "Preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them" (p. 484). My preconceptions for this study arose from the direct daily comments I experienced in my times working with teachers and the social work participants that attended professional development trainings with me over the years of my career.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

There is a long history of research examining how human beings have handled stressful situations, especially in the helping professions (Cherniss, 1980; Figley, 1995). Symptoms can manifest through physical or mental means (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006). In the early literature, quality of work life could be found in studies of industrial or business-related fields. Definitions of work-related stress terminology has changed to a similar extent when compared to the definitions of what this stress creates among professionals.

The concepts of compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, and burnout have been thoroughly researched in the fields of nursing and social work. The overarching common thread between these professions is the helping relationship which establishes a provision of assistance from the employee; for example, the nurse, the social worker, or the teacher.

Throughout the robust nursing literature, ‘cost of caring’ references symptoms that manifest mentally or physically with the individual or within the work environment. Nevertheless, these costs impact nurses’ ability to be compassionate. Parallel to nursing, compassion is equally important in teaching. Both professions must work with patients or students with complex needs. Moreover, both exhibit behaviors of isolation or avoidance of critical tasks. In general, the need for work environments that promote overall health translate into a supportive workplace and a reduction in symptoms (Billingsley, 1993; Upton, 2018).
Education and Attrition

Education is one of the main helping professions. Studies have continued to examine how the quality of work life impacts teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Attrition is a reduction of numbers, usually due to resignation, retirement, or death (“Attrition,” n.d.). Teacher attrition is influenced by a wide range of factors, including teachers’ personal circumstances and priorities; however, the research literature on teacher attrition suggests that work environment factors (e.g., low salaries, lack of administrative support) can lead to negative affective reactions (e.g., high levels of stress, low levels of job satisfaction), which lead to withdrawal and ultimately attrition (Billingsley, 2004).

Billingsley and Cross (1992) found that job dissatisfaction is directly related to stress. Stressful experiences and exposure to traumatic experiences can build up and affect the amount of satisfaction that individuals derive from their work. Conversely, commitment and job satisfaction are factors associated with higher levels of retention among teachers (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). This may explain, at least in part, why almost three in ten teachers leave their schools or the occupation itself within the first year of teaching (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Job satisfaction increases with age and experience, while role ambiguity and role conflicts are predictors of attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Billingsley, 2004). While some teacher turnover is inevitable, even beneficial (i.e., not everyone entering the teaching occupation should remain in teaching), high levels of turnover are costly in various ways, including what Smith and Ingersoll (2004) refer to as a “revolving door,” where staffing shortages manifest in disproportionately large numbers of teachers leaving their schools or the occupation altogether.

The research literature on teacher attrition indicates that a number of teacher retention strategies are effective for retaining both special education and general education teachers: (a)
strong induction programs with well-trained, highly qualified mentors, who provide systematic professional learning opportunities over a two-year time period (Billingsley, Griffin, Smith, Kamman, & Israel, 2009; Brownell, Bettini, Pua, Peyton, & Benedict, 2018; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004); (b) access to curriculum and high-quality, ongoing instructionally-focused professional development and professional learning opportunities (Leko & Brownell, 2011); (c) positive school climates that promote collaboration with colleagues and administrative policies that allow novice teachers to have manageable workloads (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley et al., 2009, Brownell et al., 2018). Schools that promote special education teacher retention often include administrative policies and/or programs that provide new and inexperienced special education personnel with access to mentors who understand the unique needs of their students (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olorunda; Jones, Youngs, & Frank, 2013; Youngs, Jones, & Low, 2011).

Thanks to the work of organizations such as the CEEDAR (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform) Center, based out of the University of Florida, teacher preparation and retention is one of the numerous topics this center seeks to impact. The website (http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/) provides a direct link to technical assistance, resources/tools and has individuals available to contact directly. CEEDAR states that they “… help states and institutions of higher education reform their teacher and leader preparation programs, revise licensure standards to align with reforms, refine personnel evaluation systems, and realign policy structures and professional learning systems.” Since the center’s inception, Florida has been a CEEDAR Intensive TA Partner since 2013 hosting participating teacher preparation programs at St. Petersburg College, the University of Central Florida, and the University of West Florida (CEEDAR, n.d.).
Unfortunately, the underlying causes of teacher attrition frequently get placed on the individual teacher. Similar to other mental health disorders, for example Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the 'blame' is placed on the individual. Furthermore, it becomes the individual who has to be 'strong' enough to correct their deficits. Review of the literature reveals that the responsibility does not purely reside with the individual teacher, rather it is more of a need for increased training/professional development issue (Billingsley, 1993; Fore et al., 2002; Macdonald, 1999; McIntyre, McIntyre, & Francis, 2017; Von der Embse, Pendergast, Segool, Saeki, & Ryan, 2016).

**Burnout**

Burnout has been defined in several ways (Burke & Richardsen, 1993; Cherniss, 1980; Pines & Aronson, 1988; Stalker & Harvey, 2002), but most researchers favor the multifaceted definition developed by Maslach and Jackson (1996) as well as Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) that incorporates a depletion of personal accomplishment or worth, depersonalization or disparagement, and feelings of exhaustion, being overstretched, and fatigued emotionally. The unconstructive stance impacts not only how clients treated, but also the ability to see any positive assessment of tangible efforts made in the workplace (Stalker & Harvey, 2002). Researchers have considered burnout to be a largely job-related stress condition or even a “work-related mental health impairment” (Awa, Plaumann, & Walter, 2010, p. 184); indeed, burnout is similar to the ICD-10 diagnosis of job-related neurasthenia (Maslach et al., 2001; World Health Organization, 1992). Moreover, a distinction must be made between mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety and depression) and burnout. Although has research supported a correlation with burnout, a marked divergence can be found between general stress reactions and other work phenomena (e.g., job dissatisfaction; Awa et al., 2010; Maslach et al., 2001). Burnout is also
separate from secondary traumatization, vicarious traumatization, and compassion fatigue (Canfield, 2005; Dunkley & Whelan, 2006; Figley, 1995).

There is insignificant basis to believe burnout influences mental health workers in a different way than nurses, teachers, or other professional groups. More recent pilot studies, such as Sharp Donahoo et al. (2018), looked at ways to measure compassion fatigue specifically with special education teachers. Although their study was intervention-based, the authors were able to shed light on the phenomena using mixed literature review including mental health workers and ways to improve symptoms (Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018).

Various terms are used to describe vicarious traumatization of workers. Terms used throughout the literature support secondary victimization, secondary survival, emotional contagion, counter-transference, and burnout and compassion fatigue (Adams et al., 2006; Cherniss, 1980; Figley, 1995). In general, these terms are used to describe the same phenomena, but throughout the literature, the differences among these terms are identifiable through either symptoms or historical context. Overarching themes intersect between burnout, secondary traumatic stress, or even post-traumatic stress throughout the discussion (DeMarni Cromer, Freyd, Binder, DePrince, & Becker-Blease, 2006; Diaconescu, 2015; Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018).

The following characteristics may be possible contributors: age, gender, educational level, licensure/certification, years of experience, psychosocial stressors, job demands or setting, resilience and whether an individual has specialized training in dealing with secondary trauma (Polat & Iskender, 2018; Radey & Figley, 2007; Sprang, Clark, & Whitt-Woosley, 2007; Tucker et al., 2009).
Based on a formal meta-analysis of 34 quantitative studies, Borman and Dowling (2008) found that personal characteristics of teachers, mainly their background and qualifications, are important predictors of turnover. Equally important moderators of attrition included school characteristics (work environment). Schools that lack collaboration, have little opportunities for teacher networking, and poor administrative support represented key components in a teacher’s decisions to stay or leave the field (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Moreover, there were concerns that attrition rates may increase with high enrollments of poor, minority, and low achieving students (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

In their study, Polat and Iskender (2018) examined several elements of teachers being resilient. The authors examined several constructs including job satisfaction, burnout, organizational commitment, and perception of organizational climate. This study used resilience as the focal point like other studies utilized teacher stress and comparative to age groups and experience levels (Polat & Iskender, 2018).

Miller et al. (1999) used a qualitative survey of special education teachers. The author found that teachers indicated the need to increase the quality of teacher education programs, improve school environments, lack of administrative support, role conflict, and lack of opportunities for professional growth all impacted their decisions to stay or leave the field of special education.

Webster and Hackett (1999) conducted a study, finding that 54% had high emotional exhaustion and 3% reported high depersonalization rates, but most reposted high levels of personal accomplishment as well. Hesjedal, Hetland, and Iversen’s (2015) study concluded that when social workers and teachers work in multidisciplinary teams, the individual’s professional commitment focused on the child's requirements. These teams supported positive working
environments and leaving speculation on the negative impacts on students and staff not having multidisciplinary teams (Hesjedal et al., 2015).

A survey of burnout highlighted 29 directors of community mental health centers in Iowa (Rohland, 2000). Over 66% reported high emotional exhaustion and low personal accomplishment, with almost half noting high levels of depersonalization. Siebert (2005) surveyed state chapter social workers, finding that 36% scored in the high range of emotional exhaustion. A single item burnout measure was used and 18% of the sample endorsed the statement: “I currently have problems with burnout.” Burnout remains relatively stable across time if left untreated; after 1 year, about 40% of workers stay in the same stage of burnout, about 30% experience less burnout (Burke & Richardsen, 1993).

Singh and Billingsley (1996) completed a survey of special education teachers, finding the most common factors that impacted teachers' decisions included the overall condition of the workplace, lack of administrative support, and general stress.

Burnout appears in mental health services throughout the literature. The focus on staff burnout continues to be an increased concern in the mental health field. A widespread review of extant research further details which significant concerns play a role in burnout for mental health workers. Similar to teacher burnout, the focus on unfavorable results for all stakeholders and ways to lessen burnout for staff (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006; Morse, Salyers, Rollins, Monroe-DeVita, & Pfahler, 2012).

Often, the individual's attitude or personality are blamed for associated burnout symptoms. Individuals may receive feedback that they are lazy, not tough enough, too emotional, or not emotional enough; the list can go on without end. Bakker et al. (2006) conducted one of the first studies to focus on the relationship between personality and burnout. Prior to this study,
the research available was often fragmented. The researchers found among the small sample some significant and meaningful results in all three burnout dimensions. When faced with stressful situations, Bakker et al. found extraversion and agreeableness had a positive correlation with personal accomplishment.

Research needs to continue on burnout and the numerous factors that impact individuals to improve the quality of life for all. There continues to be a need to remove the negative and personal stigma that the term burnout implies for individuals facing this genuine issue. Hence, this author suggests the term compassion fatigue should be used instead of burnout.

**Compassion Fatigue**

Individuals enter helping professions for many reasons, mainly related to a strong desire to make an impact or help others. These personal feelings bring about feelings of empathy and compassion while working with others. Compassion is defined as a “sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it” (“Compassion,” n.d.). When individuals face poor conditions and repeatedly see all that is not right with the world, they may become fatigued.

Compassion fatigue, or secondary traumatic stress, is a relatively new construct within the field of psychology that has been used to describe these “costs of caring” (Figley, 1995). Compassion fatigue was first defined by Figley (1995) as “the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other—the stress resulting from wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (p. 7). It is important to highlight that compassion fatigue is not conceptualized as a pathological response, but rather as a “natural, predictable, treatable, and preventable” reaction to working with traumatized individuals (Figley, 1995, p. 4).
Figley (1995) indicated that four significant factors contribute to compassion fatigue: unresolved trauma, poor self-care, lack of satisfaction with the work, and an inability or refusal to control work stressors. Often, compassion fatigue is used interchangeably with burnout despite distinct differences in the literature. This is because definitions often overlap—for example, job burnout and secondary trauma share the primary characteristic of emotional exhaustion. Figley (2002) stressed that secondary trauma should not be viewed as the same as burnout syndrome since each has distinctive effects and should be treated as such. Because the terms can be confused, these personal mental health concerns could benefit from having further clarification of all terms.

Compassion fatigue needs further conceptual explanation. While there are currently a number of current measurement scales for compassion fatigue, one does not exist that includes all of Figley’s aspects or descriptions of compassion fatigue (Jenkins & Baird, 2002). Adams et al. (2006) attempted to test the predictive power of the compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary trauma scales using a multivariate model. The findings stated that the scales remain accurate predictors of psychological distress, stress exposure, and psychological resource factors. The study concluded that the scales utilized operate as valid and reliable, bringing further clarification to the conceptual differences of compassion fatigue (Adams et al., 2006).

As with all human conditions, there needs to be consistency and clarity to impact change. Studies of the phenomenon and the potential risk of burnout and compassion fatigue need to examine all levels of development from beginning professional preparation to ongoing practice in a professional field.
Prevalence of Compassion Fatigue

Burnout, secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue are no longer strictly reserved for helping professions. Burnout and secondary traumatic stress are the two elements of compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995; Stamm, 2010b) and have been identified as an occupational hazard (Kiley et al., 2018). The framework for the theoretical model of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue is represented in Figure 1. Stamm (2010b) describes the work environment in the context of the setting within which an individual completes their employment related tasks. More important to note that the work environment includes the physical, the organizational structure and culture. Stamm (2010b) defines the client environment as the environment of the person being assisted by the helper or in the case of this study the teacher. Stamm (2010b) allows for the word help/helper to be substituted on the instrument for teach/teacher. Lastly, the theory defines the person environment as the individual’s personal traits and characteristics including the impact of the individual’s experiences through exposure to trauma and in the individual’s interactions outside of the workplace (Stamm, 2010b).

Figure 1 illustrates how each of the environmental areas contribute to the teacher role experience both positively and negatively. Teachers, just as those in helping roles, often derive gratification by serving others and assisting students during difficult situations by supporting and empowering their emotional processing of events. On the other hand, when teachers are exposed to hearing the stories of those who experience trauma, the teacher may experience a negative reaction as a result of their role. Compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue describe the influence of these experiences on the teacher’s professional quality of life.
The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, presently in the fifth edition (DSM-5) aligned secondary traumatic stress and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to match that both can develop from indirect trauma (APA, 2013). A considerable amount studies found gender to be significantly associated with predicting levels of compassion fatigue and burnout (Compton, 2014; Corey-Souza, 2007; Gleichgerrcht & Decety, 2013; Sprang et al., 2007; Wee & Myers, 2003), while others concluded no significant differences (Wells, 2008). Prior research
tends to indicate that women are more susceptible to compassion fatigue than men, leaving them more at risk for burnout (Gleichgerrcht & Decety, 2013; Sprang et al., 2007).

With economic hardships reported nightly on the news, the need for education and clarity about stress, burnout, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue can be impacted, and the appropriate treatments have become a critical necessity. Four noteworthy aspects that may contribute to compassion fatigue include lack of self-care, possible unresolved trauma, work stressors being out of control, and reduced satisfaction with work (Figley, 1995).

As more positive movement is made to remove negative associations with symptoms, individuals may become more open to assessing their exposure, lowering their risk and seeking treatment when needed. Most prevention and treatment sources cite self-care as the number one antibody to compassion fatigue. The problems occur when attempting to define self-care as it can be unique as each individual. Some supported self-care techniques supported through the literature includes, yoga, meditation or mindfulness and guided imagery. These are a small sampling but by taking actions such as requiring a self-care plan for teachers could enhance practice and theory.

**Differentiating Burnout from Compassion Fatigue**

Symptoms tend to be the primary differentiation between burnout and compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue develops from interacting with a client who is suffering and the perception that there is a deficiency in encouragement, both at home and the workplace (Figley, 1995). Due to the increase in paperwork and disruptive student behavior, teachers are at risk of feeling isolated from colleagues and needed support, as well as emotionally, mentally, and physically exhausted (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Although the symptoms crossover from one construct to the other, compassion fatigue suggests that symptoms are preventable or can be
treated. Newsome, Waldo, and Gruszka (2012) conducted a study that linked the impact of perceived stress and mindfulness suggesting that mindfulness training reduces symptoms. On the other hand, with burnout, most corrective action plans generally lead to the same conclusion: that one should change jobs. When an individual is tired/fatigued, rest and taking steps to prevent being so tired or fatigued is a relatively easy level of achievement.

**Compassion Satisfaction**

Compassion satisfaction centers on ways people access fulfillment from their job activities. It takes intellectual, social, and physical resources to contribute to compassion satisfaction (Radey & Figley, 2007). Compassion satisfaction is the gratification obtained through the belief that a job well done has been achieved. One example could be the experience of fulfillment by helping clients and staff at work, which leads to the individual being more likely to be engaged in the work environment, more positive feelings about the contribution to colleagues, the workplace and overall satisfaction and less likely to leave (Anderson, 2000; Stamm, 2010b).

Teachers' commitment and job satisfaction occur throughout the literature as reoccurring themes to combat attrition (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1992). For teachers, satisfaction comes from various aspects of their job in which they feel fulfillment from their job activities. These activities include the ability to make contributions and feel positive about colleagues. The focus has shifted from purely the teachers' willingness to commit to understanding if personal and environmental factors contribute to teachers experiencing compassion satisfaction (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Hesjedal et al., 2015).

Self-knowledge plays a critical role in the understanding of compassion fatigue. Throughout the social work literature, numerous articles have established the phenomena of
compassion fatigue. Overarching themes between social work and education literature include burnout and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The link surrounds the teacher or social worker who has negative feelings or fatigued from low job satisfaction. The reasons overlap among both helping professions involving caseloads, lack of autonomy, perceived lack of support or mentor, instability in work environments, and involuntary movement due to program or contracts not being renewed or low salaries (Diaconescu, 2015; Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018; Wisniewski, 1997).

Rationale

The literature needs to address teachers being stuck between the needs of students and the requirements of the federal, state, and district policies successfully. Between the various federal, state, and district mandates and the daily social burdens that educators face, it may only be a matter of time before fatigue and burnout set in. Often, with each policy change, school reform project or classroom change brings the same, if not more, levels of stress and concern may increase. School reform and other systemic changes are meant to bring relief, but often, even the best of intentions have a negative impact on teachers being able to do their job in the classroom effectively. Burnout is more than a cluster of individual traits; instead, it encompasses symptoms of the individual person (Bakker et al., 2006; Rosenberg & Pace, 2006).

As with all processes, there is an inherent ebb and flow throughout one’s career that is specific to each individual. Although the faces of students change in the classroom, the ‘wicked’ problems, i.e., poverty, child abuse, and violence, tend to not change. Therefore, it is essential to have better knowledge of how these problems impact teachers. Moreover, there needs to be insight of any potential relationship that may exist between increased awareness of fatigue and
how to combat it. It may be beneficial to the field of education for researchers to examine any reliance and retention that comes from teaching self-care techniques to educators.

This study sought to bridge several gaps in the literature on compassion fatigue among public school teachers working in suburban/rural schools. Researchers have posited that teachers are at greater risk of developing compassion fatigue due to working with traumatized children due to the expose to secondary traumatic stress (Figley, 1995, 2002; Kees & Lashwood, 1996). This study examined the relationships between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction of general and special education teachers in a suburban/rural public-school setting in Central Florida.

Stamm (2010a) emphasized the importance of exploring the complex association between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction as a clear delineation of the nature of these relationships; however, this has not yet been synthesized in the current literature. This study speculated that the symptoms of compassion fatigue may contribute to burnout among suburban/rural public school general and special education teachers and that compassion satisfaction was negatively associated with the risk of teacher burnout.
Chapter Three

Methods

Theoretical Framework

I used Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Theory model for this study. This model, as shown in Figure 2, is a useful framework to examine how one interprets the environments in which teachers are entrenched. Bronfenbrenner (1977) used human development and domains such as how person, time, and milieu influence each other. He further discussed how human development is influenced by environmental systems and shapes individual backgrounds. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) contends to understand human development on must examine interpersonal dynamics which include direct contact with others and effects of others actions.

The purpose of this study was to determine the interplay between the ecological factors such as teachers' emotions, beliefs, identity, goals, and the social-cultural environment. To explore factors that may impact special educators' decision to stay in the field, this study utilized the following instruments: The Professional Quality of Life Scale, Version 5 (ProQOL-5; Stamm, 2010b), and the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI; Fimian, 1984).
The Ecological Systems Theory model consists of five interrelated systems: Individual, Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, and Macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This model highlights the unique framework that each person develops from being interconnected within a system. Moreover, using the ecological systems perspective, relationships and emotional experiences among individuals and the environment do not exist independently. Thus, to understand teachers’ emotional experiences, the relationships between the person and the environment both need to be equally investigated.

For the purposes of this study, the individual referred to demographic information, such as number of years teaching, race, age, and grade level. Emotions are relational when teachers' emotional experiences can be comprehended (Denzin, 1984; Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman,
Microsystem, or the personal development of special educators, relates to the teachers' daily tasks, interactions, and relationships with their students, as well as their immediate surroundings and classroom environment. The Mesosystem, or social (classroom-level) context, focuses on the teachers' school culture, their role in the larger school environment, and their relationships with colleagues and administrators. The Exosystem, or societal (school-level) context, focuses on the setting in which the educators' school is based. Lastly, the Macrosystem, or systematic (community-level) context, focuses on the community culture and teachers' perceptions of their role in the society at large (Billingsley, 1993; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Miller et al., 1999).

**Research Design**

My assumption which served as part of the pragmatist foundation for this study is that k-12 special education and general education teachers will reveal a relationship between individual levels of compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout. I used a correlational design for this study. The variables in the study included the following: (a) years of teaching experience, general or special educator, and gender—all measured by items on the demographic questionnaire; (b) occupational sources of stress, including time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment—all measured by scores on the TSI (Fimian, 1984); and (c) compassion satisfaction, burnout, and compassion fatigue—all measured by scores on the ProQOL-5.

I investigated Compassion Fatigue and Burnout in this study as co-relationship variables. The ProQOL measured both compassion fatigue and burnout. To facilitate distribution and increase confidentiality and anonymity, I selected a web-based survey methodology (Cantrell & Lupinacci, 2008; Whitley, 2013). Online surveys have been shown to be an effective means of
collecting data in regard to sensitive issues (Granello & Wheaton, 2004), trauma history and exposure included (DeMarni Cromer et al., 2006).

**Population and Sample**

I used a convenience sample, based on information provided by the School District, for the online survey. A convenience sample utilizes study participants who are selected due to the ease of access to the population (Saumure & Given, 2008). In an effort to determine the prevalence of compassion fatigue among teachers, I administered an online survey consisting of the ProQOL-5 (Stamm, 2010b), the TSI (Fimian, 1984), and a demographic questionnaire which I developed.

The School District selected as the site for this study falls within the suburban/rural classification used by the U.S. Census Bureau (2017). While portions of the county are growing rapidly both in population and business, most of the county is rural. The population of the county as of July 1, 2017, was 525,643. Between 2010 to 2017, the population grew by 13.1%. Slightly over 20% of the population consists of school-aged children (persons under the age of 18). The racial makeup of the county is 86% White, 6.2% Black or African American, .5% Native American, 15.1% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.3% two or more races. Table 1 provides the gender and racial composition of teachers in the School District.

In order to have a significant power level, I conducted an a priori power analysis using a free online tool called G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). With assumed values of $a = 0.05$, power = 0.80, and a medium effect size of .30, a minimum sample size of 82 was required.
Table 1. Gender and racial composition of teachers in the School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>319</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Female:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total All:</strong></td>
<td>5,120</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the county served by the School District, the number of households in which a language other than English is spoken is 13.5%. Most of the county’s population (88.7%) are high school graduates; a smaller proportion (22.7%) have a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

The county has wide disparities in wealth, ranging from approximately 13% of the population who fall below the poverty level and approximately 21% who have incomes greater than one-hundred thousand dollars per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

The School District serves 73,340 students in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12. There are 31,369 elementary students; 15,207 middle school students, and 21,115 high school students. The number of students enrolled in exceptional student education is 12,476, and 3,300 students are served in ESOL classes. More than half (55.5%) of the School District’s students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, an indicator of poverty. The total number of instructional employees is 5,155, and the number of administrators is 331. There are 89 schools in the District, including 13
high schools, 15 middle schools, 47 elementary schools, 10 charter schools, and 1 virtual school. The School District serves 73,340 students in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12. There are 31,369 elementary students; 15,207 middle school students, and 21,115 high school students. The number of students enrolled in exceptional student education is 12,476, and 3,300 students are served in ESOL classes. More than half (55.5%) of the School District’s students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, an indicator of poverty. The total number of instructional employees is 5,155, and the number of administrators is 331. There are 89 schools in the District, including 13 high schools, 15 middle schools, 47 elementary schools, 10 charter schools, and 1 virtual school working in the School District in Central Florida (Florida Department of Education, 2017).

The School District required an application to conduct research form be completed. The formal application included:

- An abstract of the proposed study;
- The desired population to study;
- The plan and timeline for the dissemination of study information;
- The problems to be studied as a part of the research and how they contribute to the currently existing knowledge base;
- The protocol for the study to include information regarding confidentiality of data;
- The survey instrument intended to be utilized as a part of the study;
- A copy of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol to be submitted to the researcher’s IRB.

The application required by the School District can be found in Appendix E. Following its review of the proposed study, the School District granted permission and provided a letter of
support (Appendix E) for the project. The School District provided the email addresses via a spreadsheet sent by email.

I selected Google Forms as the online survey platform based on the fact that it is free, easy to use, and collates answers in a spreadsheet file for analysis. I sent an email through Google Forms with a cover page inviting potential participants to take the survey and to acknowledge that participation in the survey signified informed consent (Appendix G). All participants could elect the option to proceed with the survey or decline at any time. I used blanket recruitment of all teachers in the School District.

After the School District confirmed approval for the study, I submitted an application to the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (USF IRB), through the Human Research Protection Program. The USF Human Research Protection Program’s mission is “is to protect the rights, safety, and welfare of human subjects who participate in the research programs of the USF System and its affiliated institutions” (USF Research & Innovation, n.d., para. 1). The USF IRB process ensures that appropriate ethical protections will be utilized as a part of conducting this research project.

Once the school district and USF IRB applications were submitted, reviewed and approved, I sent emails to 4753 teachers in the School District. These emails included the initial invitation to participate. Two weeks after the initial invitation, I sent a follow up e-mail. Based on the response rate of the study participants, I sent a third e-mail reminder 4 weeks after the initial invitation. Each e-mail correspondence with the teachers is located in Appendices F and G.

I took care to follow all University of South Florida International Review Board (IRB) procedures in regard to informed consent and to protect participants (Appendix F and Appendix
G). Information collected in the surveys was analyzed for group patterns only, and I only reported aggregated results. There were minimal risks to the participants for this one-time brief online survey.

The ProQOL is frequently used in research. Data were collected as part of a survey packet in which the participant received no information regarding their answers. The data were recorded and scored by computer. The ProQOL has been used successfully since 1995 (Stamm, 2010). Stamm (2010) raises no concerns about negative impacts on respondents to online survey data; however, she does provide recommendations for providing feedback to respondents who complete the survey in person. Participants in this study were not provided feedback as to their scores. Stamm (2010) notes that the most important thing about giving feedback is to be prepared to give specific and clear information appropriate to the setting and be prepared to answer questions.

In this study, there was no opportunity for individuals to provide revealing personal information that might be of concern in a group setting. Stamm (2010) notes that if these cases occur, then it is incumbent on the survey administrator to contain and refocus the attention of the group of respondents. Good ethical behavior suggests that a survey administrator should follow up on individual concerns raised in a group within a more appropriate setting. Since there was no way for an individual to be identified in this study there was no opportunity for respondents to disclose any information that would warrant additional interventions such as mental or physical health care. Nonetheless, I felt there was some risk that some participants might feel uncomfortable discussing their experience of stress. For those teachers who might have needed to talk with professionals or require psychological services as a consequence of participating in this survey, I provided my contact information as well as the phone number of the United Way
hotline (211) and a direct link (https://proqol.org/Home) to the home page of ProQOL.org so that individuals could complete the self score test, receive direct feedback, and be linked to further resources for more information about compassion fatigue and resources for getting assistance.

The cover letter included the following human subjects’ considerations: (a) before accessing survey questions, participants had to read the informed consent statement and agree, electronically, online; (b) participants also had to read reassurance that no personal identification was collected; and (c) participants had to read the assurance that privacy and confidentiality would be maintained. Participants were assured that no identifying information, such as name, email address, or IP address would be collected and that their responses to the survey would remain confidential. Accordingly, the surveys contained no information that personally identified participants. I have and will use the results of this study for scholarly purposes only.

**Instruments and Measures**

The ProQOL-5 is a 30-item instrument. This instrument has three subscales that measure compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction. Psychometric properties for the three subscales have been shown to be reliable in the past (Figley & Stamm, 1996; Stamm, 2010b.)

The professional quality of life scale encompasses two characteristics: the positive (compassion satisfaction), and the negative (compassion fatigue). Compassion fatigue is comprised of two parts. The first part concerns elements typical of burnout, such as exhaustion, frustration, anger, and depression. The second part, secondary traumatic stress, is a negative feeling driven by exposure to fear and work-related trauma. Some trauma at work is experienced by direct (primary) or indirect (secondary) trauma.

Over 200 published papers have added to the construct validity of the ProQOL. An internet search revealed that more than 100,000 articles and half of the 100 published research
papers on compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious traumatization have used ProQOL or an earlier version (Stamm, 2010b). The three scales measure separate constructs. The Compassion Fatigue scale is distinct. The inter-scale correlations show 2% shared variance ($r = -.23$; $\text{co-}\sigma = 5\%$; $n = 1187$) with secondary traumatic stress and 5% shared variance ($r = -.14$; $\text{co-}\sigma = 2\%$; $n = 1187$) with burnout. While there is shared variance between burnout and secondary traumatic stress, the two scales measure different constructs, likely reflecting the distress that is common to both conditions. The shared variance between these two scales is 34% ($r = .58$; $\text{co-}\sigma = 34\%$; $n = 1187$). The scales both measure negative affect, but are clearly different; the Burnout scale does not address fear while the secondary traumatic stress scale does.

Stamm (2010b) established the following reliability estimates for the instrument: the Compassion Satisfaction scale was $\alpha = .88$ ($n = 1130$); the alpha reliability for burnout is $\alpha = .75$ ($n = 976$) and compassion fatigue is $\alpha = .81$ ($n = 1135$). Stamm (2010b) has established that the measure has good item-to-scale properties with no single item adding or subtracting from the overall scale quality. The standard errors of the measure are quite small and are as follows: CS .22, BO .21, and secondary traumatic stress .20. These small standard errors indicate that the test typically has small error interference, improving the potential measurable effect size.

**Teacher Stress Inventory**

The TSI was developed by Fimian (1984) and consists of 49 items. The 10-factor instrument assesses the strength of the occupational stress experienced by American public-school teachers. The TSI measures five stress source factors (Time Management, Work-Related Stressors, Professional Distress, Discipline and Motivation, and Professional Investment) and five stress manifestation factors (Emotional, Fatigue, Cardiovascular, Gastronomic, and
Behavioral). For this study, in order to utilize the five subscales associated with the sources of stress, I contacted Fimian via email and obtained permission to use the scale.

The first stress source subscale, “Time Management,” is comprised of five items. Sample items include “Have little time to relax” and “Not enough time to get things done” (Fimian, 1988, p. 48). The second source of stress subscale is “Work Related Stressors,” and includes six items, such as “caseload/class is too big” (Fimian, 1988, p. 49). The third subscale, "Professional Distress," is assessed with five items; sample items from this subscale include “Lack promotion or advancement opportunities,” and “need more status and respect” (Fimian, 1988, p. 50). The fourth source of stress subscale is “Discipline and Motivation,” and includes six items; each item in this subscale begins with the phrase, “I feel frustrated...,” and ends with statements like “...having to monitor pupil behavior” (Fimian, 1988, p. 49). Lastly, the fifth source of stress subscale is “Professional Investment,” with four items; sample items from this subscale include “Personal opinions are not sufficiently aired” and “Lack control over decisions” (Fimian, 1988, p. 48).

The TSI is self-administered, and participants respond to the items using a 5-point Likert-type scale, in which 1 represents “No strength; not noticeable;” 2 represents “Mild strength; barely noticeable;” 3 represents “Medium strength; moderately noticeable;” 4 represents “Great strength; very noticeable;” and 5 represents “Major strength; extremely noticeable” (Fimian, 1988, p. 15). The value of each of the subscales is computed individually; for example, to calculate scores on the Time Management subscale, each participant’s item scores were added, and then divided by the total number of items in the scale—in this case, five (Fimian, 1988).

The TSI has been found to be a valid instrument for the assessment of teacher stress (Fimian, 1988). With regard to content and factorial validity, the pilot version of the TSI, the
Teacher Stress Scale was developed following a complete review of the existing literature and consultation with teachers, graduate students, and professors in the field of education (Fimian, 1988). The scale consisted of 63 test items and 13 a priori factors: (a) Personal Competence, (b) Self-Relationship, (c) Conflicting Values, (d) Social Approval, (e) Isolation, (f) Expectations, (g) Self-Fulfillment, (h) Environmental, (i) Unmet Professional Needs, (j) Self-Inflicted Stress, (k) Professional Constraints, (l) Student-Teacher Relationships, and (m) Miscellaneous Demands of Teaching (Fimian, 1985). Fimian (1985) distributed the scale to 365 special education teachers. Following a principal-components factor analysis, 30 of the original items and 6 factors were retained. This 30-item scale was renamed the TSI (Fimian, 1985). The TSI was subsequently administered to special and regular education teachers in Vermont during the 1980-1981 school year. The resulting analysis produced a 41-item pool, with nearly identical factor patterns to the Connecticut study (Fimian, 1984). In consultation with 226 stress experts, Fimian (1988) included an additional 8-item factor—“Time Management”—to the instrument, increasing the questionnaire to 49 items (Fimian, 1988).

The TSI initially assessed two dimensions of occupational stress—strength and frequency—measured on separate Likert-type scales. However, based on data collected from 14 samples, Fimian, Zacherman, and McHardy (1985) found that the Frequency and Strength factors were significantly related; correlations ranged from a low of .30 to a high of .99. In light of this information, the Frequency dimension was eliminated from the TSI in 1987 (Fimian, 1988).

Fimian (1988) reported that final factor and reliability analysis were subsequently conducted on a combined (special and regular education) sample of 3,401 teachers using only the Strength dimension (Fimian, 1988). Based on a 49-by-49 item intercorrelation matrix and a
principal components analysis, 10 factors for the Strength dimension emerged that explained 58% of the variance in teacher stress (Fimian, 1988).

The current version of the TSI has also been found to be a reliable instrument, with high alpha reliability (Fimian, 1988). Alpha reliability assesses the degree to which items within a subscale or scale hang together; the lower the alpha reliability estimate, the lower the internal consistency of an instrument. The alpha reliability of the whole TSI scale is .93, and reliability estimates for each of the individual subscales range from .67 to .88 (Fimian, 1988; Fimian & Fastenau, 1989). In addition, Fastenau (1989) has demonstrated that the TSI has high test-retest reliability, which illustrates the degree to which an individual’s responses fluctuate across time (Fimian, 1988). Test-retest reliability was established by mailing two sets of the TSI to a random sample of 60 teachers in North Carolina. The teachers received instructions to complete the second TSI after 2 hours (25%), 1 day (25 %), 1 week (25%), or 2 weeks (25%). Correlations ranged from .42 to .99 for the subscales, and from .67 to .99 for the entire scale; additional evidence of test-retest reliability was provided in a 1984 sample of 39 teachers in Georgia, who were administered the TSI on two occasions, 2 months apart (Fimian, 1988). The correlations from this study ranged from .49 to .84 (p = .001) for the subscales, and .76 (p = .001) for the entire test (Fimian, 1988). The TSI defines ten stress-related problems in teachers. These are noted in terms of their relative impact upon teachers.

Sources of Occupational Stress

**Time management.** Time management addresses the 'balancing act' aspects of teachers' roles. Those who feel stressed by time problems are those who easily over commit themselves, become impatient when others do things too slowly, feel they have to do more than one thing at a time, have little time to relax during the workday, think about unrelated matters during
conversations, feel uncomfortable wasting time, do not have enough time to get things done, and
tend to rush in their speech (Fimian, 1988).

**Work-related stressors.** Work-related stressors represents a number of environment-specific events that act as sources of stress for teachers. These include having little time to prepare, having too much work to do, having to deal with too much administrative paperwork, and feeling that the school day pace is too fast, that their caseloads or class sizes are too big, or that their personal priorities are being shortchanged due to job demands (Fimian, 1988).

**Professional distress.** Professional distress represents the ways in which teachers perceive themselves as professionals and is similar to a 'professional self-concept' index. The following responses typified teachers under stress: lacking promotion or advancement opportunities, not progressing in one's job as rapidly as one would like, needing more status and respect, receiving an inadequate salary, and lacking recognition. Collectively, these stress factors comprise the overall construct termed 'teacher stress' (Fimian, 1988).

**Discipline and motivation.** Discipline and motivation incorporates two facets of teacher-student relationships. With respect to the first of these, discipline, high scorers depict teachers who are sensitive to discipline problems in the classroom, continually monitor pupil behavior, deal with inadequate or poorly defined discipline policies in their schools, and perceive their authority as being rejected by pupils or administrators. The second aspect of this problem is related to motivation problems; high scores on this factor suggest that some teachers experience stress when instructing students who are poorly motivated and who would do better if they tried harder (Fimian, 1988).

**Professional investment.** Professional investment explains the largest share of the teacher stress construct. Teachers who score high on this subscale feel that they are not allowed
to be personally involved in their job, that their personal opinions are not sufficiently aired, that they lack control over decisions made about what occurs in their classrooms, that they are not emotionally or intellectually stimulated by their teaching positions, and that they lack opportunities for future professional improvement. In short, they have been distanced from or are otherwise minimally invested in their careers for one reason or another (Fimian, 1988).

**Manifestations of Stress**

**Emotional manifestations.** Emotional manifestations describes the varied ways in which teachers respond emotionally to stressful work situations. Those scoring high on this subscale report that they strongly feel insecure, vulnerable, unable to cope, depressed, and anxious (Fimian, 1988).

**Fatigue manifestations.** Fatigue manifestations encompasses a number of stress-related fatigue problems. Those scoring high on this subscale find that they sleep more than usual, procrastinate, become fatigued in a relatively short period of time, feel physically exhausted, and experience physical weakness (Fimian, 1988).

**Cardiovascular manifestations.** These present as a range of cardiovascular problems related to stress. High-scorers on this subscale report feelings of increased blood pressure, feelings of one's heart pounding or racing, and shallow or rapid breathing during times of stress (Fimian, 1988).

**Gastronomical manifestations.** Gastronomical manifestations are comprised of a number of stomach disorders apparent in teachers under stress, including stomach pain of extended duration, stomach cramps, and stomach acid (Fimian, 1988).
**Behavioral manifestations.** Behavioral manifestations include the different inappropriate ways in which teachers cope with their occupational stress. High scores on this subscale may entail use of over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs, or alcohol, and/or teachers may frequently call in sick in response to stress. In this fashion, they respond behaviorally to stressful situations and instances (Fimian, 1988).

**Variables**

Relationships among variables to be considered for the study included sources of occupational/teacher stress for teachers in the School District (i.e., time management, workload, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), burnout, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction. Other variables included demographic characteristics, e.g., years of experience, education level, and educator role (general education or special education). The demographic information questionnaire assessed these variables. This study examined the relationship between the level of burnout, compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction in the careers of teachers in the School District. The three levels of compassion fatigue, burnout and compassion satisfaction were determined by scores on the Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL).

**Data Collection Procedures**

I used an online survey format to assess the potential relationships of the variables described above. I used email to contact all of the teachers whose emails were provided by the School District and invited them to participate in the survey. Potential participants included all teachers with email addresses in the public domain (i.e., on the websites of elementary, middle, high, and technical/alternative schools). I sent the invitation to participate by an email that included a brief overview of the study; informed the potential participant that their participation
was entirely voluntary, anonymous, confidential; and provided my contact information as the primary researcher. The protocol for the study was approved and met all requirements of the University IRB at the University of South Florida. Teachers who elected to participate selected a hyperlink within the body of the email which navigated them to the online survey. Data was collected confidentially. No identifying information was used on any survey results. All electronic data files utilized password protection and were saved on an external hard drive. Throughout data collection, I maintained all of the information in electronic form on a secure hard drive.

**Data Collection**

The School District supplied email addresses. Email addresses for student support services personnel were not included in the initial request to participate. I sent the first invitation to complete the survey to the 4,753 k-12 teacher’s emails provided by the School District at the end of October 2017. The email included the consent information and the link to the survey to provide anonymous responses. I informed participants that by participating in the survey, they provided informed consent and that they could stop their participation at any time. After a two-week interval, I sent a second, follow-up request in November 2017. I sent the third request two weeks after the second request in December 2017. I removed any potential participant who requested to be removed from the email list and, thus, opted out of participation. A total of 260 teachers responded to questions on the Professional Quality of Life Scale, and their responses were coded in an excel spreadsheet with no identifiers and uploaded into statistical software, SPSS. I used SPSS statistical analysis to measure levels of compassion fatigue, burnout, secondary traumatic stress and compassion satisfaction and the association between each of these phenomena. I used statistical analysis to examine sub-scales from both the Professional Quality
of Life Survey and the Teacher Stress Inventory and to explore potential correlations between how teachers with different demographic characteristics (e.g. role as a general or special education teacher, gender, number of years teaching experience) respond to each survey.

The research questions and related hypotheses are stated in Chapters 1 and repeated as a framework for discussion of results in Chapter 4. In the paragraphs to follow, I provide a narrative description of the questions I sought to answer with each set of null and directional hypotheses. My data analyses to address each hypothesis are described below.

Data Analysis

Analysis related to Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis was that there is a difference in the level of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction experienced between special education teachers and general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools (the School District). Specifically, I predicted that special education teachers would report high levels of compassion fatigue and burnout, and low levels of compassion satisfaction as compared to their general education counterparts. To test, the first hypothesis, I used the sample mean scale for the three subscales of ProQOL and converted to percentiles using the scoring table in the ProQOL manual (Stamm, 2010b). According to Stamm, scores above 17 (75%) indicate a high risk of compassion fatigue on the secondary traumatic stress subscale, and scores below 7 (25%) would be indicative of low compassion fatigue risk. High potential for compassion satisfaction was specified by scores above 42 (75%) on the Compassion Satisfaction subscale of the ProQOL. Low potential for compassion fatigue would be signified by scores below 32 (25%). A high risk of burnout would be delineated by scores above 26 (75%), and low burnout risk would be indicated by scores below 15 (25%), on the Burnout scale of the ProQOL.
I reviewed frequency data to determine what percentage of the sample fell within the low-, average-, and high-risk categories for each of the three subscales.

**Analysis Related to Hypothesis 2.** The second hypothesis explores the potential relationship between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public school. To test this hypothesis, I used a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between perceived social support and burnout, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction.

**Analysis related to Hypothesis 3.** For the third set of hypotheses, I used a one-way MANOVA to explore whether demographic variable teacher role (general education and special education) are related to teacher stress variables and compassion fatigue in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools do have a relationship. I examined intercorrelations between all demographic variables, teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment) and the criterion variable, compassion fatigue. All significant correlations were included.

**Analysis Related to Hypothesis 4.** For the fourth set of hypotheses, I examined whether the demographic variable gender is related to teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment) and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools do have a relationship. I tested this hypothesis using a one-way MANOVA. Intercorrelations were considered between all demographic variables, teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment) and the criterion variable, burnout. All significant correlations were included.
Analysis Related to Hypothesis 5. I used a one-way MANOVA to explore possible relationships between the demographic variable of number of years of teaching to teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment) and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools do have a relationship. I considered intercorrelations between all demographic variables, teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), and the criterion variable, burnout. All significant correlations were included.

The goal of this study was to explore potential relationships that establish compassion fatigue as a phenomenon experienced by public school teachers in the School District. To address this goal, I compared teacher stress variables, compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction that may impact teachers’ decisions to continue in the classroom. With this limited contribution to the literature, I hope that this study sparks recognition that more research needs to be conducted to address compassion fatigue in public school educators, through both professional development and teacher preparation programs.

Threats to Validity

Generalizability is the external threat to validity due to the limited scope of this study. I collected data only from general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools of Central Florida.

Reflexivity Reflection

As previously referenced in Chapter 1 and based on the literature discussed in Chapter 2, I held an overarching preconception that special education teachers would be at risk of experiencing compassion fatigue more than their general education peers. I expected to find a
significant difference between the two groups based on the increased workload placed on special education teachers.

**Summary**

This chapter provided methodological information about the current study. The population of interest was comprised of elementary through 12th-grade teachers, including technical or alternative teachers working in the suburban/rural public-school system in Central Florida, as discussed. The description of the instruments used in the study, and for each scale the validity and reliability data reviewed. The non-experimental and correlational design of the study was presented, and each independent and dependent variable and its measurement were defined. Differentiate methods used to screen data and identified the statistical analyses utilized to explore each hypothesis. Lastly, the procedures of the study were outlined. Chapter Four reveals and examines the results of the present research.
Chapter Four

Results

I collected data from suburban/rural school teachers in central Florida. The purpose of this study was to explore compassion fatigue as a phenomenon in teachers. Furthermore, this study involved examination of the potential relationships between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction with the demographic variables identified in Chapter 3. The research questions were:

1. Do special education teachers experience higher compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction than general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?
   
   H0: There is no difference in the level of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction experience between special education teachers and general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools.
   
   H1: There is a difference in the level of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction experience between special education teachers and general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools.

2. Is there a relationship between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public school?
H0: There is no significant relationship between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public school.

H1: There is a significant relationship between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public school.

3. Is there a relationship between the demographic variables (general education and special education), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), and compassion fatigue in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

H0: Demographic variables (general education and special education) and teacher stress variables do not have a relationship with compassion fatigue in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools.

H1: Demographic variables (general education and special education) and teacher stress variables and compassion fatigue in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools do have a relationship.

4. Is there a relationship between the demographic variable (gender), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment) and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teacher’s working in suburban/rural public schools?
H0: Demographic variables (gender) and teacher stress variables do not have a relationship with compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools.

H1: Demographic variables (gender) and teacher stress variables do have a relationship with compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools.

5. Is there a relationship between the demographic variable (number of years), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment) and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

H0: Demographic variables (number of years teaching) and teacher stress variables do not have a relationship with compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools.

H1: Demographic variables (number of years teaching) and teacher stress variables do have a relationship with compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools.

In this chapter, a review of the design of the study, the descriptive statistics of the sample provided, and the findings from each tested hypotheses are discussed.

Statement of Design

I used a non-experimental, correlational design for this research. The independent variables included teacher role (general education or special education), years of teaching experience, and teachers’ gender as measured by items on the demographic questionnaire.
The dependent variables were compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, and teacher stress. I explored teacher stress (i.e., time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment) by using scores on the TSI (Fimian, 1984). She measured compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction by scores on the ProQOL-5.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Participants in the current study included full-time suburban/rural public-school teachers in Central Florida. No part time or substitute teachers participated in the study. As addressed in chapter three, 5.47% (n = 260) of the potential respondents participated in the survey, while only 82 respondents were needed for adequate power.

Figure 3 below shows the total percentage of participants by gender. As Figure 1 illustrates, 86.6% of respondents were females and 13.4% were males. This gender representation is reflective of teaching being a female dominant career. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), in 2011-12, 76% of public-school teachers are female.

![Figure 3. Percentage of participants by gender.](image.png)
Figure 4 shows the number of participants by age. There were no large differences are found between the age groups. Twelve of teachers were in the 18 to 25 years of age range; 57 were in the 26 to 35 age range; 63 were in the 36 to 45 years of age range; and 72 were in the 46 to 55 years of age range. The majority of participants grouped in the age categories of 46 to 55. Only 4 of participants were age 66 and above.

**Figure 4. Number of participants by age.**

Figure 5 below displays the percentage of the participant’s race and ethnicity. The majority of respondents identified as white or Caucasian or white/non-Hispanic.
Table 2 represents the gender and racial composition of teachers in the School District according to the Florida Department of Education (2018).

**Table 2. Gender and racial composition of teachers in the School District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>3,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Male: 1,070  Total Female: 4,050
Total All: 5,120
The sample of participants in this study, shown in Figure 3, had a similar demographic make up to those in the overall teaching population. As shown in Table 2, 94% of the School District’s instructional personnel are White and or White/Hispanic, and 2.5% are Black. Figure 3 demonstrates that 96% of the participants in this study were White or White/Hispanic and 3% are Black.

Table 3 illustrates the total years of teaching for study participants. While most have been teaching for 0 to 10 years, the next majority have been teaching between 11 and 20 years.

**Table 3. Years in Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Education</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bi-modal distribution of teachers’ years of experience is interesting in that 30% of teachers have five or fewer years of experiences and are likely at greatest risk for leaving the profession. Likewise, 24% of the respondents have 21 to 31 years of experience and will likely leave the profession due to retirement within 5 to 10 years.

**Findings Related to Research Question 1**

The first research question sought to examine the question: Do special education teachers experience higher compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction than general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools. I addressed research question one by using the demographic data regarding teachers’ roles (general education or special education) and two instruments, Stamm’s Professional Quality of Life Scale and Fimian’s Teacher Stress
Inventory. Stamm's (2010a) Professional Quality of Life Scale, Version 5, frequently referenced in the literature as ProQOL-5, remains one of the predominant measures for compassion fatigue. Fimian's (1988) Teacher Stress Inventory, often seen abbreviated as TSI, primarily measures teacher stress.

**Professional Quality of Life Scale Version 5.** The PRoQOL-5 measured participants’ levels of secondary traumatic stress, burnout (compassion fatigue), and compassion satisfaction. Table 4 provides the frequency distribution results for compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue (secondary traumatic stress and burnout) for general education and special education teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion Satisfaction</td>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>49.83</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>50.11</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50.67</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>49.61</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Traumatic Stress</td>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50.96</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>49.40</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Stamm (2010b), any scores in the 75th percentile or above 17 on the secondary traumatic stress subscale would be diagnostic of high risk for compassion fatigue, while scores in the 25th percentile or below 7 would be consistent with low compassion fatigue risk. Stamm (2010b) established scores on the Compassion Satisfaction subscale that would indicate high or low potential for compassion fatigue. Again, the 75th percentile, or scores above 42, would point to high potential. Scores at or below the 25th percentile, or scores below 32, would indicate low potential. The Burnout scale defines high burnout risk with scores in the 75th percentile or above 72.
percentile, or scores above 26, while the 25th percentile, or scores below 15, explain a low burnout risk (Stamm, 2010b). The results shown in Table 2 indicate that these participants in this study scored in the 75th percentile in each of the scales measured; thus, this sample of participants has high risk for compassion fatigue.

**The Teacher Stress Inventory.** I used the TSI to measure participants’ levels of stress related to time management, work-related stressors, professional distress, discipline and motivation, and professional investment. Figure 6 provides the means and standard deviations for the sample. (used with permission from Fimian).

![Figure 6](image.png)

**Figure 6.** Graphical representation of high-low cut-off points for the TSI subscale and scale mean scores. *Permission granted to use from Fimian.*

As illustrated in Figure 6, teachers in this sample fell within the expected cut off scores when compared to the original sample population.
Table 5. TSI Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Time Management Total</th>
<th>Work Related Stress Total</th>
<th>Professional Distress Total</th>
<th>Discipline &amp; Motivation Total</th>
<th>Professional Investment Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For research question one regarding whether special education teachers experience higher compassion fatigue (secondary traumatic stress and burnout), and compassion satisfaction than general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools, the hypothesis was tested by sample means. The independent-samples t test results presented in Table 5 revealed no significant difference between general education and special education teachers experiencing compassion satisfaction (t (260) = -.223, p > .05). Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted and the directional hypothesis was rejected. The mean of the general education teachers (M = 49.83, SD = 10.02) was not significantly different from the mean of special education teachers (M = 50.11, SD = 10.02). No significant differences were found between the groups for burnout (t (260) = .792, p > .05). The mean of the general education teachers (M = 50.62, SD = 10.27) was not significantly different from the mean of special education teachers (M = 49.608224, SD = 9.84).

There were no significant differences between the groups for secondary traumatic stress (t (260) = 1.220, p > .05). General education teachers’ mean score (M = 50.96, SD = 9.901 was not significantly different from the mean of special education teachers (M = 49.40, SD = 10.05).

While there were no significant differences between general education and special education teachers, both general and special education teachers were at high risk for burnout given their respective means (general education= 50.62; special education = 50.96), using
Stamm’s criteria for the burnout construct. Likewise using Stamm’s criteria, both general and special education teachers appear to be at high risk for compassion fatigue.

**Findings Related to Research Question 2**

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to address Research question 2, which pertained to whether there was a relationship between compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in the School District. Table 6 shows the resulting correlations.

Table 7 shows a strong negative correlation for all four variables: Compassion satisfaction ($r(260) = .250, p < .001$), Burnout ($r(257) = -.726, p < .001$), secondary traumatic stress ($r(260) = -.250, p < .001$), and Professional distress total ($r(260) = -.182, p < .001$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the four variables. For our sample, as compassion satisfaction increases, the other variables decrease. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the directional hypothesis was accepted.

**Findings Related to Research Question 3**

I used a one-way MANOVA to address research question three, which related to whether there was a relationship between the demographic variables (general education and special education), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), and compassion fatigue in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools. Table 7 shows the results of the MANOVA for general and special education teachers and stress variables.

The results of this analysis (Table 7) show that no significant effect was found between general and special education teachers on the stress variables and compassion fatigue. ($\Lambda(5, 431) = .984, p > .05$). Thus, I accepted the null hypothesis and rejected the directional
hypothesis. Neither general nor special educators are significantly influenced by teacher stress sources.

**Table 6. Relationship Between Professional Distress, Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Compassion Satisfaction</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>Secondary Traumatic Stress</th>
<th>Pro Distress Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion Satisfaction</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.726**</td>
<td>-.250**</td>
<td>-.182**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>σ (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.726**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.597**</td>
<td>.338**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>σ (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Traumatic Stress</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.250**</td>
<td>.597**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.209**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>σ (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Distress Total</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.182**</td>
<td>.338**</td>
<td>.209**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>σ (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

**Findings Related to Research Question 4**

Research question four explored whether there was a relationship between the demographic variable (gender), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment), and compassion satisfaction in
general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools. I used a one-way MANOVA, as shown in Table 8, to address this question.

Table 7. Multivariate Tests – General and Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Hypothesis $df$</th>
<th>Error $df$</th>
<th>$\sigma$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>Pillai's Trace</td>
<td>.958</td>
<td>1949.203$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>431.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td></td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>1949.203$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>431.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotelling's Trace</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.613</td>
<td>1949.203$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>431.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy's Largest Root</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.613</td>
<td>1949.203$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>431.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Gen Ed and Sp Ed | Pillai's Trace  | .016  | 1.445$^a$ | 5.000          | 431.000    | .207     |
| Wilks' Lambda   |                 | .984  | 1.445$^a$ | 5.000          | 431.000    | .207     |
| Hotelling's Trace |               | .017  | 1.445$^a$ | 5.000          | 431.000    | .207     |
| Roy's Largest Root |               | .017  | 1.445$^a$ | 5.000          | 431.000    | .207     |

$^a$Exact statistic

Table 8. Multivariate Tests – Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Hypothesis $df$</th>
<th>Error $df$</th>
<th>$\sigma$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>Pillai's Trace</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>266.705$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td></td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>266.705$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotelling's Trace</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.021</td>
<td>266.705$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy's Largest Root</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.021</td>
<td>266.705$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Pillai's Trace</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>1.146$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td></td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>1.146$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotelling's Trace</td>
<td></td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>1.146$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy's Largest Root</td>
<td></td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>1.146$^a$</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>121.000</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Exact statistic
The results of this analysis (Table 8) reveal no significant effect for gender (Lambda (5, 121) = .955, \( p > .05 \)). Thus, I accepted the null hypothesis and rejected the directional hypothesis.

Gender did not significantly influence the teacher stress sources.

**Findings Related to Research Question 5**

Research question five pertained to whether there was a relationship between the demographic variable number of years of teaching experience, teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools. I used a one-way MANOVA to test the hypotheses.

**Table 9. Multivariate Tests – Number of Years in Education Field**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>( F )</th>
<th>Hypothesis ( df )</th>
<th>Error ( df )</th>
<th>( \sigma )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>Pillai’s Trace</td>
<td>.920</td>
<td>496.787</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>215.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>496.787</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>215.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hotelling's Trace</td>
<td>11.553</td>
<td>496.787</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>215.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roy's Largest Root</td>
<td>11.553</td>
<td>496.787</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>215.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years in Education</td>
<td>Pillai’s Trace</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>215.000</td>
<td>1095.000</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>215.000</td>
<td>1074.578</td>
<td>.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hotelling's Trace</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>215.000</td>
<td>1067.000</td>
<td>.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roy's Largest Root</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td>1.716</td>
<td>43.000</td>
<td>219.000</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( ^a \)Exact statistic  
\( ^b \)Statistic is an upper bound on \( F \) that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

The results of this analysis (Table 9) show no significant effect (Lambda (215, 1074) = .405, \( p > .05 \)). Thus, I accepted the null hypothesis and rejected the directional hypothesis. The number of years teaching experience in education did not significantly influence teacher stress.
Summary

When investigating the prevalence of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction, I found no significant differences between general and special education teachers. The average score on secondary traumatic stress and burnout, which comprise compassion fatigue, is 50. The mean for secondary traumatic stress for general education teachers was 50.96, with special educators following closely with 49.40, thus indicating an average score.

I found similar results with regard to burnout. General education teachers’ mean equivalent was 50.67, and special educators followed closely with 49.61. Notably, both general and special education teachers met Stamm's criteria for compassion fatigue which is comprised of the burnout and secondary traumatic stress measures. A comparable pattern was found with compassion satisfaction, with general education teachers’ mean at 49.83 and special education teachers slightly above at 50.11.

Exploring the relationship between teacher stress, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction, a Pearson correlation indicated a significant linear relationship between teacher stress, compassion fatigue (secondary traumatic stress and burnout), and compassion satisfaction, meaning that as compassion satisfaction increased, the other variables decreased.

Analyses of demographic variable including gender and number of years teaching did not produce significant findings. Furthermore, multiple teacher stress sources produced no significant relationships with compassion fatigue.

This chapter reported the data analysis results and included descriptive statistics, correlation, and MANOVA. I collected all data from general and special education teachers in the School District in central Florida. Chapter Five discusses the results.
Chapter Five

Discussion

This study examined the phenomena of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction among teachers working in one suburban/rural public school district (the School District). As discussed in Chapter Two, the phenomenon of compassion fatigue is a well-established cause of burnout among people in the helping professions such as nursing and social work. The purpose of this study was to explore the applicability of those findings to the field of education. Specifically, the stresses of public school teaching would appear to create the conditions for compassion fatigue to occur and perhaps be a factor in the high rates of turnover among educators – particularly in the field of special education.

The purpose of this study was to determine the interplay between the ecological factors such as teachers' emotions, beliefs, identity, goals, and the social-cultural environment. To explore factors that may impact educators' decisions to stay in the field, this study utilized the following instruments: The Professional Quality of Life Scale, Version 5 (ProQOL-5; Stamm, 2010b), and the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI; Fimian, 1984).

The study addressed the following questions:

1. Do special education teachers experience higher compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction than general education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?
2. Is there a relationship between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public school?

3. Is there a relationship between the demographic variables (general education and special education), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment), and compassion fatigue in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

4. Is there a relationship between the demographic variable (gender), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment) and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

5. Is there a relationship between the demographic variable (number of years), teacher stress variables (time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment) and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools?

The conceptual model used for the study was Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Theory model. This model, as shown in Figure 1, in Chapter 3, is a useful framework for considering the ecology of the School District and its interaction with the teachers who served as participants.

As noted in Chapter Three, Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1986) framework stresses that humans develop within a complex system of relationships that are critical to positive development. He further illuminates the bidirectional interactions. These interpersonal dynamics
can affect teachers’ physical and social relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). The current ecological framework in which our participants live and do their work is based largely on accountability at all levels. At the meso level, since passage of NCLB (2002), states and school districts have been held accountable for student success in meeting standards and passing assessments. School districts must report on student progress to states, and districts, in turn, devolve accountability to individual schools which are graded and compared to other schools. Curriculum and assessment developers have developed industries based on providing materials and instructional guides that reduce teacher discretion in making decisions about how best to meet the needs of individual students. At the individual level, teacher assessment systems have placed a measure of responsibility/blame for student success or failure directly on individual teachers. The accountability culture of schools potentially increases the workplace stress of all stakeholders. These ecological factors can influence how teachers relate to the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). Perception becomes the individual’s reality; hence these perceptions eventually lead to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction—in other words, the individual experiences compassion satisfaction or compassion fatigue.

The assumption underlying this study is that k-12 special education and general education teachers would reveal a relationship between individual levels of compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout. A correlational design was utilized for this study. The variables in the study included the following: (a) years of teaching experience, role (general or special educator), and gender—all measured by items on the demographic questionnaire; (b) occupational sources of stress, including time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, and professional investment—all measured by scores on the TSI (Fimian, 1984); and (c) compassion satisfaction, burnout, and compassion fatigue—all measured by
scores on the ProQOL-5. Both instruments, the TSI and the ProQual-5, measure the ecological factors of individual backgrounds and environmental influences. Environmental impact on the teacher plays a significant role in how an individual perceives stress. Darling (2007) highlights Bronfenbrenner’s theory of human development in which all experiences are established as interrelated and our knowledge of development unavoidably comes from the framework of culture and history.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: Prevalence of Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction in General Education and Special Education Teachers. The findings reported in Chapter 4 suggest that within the current population there are not differences in how general education and special education teachers experience compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction. Notably, however, as compared to other research groups (e.g., Stamm, 2010b) both general and special education teachers in this sample report high levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress; that is, compassion fatigue. Teachers are not exempt from the characteristics that impact compassion fatigue. These include the lack of self-care, possible unresolved trauma, work stressors being out of control, and reduced satisfaction with work (Figley, 1995).

Research Question 2: Relationship Between Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction. Using previous research and Stamm’s (2010b) theory of the relationships between these constructs, it was hypothesized that the phenomena of compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) and compassion satisfaction is experienced, and special education teachers in this study would experience higher levels of secondary traumatic stress and burnout (compassion fatigue) than their general education counterparts. An investigation of means and frequency data revealed no significant differences between these groups, and, in fact, special
education teachers were slightly less vulnerable to burnout. Approximately 90% of all teachers scored within the high-risk range for compassion fatigue.

Results were measured by the sample mean scale for the three subscales of ProQOL and converted to percentiles using the scoring table in the ProQOL manual (Stamm, 2010b). A high risk of compassion fatigue would be indicated by scores above 17 (75th percentile) on the secondary traumatic stress subscale, and scores below 7 (25th percentile) would be indicative of low compassion fatigue risk. High potential for compassion satisfaction was specified by scores above 42 (75th percentile) on the Compassion Satisfaction subscale of the ProQOL. Low potential for compassion fatigue would be signified by scores below 32 (25th percentile). A high risk of burnout would be delineated by scores above 26 (75th percentile), and low burnout risk would be indicated by scores below 15th (25th percentile) on the Burnout scale of the ProQOL. There is limited work that supports the prevalence of secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue in teaching populations (Hoffman, Palladino, & Barnett, 2007; Robinson, 2005).

Both special education and general education teachers in the current sample produced a group mean compassion fatigue score in the high-risk range, similar to counselors in other studies (Wee & Myers, 2003). An elevated risk of compassion fatigue has also been found in other helping professions, such as hospice nurses (Abendroth & Flannery, 2006), emergency nurses (Hooper, Craig, Janvrin, Wetsel, & Reimels, 2010), and oncology nurses (Dominguez-Gomez & Rutledge, 2009). Moreover, there are overarching themes (e.g., workload, time management, and reaction to work) that link the relevance of compassion fatigue (Lee, 2013).

**Research Question 3: Relationship Between General and Special Education, Teacher Stress Variables, and Compassion Fatigue.** Based on the literature in Chapter Two, I hypothesized that special education teachers would be impacted more by teacher stress and
compassion fatigue based on the increased paperwork/case management requirements of special education teachers, the overall condition of the workplace, lack of administrative support, and general stress (Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

According to the results in Chapter 4, teacher stress sources of time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment were not significant based on whether the teacher was in general or special education. Similarly to other findings of this study, there was no difference between general education and special education teachers. Fimian (1988) did not separate out general and special education teachers so this result is not atypical. Although literature tends to address increases in paperwork and disruptive student behavior specifically for special education teachers this study highlights that all teachers are at risk of feeling isolated from colleagues and needed support, emotionally, mentally, and physically (Billingsley & Cross, 1992).

**Research Question 4: Relationship Between Gender, Teacher Stress Variables, and Compassion Satisfaction.** The findings in Chapter Four indicate that gender is not significantly related to teacher stress sources of time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment and compassion satisfaction. The finding that there was no significant difference between males and females compassion satisfaction was unexpected. However, these findings are in line with other studies that determined gender as inconsequential in the occurrence of compassion fatigue, burnout and compassion satisfaction (Sprang et al., 2007; Wells, 2008). In light of the Billingsley and Cross findings, gender differences should continue to be examined and should not be ruled out due to the limited number of males represented in this study.
Research Question 5: Relationship Between Number of Years Teaching, Teacher Stress Variables, and Compassion Satisfaction. Billingsley and Cross (1992) highlighted that job satisfaction increases with age and experience. Similarly to job satisfaction, compassion satisfaction increases the likelihood that an employee would remain in their field. Hence, it was theorized that the number of years teaching would increase the probability that the longer teachers remained in the field of teaching the stronger their job satisfaction would be.

The results in Chapter Four explored the potential relationship between number of years spent teaching, teacher stress sources of time management, discipline and motivation, professional distress, professional investment and compassion satisfaction. While the findings of this study did not support a strong relationship, the data is open to doubt, this area warrants further exploration in future studies, possibly breaking down the differences between new teachers and teachers closer to retirement.

Relationship Between Teacher Stress, Compassion Fatigue, and Compassion Satisfaction

No significant difference appeared in the relationship between teacher stress, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public schools. This suggests that there is no reason to separate general education teachers from special education teachers when looking at these constructs. As with other studies among helping professions, there is little difference as to how compassion fatigue impacts mental health counselors, nurses, or even animal caregivers (Craig & Sprang, 2010; Rank et al., 2009; Ray, Wong, White, & Heaslip, 2013).

When teacher stress factors (work related stress, time management, discipline, motivation, professional distress, and professional investment) are observed, a significant regression equation was found for both burnout and secondary traumatic stress (scores combined = compassion fatigue) in general and special education teachers working in suburban/rural public
schools. Stamm (2010b) developed the Compassion Satisfaction-Compassion Fatigue model. This model utilizes both occupational stress and the positive effects of helping others to offer better understanding of compassion fatigue (Stamm, 2010a, 2010b). Support for this model is found throughout peer-reviewed literature, both among studies that explicitly reference this model and in studies that use similar constructs without referencing a model (e.g., Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). However, this model has not been applied specifically to teachers.

**Limitations**

The current research should be viewed within the context of several limitations. It is important to note that no data were collected on environmental factors that the research literature suggests may contribute to burnout and secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue such as engaging in self-care (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) and having positive supportive relationships with colleagues (Brenneman, 2015). Another limitation is relying on self-reporting on surveys. Respondent errors in self-reports may include over-reporting of events, under-reporting of events or inconsistent responses (Sinkowitz-Cochran, 2013)

The study’s response rate raises concerns about the racial/ethnic representativeness of the sample. Approximately 20% of the teachers invited to contribute to the study chose to participate. The sample consisted primarily of individuals who identified as non-Hispanic Caucasian or white. Table 1 in Chapter Four, from Florida Department of Education (2013), supports that the majority of teachers in the School District identify as white. Moreover, while only 3% of the respondents identified as Black or African American, this reflects a higher percentage than that of Black teachers employed by the School District (2.5%).
As for the overall response rate, in an analysis of 1,607 studies published in refereed academic journals, Baruch and Holtom (2008) found that the average response rate for web-based surveys ranged from 10.6 to 69.5%, with a mean of 39%. The authors recommended that response rates falling below one standard deviation (15.1) of the average should be briefly contextualized. In the current study, the response rate of 20.63% is more than one standard deviation below the mean established by Baruch and Holtom (2008), and therefore warrants explanation.

Issues that may have contributed to the low response rate in the study include: potential participants may not have preferred using their school-based email addresses. Almost 25% of the invitation emails bounced back; it is not possible to determine how many emails delivered could be filtered out as junk mail or spam. Furthermore, there was no way to determine how many teachers who received the email utilized their school-based account during the data collection period. Potential participants, if given in-person recruitment efforts, may have been more likely to respond since they would have been given information about the study and could have provided the researcher with their preferred contact information.

The data collection period of the study was another factor that may have limited the response rate. Invitations were transmitted to potential participants by email late in the fall semester leading up to the December winter break. Teachers were likely to be busy during this period and may not have had the time or energy to complete even a brief survey. If data had been collected during another point in the school year, it is possible that more teachers would have been able to participate. Since the study was not longitudinal, it only measured levels of compassion fatigue once. This is particularly relevant to the ProQOL instrument which is
designed to be taken multiple times a year. However, data on “test-retest reliability” (Salkind, 2013, p.43) suggest the ProQOL is reliable over time (Stamm, 2005).

The teachers who elected to participate in the study despite these challenges may not have been representative of the larger population of interest, or even of the smaller subset of suburban/rural public-school educators in the School District. Whitley (2013) noted that people who volunteer to participate in research may differ from those who do not volunteer in a number of ways, including interest in the study’s subject. In fact, the probability of teachers experiencing more stress or feeling less supported by their school district may make them more likely to participate in research studies (Hesjedal et al., 2015; Koenig et al., 2018).

Whitley (2013) further discussed incidences of social desirability bias, which is a concern with this study given the use of self-report measures. Thus, as with any survey, researchers should take care in generalizing these results.

Finally, while this study explored a wide range of variables that contribute to compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction among suburban/rural public-school educators, the focal point of this study highlighted teachers and their direct perceptions of the working environment. Outside of the current research scope remain many systemic issues, such as poverty, school reform efforts, and budget cuts. Further empirical investigation into the impact of these factors on well-being of educators is also warranted.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 connects the constructs between burnout and compassion fatigue studies conducted among the helping professions (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cherniss, 1980; Figley, 1995). This study supported the notion that burnout does not impact teachers differently than nurses, mental health workers, or other professional groups, while extant research describes strong relationships between burnout and a range of associated
problems. Billingsley and Cross (1992) established in their study that work-related variables and stress correspond as better predictors of job satisfaction or compassion satisfaction. Supportive of this study’s findings, the authors found no significant differences between general education and special education teachers. Furthermore, both burnout and compassion fatigue is supported with having a negative impact on teachers throughout the research (Koenig et al., 2018; Kokkinos, 2007).

In their pilot study, Sharp, Donahoo et al. (2018) utilized ProQOL and a self-care intervention, where participants were trained on the technique of mindfulness. The authors found that mindfulness improved compassion satisfaction for special education teachers. Time of inquiry played an integral role in their data collection, which suggests a need to measure compassion fatigue at various periods of the school year since compassion fatigue levels may vary.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The goal of the current research was to increase awareness that the phenomenon of compassion fatigue can be found in teaching, similar to other helping professions. While this study highlighted the significance of these issues and identified several personal and environmental contributing factors, numerous areas of inquiry remain. First, the present research was conducted with public school teachers in a single suburban/rural school district. Future studies of educator compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction might benefit from more geographically-diverse populations of teachers and more diverse school populations (e.g., high poverty or urban).

Future research should also take into consideration the role of school reforms efforts such as NCLB (2002) and the added stressors of the 'accountability era' from the ESSA (2015); which
have placed much of the burden of accountability for student performance on individual teachers. Evaluation of how best to develop and deliver effective preservice or inservice training for beginning teachers and veteran teachers could be another area of future research interest.

An examination of teachers from different types of schools (e.g., public, private, and charter) would also add to the understanding of the environmental factors that may influence the development of work-related and secondary traumatic stress responses among educators. A more detailed inquiry into the relationship between and the development of teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress is also warranted.

In conclusion, this research highlighted that both general and special education teachers may face symptoms of compassion fatigue. Despite limitations, the investigator hopes that this study will encourage using current and further research in the development of content related to compassion fatigue for delivery in teacher education courses. Moreover, there are promising interventions to address self-care (Lee, 2013), managing work stress (Bercier & Maynard, 2015; Flarity, Gentry, & Mesnikoff, 2013; Potter et al., 2013), and a wide range of mindfulness- and meditation-based interventions (Beck, Hansen, & Gold, 2015; Goodman & Schorling, 2012). It is therefore imperative to inform current and future teachers about the necessary steps to take in order to maximize their compassion satisfaction, manage compassion fatigue, handle work stress, and prevent burnout among the phenomenal individuals who choose daily to teach in schools.

Reflection

In light of the literature that I reviewed and the frequent classification of special education as a “high shortage area” (www.ed.gov; n.d.; FLDOE.gov, n.d.) I was quite taken aback by the results. Often in the literature and in the school building there is a division placed between general education and special education teachers, and special education teachers do not
feel adequately supported by other teachers or building administrators. The results of this study are a glaring reminder that teachers are teachers and that the way they experience the relationships with students, colleagues, administration and community is potentially connected more to the person in the environment.

Implications

An anecdotal example provides insight into the importance of these findings. At one elementary school in the suburban/rural public school district in Central Florida, two second grade teachers, of the same class, resigned their positions before the winter break. The same phenomena occurred among third grade teachers at the same school. This example highlights the finding of high levels of compassion fatigue in the respondent population of this study and highlights the importance of this study.

The findings of this study also suggest that the school district is at risk for attrition because of the number of teachers who are in their first 5 years of teaching or who are close to retirement.

Compassion fatigue has the potential to be widespread among teachers. Based on the findings of this study, compassion fatigue is not unique to special educators. Expanded research on infusing awareness and prevention/treatment needs to begin throughout teacher preparation programs and continue throughout professional development. Shifting the rhetoric of burnout to understanding compassion fatigue requires a change in mindset. Compassion fatigue has established prevention and treatments with numerous helping professions such as nurses and social workers that have impacted retention in their respective workforces (Conrad & Kellar-Guenter, 2006; Garrosa, Moreno-Jiménez, Liang, & González, 2008; Lee, 2013).
For example, mindfulness is frequently mentioned in the literature as a self-care intervention. The key to being mindful is to become intentional with one’s attention. Additional steps include: acceptance, openness, curiosity, kindness, patience and trust. All can be challenging for healthy individuals, balancing these steps under stress or even diagnosed mental illness and the task may appear more difficult (Goodman & Schorling, 2012; Kiley et al., 2018).

The key in practicing a self-care intervention such as mindfulness is the ability to bring the mind and body together in the same place at the same time. The stress is placed on being versus doing. Mindfulness is, as the name suggests, being mindful of the moment by being checked in rather than checked out (Goodman & Schorling, 2012; Kiley et al., 2018; Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018).

The concept of fatigue is not foreign to most individuals; and when one feel fatigue there is an innate feeling that one can achieve rest and recovery. This awareness would begin the needed mindset shift in creating longevity for all teachers to stay in the classroom.
References


Sinkowitz-Cochran, R. L. (2013). Survey Design: To Ask or Nor to Ask? That is the Question…Clinical Infectious Disease, 56(8) 1159-1164. Retrieved from doi: 10.1093/cid/cit005


Appendix A

Professional Quality of Life Scale

*Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue (ProQOL) Version 5 (2009)*

When you *teach* people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you *teach* can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a *teacher*. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the *last 30 days*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1=Never</th>
<th>2=Rarely</th>
<th>3=Sometimes</th>
<th>4=Often</th>
<th>5=Very Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I am happy.
2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I *teach*.
3. I get satisfaction from being able to *teach* people.
4. I feel connected to others.
5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.
6. I feel invigorated after working with those I *teach*.
7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a *teacher*.
8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I *teach*.
9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I *teach*.
10. I feel trapped by my job as a *teacher*.
   11. Because of my *teaching*, I have felt "on edge" about various things.
12. I like my work as a *teacher*.
13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I *teach*.
14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have *taught*.
15. I have beliefs that sustain me.
16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with *teaching* techniques and protocols.
17. I am the person I always wanted to be.
18. My work makes me feel satisfied.
19. I feel worn out because of my work as a *teacher*.
20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I *teach* and how I could help them.
21. I feel overwhelmed because my case *work* load seems endless.
22. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I [teach].
24. I am proud of what I can do to [teach].
25. As a result of my [teaching], I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.
26. I feel "bogged down" by the system.
27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a [teacher].
28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.
29. I am a very caring person.
30. I am happy that I chose to do this work.

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Appendix B

Teacher Stress Inventory

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

Examples:
I feel insufficiently prepared for my job.

1  2  3  4  5

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

I feel that if I step back in either effort or commitment, I may be seen as less competent.

1  2  3  4  5

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

TIME MANAGEMENT

1. I easily over-commit myself.

1  2  3  4  5

2. I become impatient if others do things to slowly.

1  2  3  4  5

3. I have to try doing more than one thing at a time.

1  2  3  4  5

4. I have little time to relax/enjoy the time of day.

1  2  3  4  5

5. I think about unrelated matters during conversations.

1  2  3  4  5

6. I feel uncomfortable wasting time.

1  2  3  4  5

7. There isn't enough time to get things done.

1  2  3  4  5

8. I rush in my speech.

1  2  3  4  5

Add items 1 through 8; divide by 8; place your score here:
WORK-RELATED STRESSORS
9. There is little time to prepare for my lessons/responsibilities. 1 2 3 4 5
10. There is too much work to do. 1 2 3 4 5
11. The pace of the school day is too fast. 1 2 3 4 5
12. My caseload/class is too big. 1 2 3 4 5
13. My personal priorities are being shortchanged due to time demands. 1 2 3 4 5
14. There is too much administrative paperwork in my job. 1 2 3 4 5

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EMOTIONAL MANIFESTATIONS
I respond to stress...
30. ...by feeling insecure. 1 2 3 4 5
31. ...by feeling vulnerable. 1 2 3 4 5
32. ...by feeling unable to cope. 1 2 3 4 5
33. ...by feeling depressed. 1 2 3 4 5
34. ...by feeling anxious. 1 2 3 4 5
Add items 30 through 34; divide by 5; place your score here:

**FATIGUE MANIFESTATIONS**
I respond to stress...
35. ...by sleeping more than usual. 1 2 3 4 5
36. ...by procrastinating. 1 2 3 4 5
37. ...by becoming fatigued in a very short time. 1 2 3 4 5
38. ...with physical exhaustion. 1 2 3 4 5
39. ...with physical weakness. 1 2 3 4 5

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

**CARDIOVASCULAR MANIFESTATIONS**
I respond to stress...
40. ...with feelings of increased blood pressure. 1 2 3 4 5
41. ...with feeling of heart pounding or racing. 1 2 3 4 5
42. ...with rapid and/or shallow breath. 1 2 3 4 5

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

**GASTRONOMICAL MANIFESTATIONS**
I respond to stress...
43. ...with stomach pain of extended duration. 1 2 3 4 5
44. ...with stomach cramps. 1 2 3 4 5
45. ...with stomach acid. 1 2 3 4 5

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

**BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATIONS**
I respond to stress...
46. ...by using over-the-counter drugs. 1 2 3 4 5
47. ...by using prescription drugs. 1 2 3 4 5
48. ...by using alcohol. 1 2 3 4 5
49. ...by calling in sick. 1 2 3 4 5

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

**TOTAL SCORE**
Add all calculated scores; enter the value here ______.

Then, divide by 10; enter the Total Score here ______.
Appendix C

Permission to use Teacher Stress Inventory

7/16/2010

University of South Florida Mall - Requesting permission to use TSI for my dissertation

April Steen <asteen@mail.usf.edu>

Requesting permission to use TSI for my dissertation

Michael Fimian <Fimian@InstructionalTech.net>
To: April Steen <asteen@mail.usf.edu>

Thu, Mar 24, 2016 at 1:56 PM

Hi April,

Sure, feel free to make use of the inventory...

Good luck with your defense!

Regards,

Michael

Dr. Michael J. Fimian
InstructionalTech.net
37 Gay Rd
Brookfield, MA 01506

774-200-7881
www.InstructionalTech.net

[Quoted text holder]

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1?ik=914b6e85b3&view=pt&search=all&permmsgid=msg-f%3A152070720729646712&simipli=msg-f%3A152070720729646712
Appendix D

Demographic Information (SAMPLE)

Please note that this information, as well as responses to the questionnaires/surveys, will be used to look for group patterns only, and only group findings will be reported. In this manner, anonymity will be preserved and confidentiality will be maintained.

Current Position
_____ Classroom Teacher (specify grade): ______________________
_____ Subject Teacher (specify subject): ______________________
_____ School/Guidance Counselor
_____ School Social Worker
_____ School Psychologist
_____ Other Teacher or support personnel (specify specialty): ________________

Assignment Level
_____ Elementary
_____ Middle
_____ Secondary
_____ Technical or Alternate School

School Population
_____ <200
_____ 200-399
_____ 400-599
_____ 600-799
_____ 800-999
_____ 1000-1199
_____ 1200-1399
_____ 1400-1599
_____ 1600-1799
_____ 1800-1999

Number of Years in Field of Education: _____
Number of Years in Current Position: _____
Employment Status: _____ full-time _____ part-time
Age: _____
Gender: _____ female _____ male
Ethnicity: ______________________

Highest Level of Education Attained:
_____ Bachelor’s degree
_____ Master’s degree
_____ Doctoral degree
_____ Other (specify): _______
Appendix E

SPSS Code for Scoring the ProQOL

COMMENT: Step 1: Score ProQOL IV. or 5 variable names in syntax assume pq# for each item.

This routine

reverses items 1, 14, 15, 17 and 29 then scores the three scales of the ProQOL IV; Secondary Traumatic Stress

the new scale name for the old Compassion Fatigue scale.

RECODE pq1 pq4 pq15 pq17 pq29
(1=5) (2=4) (3=3) (4=2) (5=1)
INTO pq1R pq4R pq15R pq17R pq29r.

COMPUTE CS = SUM(pq3,pq6,pq12,pq16,pq18,pq20,pq22,pq24,pq27,pq30).
COMPUTE BO = SUM(pq1r,pq4r,pq8,pq10,pq15r,pq17r,pq19,pq21,pq26,pq29r).
COMPUTE STS = SUM(pq2,pq5,pq7,pq9,pq11,pq13,pq14,pq23,pq25,pq28).
EXECUTE.

COMMENT: Step 2: Convert raw score to Z score. Note that this routine produces an extraneous output file

with n and means that can be deleted.

DESCRIPTIVES
VARIABLES=CS BO STS /SAVE.

COMMENT: Step 3 Convert Z score to t score.

COMPUTE tCS = xCS*10)+50.
VARIABLE LABELS tCS 'CS t score'.
EXECUTE.

COMPUTE tBO = (ZBO*10)+50.
VARIABLE LABELS tBO 'BO t score'.
EXECUTE.

COMPUTE tSTS = (ZSTS*10)+50.
VARIABLE LABELS tSTS 'STS t score'.
EXECUTE.

COMMENT: Interpretation of scores: The mean score for any scale is 50 with a standard deviation of 10.

COMMENT: The cut scores for the CS scale are 44 at the 25th percentile and 57 at the 75th percentile.

COMMENT: The cut scores for the BO scale are 43 at the 25th percentile and 56 at the 75th percentile.

COMMENT: The cut scores for the STS scale are at 42 for the 25th percentile and 56 for the 75th percentile.

(from the Concise ProQOL manual, Stamm, B. H., 2010b)
Appendix F

School District Support Letter

August 18, 2017

Ms. April Steen

Dear Ms. Steen:

Attached you will find an approval for your research study entitled, “Compassion Fatigue and Teachers.”

To examine the following: The prevalence of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction among teachers working in suburban public schools. The correlations between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction. The perceived social support, demographic, and work stress-related variables that predict compassion fatigue and burnout. The ability of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction to predict burnout, over and above the influence of all other variables.

We are always interested in the outcome of research conducted in our school system. When your study is complete, please forward a brief summary of your findings to the Office for Accountability, Research, and Measurement.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Ph.D., Director
Office for Accountability, Research, and Measurement

/ig
Attachments

xc: All Principals
APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Please print or type

This form MUST be completed and signed by appropriate Office of Accountability, Research, and Measurement prior to collecting data and conducting research at the.

Part I

Name: AP.21.e STSAA

Mailing Address:

Phone: Fax:

Research Affiliation: Uteck, UBC approved for university research pending your support

Why are you conducting this study? 

☐ Thematic Course ☐ Thesis ☐ Dissertation

☐ Research Interests (not a student) ☐ Other (specify):

If this is a student project complete the following:

Degree Sought: PhD, Curriculum & Instruction Project Advisor: Patricia Pena

Signature of Advisor:

Are you an employee of the: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what is your work location?

Signature of Principal (if the study is to be conducted in a school, in the district, and the researcher is employed in the district):

This is an important aspect of your application to conduct research. These individuals are the administrative staff members responsible for center areas, schools, or locations at which the study is being carried out. These persons serve as a liaison for the project and are selected because of their interest or expertise in the world of interest. If studies are requested to be done at specific school sites, the principals must be willing to serve as a contact if the application is to be approved.

Signature ____________________________

Department ____________________________

Signature ____________________________

Department ____________________________
Compassion Fatigue and Teachers

Title of Research Project: 

Primary research question(s) and purpose: What is the relationship and/or the prevalence of compassion fatigue among general and special education teachers?

Describe or name the instrument you plan to use (if applicable):

Teacher Stress Inventory and Physician Quality Life Scale

Include a copy of the survey form or instrument with your application:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects required for your study:</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th># Needed</th>
<th>Time Required</th>
<th>List schools and/or grades</th>
<th>Specify any other items needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25-30 min</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (specify)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe the benefits to students and/or the school district:

This study is trying to establish the phenomenon of compassion fatigue. Teachers participating can gain insight on their stress and fatigue and given access to further resources.

Describe (generally) the statistical techniques(s) which will be used to analyze your data:

You will be an online survey so the data will be kept anonymous. Hypotheses will be tested using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, multiple regressions and hierarchical regression analysis.

List the major activities or phases of your study, approximate timelines for completing each phase and your expected completion date:

Data Collection Aug-Oct provide results to district Nov-Dec

Final defense Dec 2017

List any special services or resources which are required for the completion of your study (e.g., special requests for video taping or audio taping subjects):

None

This is an online survey

When will the research be conducted?

Aug-Oct 2017
Part III
Attach to this application:

- Research proposal that includes the purpose, statistical and design methodology, and benefit to the district.
- All research instruments
- IRB approval, if applicable
- A one-page letter or summary that can be shared with principals describing the tasks that will be required of teachers, students, or schools.

One (1) copy of the final report, thesis, dissertation, or study results with an executive summary must be submitted to the Office for Accountability, Research, and Measurement no later than one month after submission of the document to the sponsoring institution agency.

Further, I understand and will abide by the laws related to protection of human subject rights and privacy. I will maintain confidentiality of all records, and I will destroy and eliminate any reference to school districts, or individual identity.

[Signature]
Researcher’s Signature
[Date]
4/30/17

For Office Use Only

[ ] Granted
[ ] Denied
[ ] Conditions, if any

[Signature]
Signature of Director or Designee Accountability, Research, & Measurement

Note to Researcher: When seeking approval at the school level, a copy of your approval letter MUST be shown to the school principal.

Return the completed application and required documentation to
by email [Redacted]
Postal mail to:

[Redacted]
Director
Accountability, Research, and Measurement
Appendix G

IRB Approval Letter

July 17, 2017

April Steen
Teaching and Learning
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: Exempt Certification
IRB #: Pro00066650
Title: THREATS TO TEACHING: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONSTRUCTS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE IN THE CLASSROOM

Dear Ms. Steen:

On 7/17/2017, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets criteria for exemption from the federal regulations as outlined by 45CFR46.101(b).

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
(ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF IRFP policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF IRFP Policy, once the Exempt determination is made, the application is closed in ARO. Any proposed or anticipated changes to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB review must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an amendment or new application. **Note: no research activities can begin without obtaining the required letter of support.**

Given the determination of exemption, this application is being closed in ARO. This does not limit your ability to conduct your research project.
We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board
Appendix H

Informed Consent For Participants

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study. We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called: Compassion Fatigue and Teachers. The person who is in charge of this research study is April Steen. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Patricia Kleinhammer-Tramill.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the prevalence of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction among teachers working in suburban public schools. To examine any correlations between compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction and perceived social support, the demographic, and work stress-related variables that predict compassion fatigue and burnout, and the ability of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction to predict burnout, over and above the influence of all other variables.

**Why are you being asked to take part?**

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a k-12 school teacher.

**Study Procedures**

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to fill an online survey that will take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying
information such as your name, email address or IP address. The survey questions will be about how you feel when at work as a teacher. We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal
You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer; you are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits and Risks
We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

This research is considered to be minimal risk.

Compensation
We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
We must keep your study records as confidential as possible. It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses because you are responding online.

Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are: the author, principal investigator, advising faculty, and The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB).

- It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet. However, your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person’s everyday use of the Internet. If you complete and submit an anonymous survey and later request your data be withdrawn, this may or may not be possible as the researcher may be unable to extract anonymous data from the database.
**Contact Information**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu. If you have questions regarding the research, please contact the Principal Investigator at asteen@mail.usf.edu.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are. You can print a copy of this consent form for your records.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by proceeding with this survey that I am agreeing to take part in research and I am 18 years of age or older.

(active link for survey inserted)