Selected demographic and school factors that relate to the occupational stress of the special education teacher

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SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC AND SCHOOL FACTORS THAT RELATE TO THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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ABSTRACT

SMITH, PATRICIA F. B.A. Spelman College, 1962
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SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC AND SCHOOL FACTORS THAT RELATE TO
THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

Advisor: Professor Trevor Turner
Dissertation dated December 1989

The purpose of this study was to examine the occupational stress experienced by elementary school, special education teachers in relationship to selected demographic and school factors: age, tenure in present position, type of exceptionality, mode of delivery as well as organizational support, professional task/role responsibility, personal coping capabilities, respectively. Additionally, the study sought to examine the occupational stress levels of the special education teachers.

Participants included 71 elementary special education teachers in the Atlanta Public Schools (grades K-5). The Burnout Assessment Inventory and [adjusted] demographics response sheet (Clouse, 1982) was used to secure data on all variables. Statistical procedures used were the Correlational Analysis (Pearson r) and the...
Multiple Regression Analysis. Tests of significance were set at the .05 level of confidence.

The major findings of this study were: (a) a significant relationship was found to exist between personal coping capabilities and occupational stress; (b) no significant relationships were found to exist between occupational stress and the following: age, tenure in present position, type of delivery mode, type of exceptionality, organizational support, and professional task/role responsibilities; (c) personal coping capabilities had the greatest effect on occupational stress; and (d) the teachers of the hearing impaired, physically handicapped, speech/language impaired and learning disabled exhibited higher levels of occupational stress.

Recommendations were made that: (a) other variables be identified that may be significantly related to occupational stress, (b) more research is needed to determine how people acquire coping strategies, (c) special educators and other administrators provide more support for the teachers of physically handicapped students, and (d) special educators and other educational administrators seek means to help special education teachers to strengthen their levels of coping skills.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses sincere appreciation to the many individuals who have contributed toward the successful completion of this dissertation. Especially important has been the scholarly assistance of my committee members: Dr. Trevor Turner, Chairperson, Dr. Phillip Bradley, Dr. Olivia Boggs and Dr. Stanley Mims. Their prompt and timely comments, suggestions and directions were most valuable.

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I dedicate this study to my mother, Mrs. Lois Fletcher; my oldest son, Patrick; my triplets: Brian, Brittani, and Brandon; and my brother, John Fletcher, Jr., for their selfish love and everlasting faith in me. Thank you Father!
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Any school can be characterized as a complex social system comprised of numerous interrelated and interacting parts (Fimian, 1982). "The degree to which these parts are influenced by the social milieu," observes Fimian, "will often determine the degree to and fashion in which they continue operating in a relatively smooth manner"; however, "when the school's social system does not function as it should, the 'wear and tear' on the human components become evident" (p. 97). Recent interest in the detrimental effects of the school upon the employees has dramatically increased with numerous studies identifying school-related factors that act as sources and manifestations of stress and burnout (Fimian, 1982; 1983).

The topic of stress and job burnout in regard to special education was almost a nonissue as recently as the late 1970s (Shaw, 1980b). Now, there is widespread attention to the topic. It appears that something has changed the perception if not the experience of special educators in recent years (Shaw, 1980a). Previously, there has been a limited amount of empirical literature
in the area of stress and burnout among special education teachers.

According to Bensky (1980), stress is one of the major issues facing today's educators. He contends that the problems of our society have greatly influenced the changes in the social setting of the school. These problems: lack of respect for authority and institutions, the disintegration of traditional family values, economic problems including inflation and recession, reduction in civic responsibilities, and the lack of and/or limited resources directly impinge on the functioning of schools. In many instances, schools have become "mirror images" of the society. As a result, educational leaders and teachers are faced with increased pressures, aggression, changes, and conflicts which impact their mental health and ultimately their work performance (Bensky, 1980).

Research to date seems to indicate that teacher stress and burnout are particularly significant in the area of special education. The work of special education teachers is extremely stressful because they are overworked, constantly under fire and, in many instances, unappreciated (Meadow, 1980). Meadow also observed that this may cause them to consider leaving
Special Education or actually leaving teaching altogether.

Among the special education population, there appears to be an increasing awareness of the aspects of the environment on teachers' personalities, both physically and psychologically (Coopman, 1980; Fimian, 1982; McClean, 1979). These researchers believe that frequent feelings of physical and psychological stress lead to distancing from students, diminished work performance, increased absenteeism and high attrition. It has been documented that population shifts, increased professional opportunities outside of teaching, especially for women, and the declining calibre and number of teachers entering the profession have created a crisis in the teaching profession. This is more evident in the special education field. The dissatisfaction of special education teachers with their occupational setting and conditions is a most visible and significant factor contributing to this crisis (Dixon, Shaw & Bensky, 1980).

Special education teachers have felt the impact of the legal mandate, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142 which has created many additional responsibilities that may produce stress: placement team meetings, due process, increased
paperwork, individualized educational programs (IEP's), and intensive involvement with and accountability to parents (Dixon et al., 1980). Preliminary data indicate that this combination of working with exceptional children and implementing the mandates of P.L. 94-142 has created many stressful conditions for many special education teachers.

Additionally, special education teachers have felt the impact of the Quality Basic Education (Q.B.E.) Act (1985). This historic legislation focused on the school environment and how it should be; that is, the school should be characterized by efficient organization and leadership; there should be: a focus on basic mastery, close attention should be given to the needs and problems of students, effective uses of resources and positive school and community relations. The school program should reflect the needs of different types of students. The Act further mandated that in special education, students who require more resources to learn—whether because of a handicap or any other special learning conditions—be supported with additional funds. The intent of QBE legislation was to bring excellence into the school system. There was, however, a need for accountability—someone had to be
held accountable for the documented, successful implementation of the program. Nevertheless, the demand for accountability--for making sure that the system works efficiently and effectively--has produced quantifiable stress for teachers. Thus, it seems that the demand for additional paperwork, major organizational and curriculum changes, and teacher evaluation may provide an even greater amount of stress for special education teachers.

While every job carries certain pressure and stressors, there are indications that teachers are experiencing an overwhelming number of them. Data indicate that the problem of stress that results in burnout of educators is real and worthy of concern. The Board of Education of the City of Atlanta Minutes (1988, June) state that teachers, inclusive of special education teachers, showed a 94 percent attendance rate and a less than .05 percent turnover rate, but this record does not reflect the extent of the problem regarding the issue of stress and burnout.

The Annual Review Update Meetings for Special Education Teachers (1989, April) indicated that many special education teachers expressed various concerns regarding stress and burnout. They reported conditions
in their work environment that were perceived to be overly demanding and threatening. These individuals complained about the excessive paperwork, time restraints, work overload, neglect of personal priorities and lack of organizational support. The summative evaluation data reported reflected the need for a stress management workshop as a top priority for future inservice workshops for special education teachers.

It is important that special education teachers have good mental health and positive self-perception not only for their own well being but also for the students they teach. Because exceptional children often lack the ego strength of normal children, their self-concept can be seriously impaired by a cynical, negative teacher (Weiskop, 1980). The data, regarding the lack of good mental health and positive self-concept which appears to plague special education teachers, suggest that these teachers may be experiencing occupational stress.

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine what are the perceptions of occupational stress held by special education teachers at the elementary school level and
the relationship of those perceptions to selected demographic and school factors, such as: age, tenure in present position, total years teaching experience, type of exceptionality, mode of delivery as well as organizational support, professional task/role responsibilities, personal coping capabilities, respectively.

Significance of the Problem

The problems of stress and tension experienced by special education teachers are prevalent and intense. Calder (1984) stated that not only has the stress of the special education teachers increased, but also the intensity. "The intensity of this [job related] stress has never been higher; its potential for undermining the instructional delivery of services to the exceptional child has never been more ominous" (p. 8).

So prevalent is the problem of stress in the field of education that the National Educational Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), together with other professional teacher organizations, have begun to focus on the problem of stress and offer suggestions for its amelioration and prevention. The Georgia Federation of Teachers (GFT) conducted a survey
in eight Georgia school systems (Goolrick, 1981; Terry, 1981). Half of the teachers surveyed believed that they had experienced on-the-job stress, 59 percent had considered leaving the profession, and 42 percent reported that given a choice of careers, they would not choose teaching again.

In a survey of learning disabilities teachers who left Georgia classrooms, Coopman (1980) found that only 40.9 percent of those contacted would re-enter special education, if they had the opportunity. Excessive paperwork and meetings played a large role in their leaving. Dr. Julie Elfman, Recruiting Consultant for the Georgia Department of Education, has stated that the average special education teacher in Georgia remains in the field three years (Goolrick, 1981). The reasons for this rapid turnover are unknown. However, in a survey in Kansas, Siantz (1980) found a similarly high rate of attrition (25 percent, after one year of teaching) for graduates from a master's program in special education who responded to her questionnaire. Over one-half of those who left their jobs were considered "burned-out" according to study criteria.

The concern over teacher stress has not been limited to local and national teacher groups. On February 6,
1980, the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education heard testimony presented by Marsha Berger, Vice President at Large, Providence Teachers' Union, including a plea for additional research on conditions producing teacher stress, and pointed out the need to provide professional help to teachers who have experienced severe stress (Berger, 1980). Sparks (1979) noted, the "stage is set for job-related stress when involvement in work is high (as in teaching), but feelings of control of power in the work setting are limited." Thus, environmental stressors have the potential for creating a high level of tension and stress in teachers.

Now that teacher organizations are moving into collective bargaining concerning working conditions, special class teachers and groups must make known their specific needs. Efforts must be started now to stop the growing waste of fine educators from stress.

Not only is stress a factor which adversely affects teachers, but it is a factor which adversely affects the overall organization of which they are a part. In those organizations, the following trends have been observed: high rates of accidents and job turnover, poor work
relationships (Cox, 1978), increased medical care costs, decreased teacher effectiveness, increased disciplinary problems, mechanistic teaching, low student and teacher morale, increased use of grievance procedures, petty theft of school supplies, and increased use of sick leave and "mental health days" (Paine, 1981).

Dixon, Shaw and Bensky (1980) note three organizational indicators of the current presence of burnout in special education: (a) increased administrative time spent in recruiting, hiring, and providing orientation for new staff; (b) increased role confusions, resentments, and interpersonal problems between regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, and administration; and (c) local bureaucratic procedures. These authors add that administrators' concerns must be for the organization as a whole, not just the individual teacher.

The literature indicates that stress has a devastating effect on the individual and the school system. In other words, stress has a debilitating effect on the process of education, the special education teacher's personal health and the delivery of services to students. It has been documented that incidences of excessive use of alcohol, drugs, food and
tobacco may occur in individuals under stress. Other destructive effects can be observed such as: lower morale and creativity, inability to concentrate including sporadic memory difficulties, lower self-esteem within their school and personal lives, disorganization in the classroom, and overreaction to mild pressure in the classroom. The key is that effects of stress are physical, psychological and emotional (Zabel, 1982). In addition to the rapid turnover rates already mentioned, there is a higher prevalence of diseases and the resulting absenteeism (Shaw & Bensky, 1980).

The literature review purports that the effect of stress and burnout on the school system cannot be overlooked. The delivery system is becoming more inefficient and non-productive. School systems are becoming increasingly aware of the inefficient use of staff time and the resulting encumbrances of increased financial cost. In addition, health care costs are rising at a phenomenal rate, leaving school systems unable to underwrite the cost of the effect of stress and burnout on individual staff members.

While increased financial cost and special education teacher indifference are having a devastating effect,
there is an even bigger problem for school systems to deal with: the effect of special education teachers' stress and burnout on the handicapped learner/student. Meadow (1980) concluded that when the teacher suffers from stress and burnout, the handicapped students will not receive the total benefits of the special education teachers' expertise and services.

Special education teachers have to learn to cope with emotions created by the nature of the job which may sometimes be stressful, painful, and even debilitating. Unless they learn to handle this problem, they may be unable to survive and continue in their educational efforts (Zabel & Zabel, 1982). Knowing which stressful incidents impact special education teachers most, and which least, is a first step in identifying, defining and resolving stress-related problems in schools. All educational personnel must work together to identify the stress factors that inhibit optimum performance on the part of special education teachers and, in some cases, cause them either to leave the profession or remain dispirited and depressed. After these factors are identified, and causal relations shown, efforts should and must be made to develop strategies to overcome these inhibitors. It is hoped that this examination will make a worthwhile contribution toward that end.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

In recent years, it has become apparent that special education teachers are burning out on the job because they are subjected to varying degrees of occupational stress. Occupational stress promotes physical, emotional and attitudinal exhaustion and results in a significant decrease in special education teachers' performance and job satisfaction. Many special education teachers are experiencing high levels of stress related to inordinate time demands, excessive paperwork demands, role ambiguity, lack of adequate instructional materials, etc. In addition to resulting in a number of emotional and physical illnesses, it is expected that special education teachers under severe stress will experience increased job turnover and absenteeism, reduced job satisfaction, and mental and physical withdrawal and detachment.

For these reasons, the research reviewed and reported in this chapter relates to various aspects of special education teachers' perceptions of occupational stress. The specific topics which guided the research review were:
1. Self-Report Perception of Stress
2. Demographic Factors
3. School Factors
   - Professional Task/Role Responsibilities
   - Organizational Support
   - Personal Coping Capabilities

The research reviewed is reported under these headings. In addition, a summary, a critique of the research, and the writer's comments on the contribution to the present research will conclude the review.

Self-Report Perceptions of Stress

Occupational stress among teachers is a growing concern in education. The existing research literature is comprised of studies that examine teacher stress in two ways: (a) as conditions in the work environment that are perceived as being overly demanding or threatening and (b) as a wide range of personal and emotional symptoms experienced by teachers. Murphy's (1986) investigation dealt with the concern of Anchorage's special education teachers regarding burnout. The study's purpose was two-fold: (a) to compare Anchorage's special education and regular education teachers to learn if there were differences
between the two groups in levels of burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) in the areas of job satisfaction, job stress, and ways of coping with stress; and (b) to collect data that would prove useful to administrators.

A mail-out survey consisting of the MBI and a brief demographic questionnaire was used to gather data. Results were analyzed by SPSS/X. Special education teachers reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion and lower levels of personal accomplishment on the MBI than did regular education teachers. No differences between the two groups were found on the MBI depersonalization subscale. No significant differences between job satisfaction levels were reported by the two groups, but teachers who had taught longer reported lower job satisfaction. High job satisfaction was found to correlate with low MBI burnout scores. No differences were found between groups in the percentages of stress resulting from work. Teachers in both groups reported their most important technique for coping with stress at work as talking with co-workers. Both groups reported their most common strategy for coping with stress away from work was physical exercise.

Teacher burnout is not abnormal and is found in both
special education and regular education teachers. Although special educators reported higher burnout levels on two of the three MBI subscales, both Anchorage groups were relatively free from burnout. There was no empirical evidence showing that the coping strategies used by teachers are efficacious in alleviating stress. All teachers could benefit from school district efforts to deal with teacher burnout. Administrators can raise teachers' job satisfaction feelings by working to prevent burnout.

In an attempt to treat teacher stress in a more comprehensive manner, Kass (1985) assessed personal symptoms and environmental factors between two groups of teachers: regular elementary classroom teachers and special education classroom teachers.

Subjects completed the Hopkins Symptom Checklist to measure their level of personal symptoms of stress. The Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire was used to measure their perceptions of environmental stressors. A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test simultaneously the effects of the dependent variables (personal stress symptoms and environmental stressors) on the independent variables of teacher type and number of years' teaching experience. Results
indicated that regular classroom teachers and special education teachers did not differ significantly in terms of the magnitude of occupational stress experienced. Also, the amount of stress experienced by the two groups of teachers did not differ when the number of years of teaching experience was considered. Lastly, there was no significant interaction between type of classroom teacher and the number of years of teaching experience.

During the same time, Carico (1985) conducted a study to determine the sources of teacher stress and to identify recommendations for dealing with this stress. The population used in the study were faculty members from five school systems in Blount and Hamblen Counties in Tennessee. The 48 schools which were selected included a total sample of 1,165 elementary, middle school, high school, and special education teachers who were asked to complete a survey questionnaire designed to measure their perceptions of teacher stress.

An analysis of the responses of 93.5 percent of those surveyed produced the following major findings:

1. A major source of stress for teachers was inadequate salary.

2. A second major stress factor was insufficient time to properly perform their duties.
3. The amount of clerical work was a major stress factor.

4. Parental indifference toward school activities was an important cause of stress.

5. The actions recommended by teachers for reducing stress all included giving them more time, money, support and control.

A specific self-reported inventory which was designed primarily to examine personal characteristics of teachers and their relationship to stress was developed by Fimian (1981a, 1981b). Items for the instrument, called the Special Education Teacher Stress (SETS) questionnaire, were taken from a survey of the literature and a subsequent review by a professional panel. The 63 items dealing with sources and symptoms of stress were judged on a frequency and intensity scale similar to that of Maslach and Jackson's MBI. In addition, there are questions concerning personal and professional characteristics. Fimian administered the questionnaire to 800 randomly selected special education teachers; 47 percent (365) were returned. Following factor analysis, six sub-scales were created: (a) Personal/Professional Stressors, (b) Professional Dissatisfaction, (c) Discipline and Motivation of
Students, (d) Emotional Manifestation, (e) Behavioral Manifestations, and (f) Physiological Manifestations.

The results of the study were reported in two articles by Fimian and Santoro (1981a, 1981b). Of the total sample of 365, 49.3 percent reported taking "mental health days" for job-related stress, 7.4 percent received professional counseling, and 82.2 percent gave and/or received peer support to assist in job stress; 87.1 percent rated their jobs as moderately to very stressful and 46.3 percent reported being generally to very satisfied with their jobs, emphasizing that job stress and job dissatisfaction are different phenomena. Also, 50.4 percent reported that their views toward teaching had become more negative while 26 percent rated their views as becoming more positive since they began teaching; 56 percent felt inadequately trained to teach handicapped students.

Based on self-reported stress, respondents were separated into high, medium, and low stressed groups and their responses to other items on the questionnaire compared. The highly stressed group reported significantly higher numbers of mental health days taken, more counseling received, less administrative support received, greater development of negative views
toward teaching, and greater job dissatisfaction. No differences in perceived stress could be attributed to sex or to the amount of peer support received by the three groups. The authors observed that while specific individuals do appear to have significant problems, stress may not be as epidemic as some had claimed as evidenced by these data.

Studies which examined the relationship between objectively measured environmental stressors and employee perception were identified by Beehr and Newman (1978). They located very few such studies but on the basis of a few, concluded that perceptions of stress do appear to be related to objectively-measured stressful situations and to individual and/or organizational consequences.

Kyriacou (1980) asked subjects to respond to the question, "In general, how stressful do you find being a teacher?" on a five-point Likert-type scale. He found that such a self-report measure appeared to have high face validity, and on the basis of a significant correlation with reported frequency of stress symptoms, the measure also had good concurrent validity.

Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1979a) compared the self-reported stress of 130 British teachers with scores on a
Likert-type format of Rotter's I-E (1966) scale. They found a significant correlation (at the .01 level) between self-reported stress and externality. It would seem, then, that an external locus of control may be related to the perception of high stress and to less effective coping techniques.

Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1979b) conducted a survey of 257 teachers in 16 medium-sized comprehensive schools in England. Biographical information (sex, age, qualifications, experience, teaching position), ratings of 51 sources of stress, a measure of self-reported stress, and ratings of 17 symptoms were requested. Response return was 80.3 percent. Twenty percent of the respondents rated teaching as very or extremely stressful.

The ratings of sources of stress were submitted to factor analysis and four factors emerged: (a) pupil misbehavior, (b) poor working conditions, (c) time pressures, and (d) poor school ethos. T-tests to compare mean responses of each biographical subgroup on the different sources of stress were performed. The authors found the female teachers rated pupil misbehavior items to be the greatest sources of stress while male teachers rated administrative and paperwork items to be the greatest source of stress.
Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1979b), in a survey of 218 teachers, found a positive correlation between self-reported teacher stress and intention to leave the teaching profession. The association between stress and total days absent was also significant. Younger and less experienced teachers reported greater stress from disciplinary activities and from lack of opportunity for promotions or for decision-making. No significant differences were found among the biographical subgroups in self-reported stress. The authors suggest that "the personality characteristics rather than the biographical characteristics account for the individual differences in teacher stress" (Kyriacou et al., 1978b, p. 166). They also concluded that the measure of self-reported stress seemed to have high validity since ratings of all 51 sources of stress and 17 symptoms correlated significantly and positively with it. They underscored the need to validate empirically particular measureable responses such as job satisfaction and absenteeism as indicators of teacher stress.

Demographic Factors

Studies reviewed and reported in this section relate primarily to the inclusion of demographic characteristics
which impact special education teachers' perception of occupational stress. Those are: age, tenure in present position, type of exceptionality, and mode of delivery.

Tupes (1985) conducted a study, Stress and Teachers, a comparative study of elementary and secondary teachers in the Prince William County, Virginia Public School System. Although this study concerned itself with regular teachers, it could also be replicated by using a sample of elementary and secondary special education teachers.

Tupes measured, analyzed and compared the degree of stress perceived by public elementary and secondary school teachers in the Prince William County School System. The sample for this survey was composed of members in the Prince William Education Association for the 1983-84 school year. Of the Association's 1,530 members, 511 teachers were randomly sampled systematically, school by school. Two hundred sixty-nine were secondary teachers, while 242 were elementary teachers. A 94 percent response was received.

The survey instrument consisted of 48 job-related events to which the sample respondents were asked to indicate the degree of stress they associated with each event. A 48-item demographic questionnaire was used to
collect personal and situational information about the respondents. These items were identified as the variables which could be related to the stress experienced by the teachers.

The findings of the study indicated that even though a moderately high level of stress was reported, the respondents at the secondary school level did not appear to differ from those at the elementary school level, sex was a significant predictor of perceived stress level, and that there are differential levels of stress across selected levels of key demographic variables, such as: sex, age, marital status, race, degree, tenure and percentage of total family income. Additionally, the study examined internalized manifestations of stress experienced by the respondents.

A study to determine the extent of burnout among teachers of the hearing impaired and to ascertain if there were differences in the causes of burnout between self-contained classroom teachers and itinerant teachers in a large urban school system was conducted by Dawson (1985). The instruments used in this investigation were the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. An analysis was made of the results obtained from the two instruments to ascertain
the level of burnout among teachers of the hearing impaired. The 218 questionnaires used for the analysis represented 96 percent of the 227 teachers of the hearing impaired in this system.

Analysis of the data from the Maslach Burnout Inventory yielded the range of burnout to be 37-30 percent. These teachers were burned out on the frequency and intensity dimensions of the emotional exhaustion subscale, of the depersonalization subscale and of the personal accomplishment subscale. Demographic data revealed that certain demographic variables contributed to the level of burnout. White respondents tended to be more depersonalized than blacks. Divorced and widowed respondents showed more emotional exhaustion than married or single teachers. Itinerant teachers had less feelings of depersonalization than teachers in self-contained classrooms. Respondents working 30-50 hours had less depersonalization that those respondents working under 30 and over 50 hours.

Data from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire showed 68 percent of the respondents had general job satisfaction. Itinerant teachers scored higher than classroom teachers on the extrinsic scales; older respondents scored higher than younger respondents on
both the intrinsic scale and on the extrinsic scale; married and widowed persons had greater job satisfaction than single or divorced persons; and respondents working between 30 and 50 hours per week had more intrinsic satisfaction than those respondents working under 30 or over 50 hours.

Holt (1985) explored the variation in individual personality characteristics, termed "hardiness," among female elementary teachers who had differing levels of burnout despite high levels of occupational stress.

One hundred thirty-four elementary regular and special education teachers in a midwestern university town returned surveys comprised on the Teaching Events Stress Inventory, Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Alienation Test, the Internal-External Control Scale, and a demographic questionnaire which also asked for incidences of stress-related physical or mental illness and coping activities.

Teachers were grouped according to level of stress, degree of burnout, and combined stress and burnout. Analyses of variance were conducted to determine variation in hardiness between high stress/high burnout teachers and high stress-low burnout teachers. Both high and low stress teachers (N = 134) were included in
summaries of demographic characteristics, chi-square analyses and correlations of characteristics with the independent and dependent variables.

Results indicated a significant interaction of burnout and hardiness. Teachers with high levels of occupational stress who had a low level of burnout also felt less alienated and had more internal locus of control. Those with high level of occupational stress and a high level of burnout felt more alienated and indicated a more external locus of control.

Low stress groups had older and more experienced teachers. Sixty-six percent of special educators were in the high stress groups. Low burnout groups had significant frequencies of married teachers with the most or least experience. The high stress-high burnout group had more teachers with five to ten years' experience. Sixty percent of those reporting stress-related physical and mental illness were in the high stress-high burnout group. Physical illness was significantly correlated with level of stress, emotional exhaustion and alienation. No significant correlations were found between age, marital status, education, or type of educator and any of the variables. Coping
activities were passive for high burnout teachers and active for low burnout teachers.

The organizational perspective to stress which emphasizes the inclusion of both demographic and work-environment characteristics was considered by Calder (1984). Also central to the logic underlying the study was the aptitude-treatment-interaction approach to predicting both physiological and psychological response to stress intervention.

The subjects for this study were 1,730 teachers in the Dallas Independent School District who completed a stress intervention program during the 1982-83 school year. Teachers were assessed on pre and posttest physiological and self report psychological measures of stress. In addition to the physical examination and self-ratings, the eight-week intervention program included nutritional analysis, educational modules, exercise programs, and individual counseling to establish stress-management goals.

The background variables addressed were: age, sex, race, racial crossover status, marital status, years of teaching experience, size of school, grade level taught, economic deprivation of the school's student population, and racial composition of the school. Physiological
stress measures consisted of blood pressure and total treadmill time. Psychological self-rating factors were: well-being, job satisfaction, self-concept, energy, health, strain, job happiness and happiness.

An important contribution of the study was the examination of background variables as predictors of both physiological and psychological stress levels. Complex relationships among variables were identified, with different background variables predicting different aspects of stress response. In general, significant background predictors of stress on various measures were teacher ethnicity, sex, marital status, years of teaching experience, racial composition of the school, grade level taught, and the economic deprivation index of the school.

Another major contribution of the study concerned the identification of background predictors of response to the stress intervention, controlling for pretest stress status. Significant predictors on the various stress measures included ethnicity, sex, years of teaching experience, and the school economic deprivation index.

Recently, claims have been made that special education teachers experience unique and more intense
stressors in their job than regular educators. Researchers have observed that the behaviors and characteristics of children in those special education classes constitute an important source of stress for the special education teacher.

Ettingoff (1984) sought to discover whether or not perceptions of students' behaviors differ between special and regular education teachers and whether or not these perceptions are related to the amount of reported job-related stress among teachers. Two school districts with different socioeconomic backgrounds were studied. A 98-item survey, divided into five sections, was developed in two pilot studies. A total of 74 teachers completed this survey, including 39 special education teachers of learning disabled and/or emotionally disturbed children and 35 regular education teachers.

Multivariate analysis of variance was used to study teachers, school district, and interactive effects. No significant differences between teacher groups on perceived satisfaction in teaching or the reported frequency of the symptoms of stress were found. Regular education teachers reported more positive behavior in the classroom than special educators reported, but this
difference was not statistically significant. A significant difference was found on the importance of positive qualities. Regular educators rated intellectual and motivational qualities higher than special educators.

A significant difference between the two school districts was found in frequency of symptoms of stress reported, with the teachers working in the lower socioeconomic area reporting higher frequencies of stress symptoms. A more positive attitude toward teaching was manifested by those teaching younger children and those reporting a higher frequency of positive behaviors in the classroom.

Additional studies examined the relationship of background variables relative to occupational stress of special education teachers. Among these are the studies of Johnson, Gold, Williams, and Fiscus (1981) who made use of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) in a study of stress variables with a sample of teachers of the learning disabled (LD), emotionally disturbed (ED), and educable mentally retarded (EMR). In addition to responses on the MBI, the authors secured demographic information and the teachers' perceptions of the degree to which certain factors were stressful or assisted in
coping. Of the 195 randomly selected teachers, 69 percent responded. While no significant differences were found among the LD, ED, and EMR groups of teachers, the authors did find that teachers with four to five years' experience compared to those with less and teachers with a B.A. degree compared to those with a M.A. or Ed.S degree perceived themselves to care more frequently and intensely about their students' needs and were less stressed by students.

Many studies during the late 1970s and early 1980s focused on the special education teacher as a result of P.L. 94-142. Matuskey (1981) conducted a survey of 351 teachers of learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, physically handicapped, trainable mentally retarded, and educable mentally retarded students. She found a relationship between the handicap of the student and factors which caused stress to teachers. Teachers of the EMR were likely to rank student attitudes as stressful while teachers of the EH rated discipline as stressful. Teachers of students with LD found lack of planning time most stressful. Teachers who taught combined groups of LD and EH students found lack of communication on the county level most stressful. Excessive paperwork was found highly stressful by all
teacher groups except those of the trainable retarded; and inadequate salary was found highly stressful by all groups except the teachers of the physically handicapped.

In the study conducted by Johnson et al. (1981), teachers of the EH found insufficient and/or inappropriate supervision, insufficient psychological services, fear of physical attack, verbal threats, potential violence and overall responsibilities significantly more stressful (at .05 level) than did LD or EMR teachers. LD teachers found involuntary assignments to extra-curricular activities significantly more stressful (at .05 level) than did ED and EMR teachers. Useful coping strategies for the three groups differed somewhat. EMR teachers made most use of peer support while LD and ED teachers preferred confiding in significant others. ED teachers also made frequent use of recreation to deal with stress. The authors found no significant differences in the frequency and intensity of burnout among teachers of LD, ED and EMR. They suggest that perhaps this is because all groups work with the mildly handicapped and so have similar roles.

Zabel et al. (1982) examined variables associated with the experience of burnout among a randomly selected sample of special education teachers. Included in the
sample were 100 teachers each of the LD, EH, TMR, EMR and gifted; 100 interrelated (serving several mild handicapping conditioning) teachers; and all the teachers of low incidence handicapped in one state. A total of 765 questionnaires were distributed. The survey included the Maslach Burnout Inventory and questions concerning teacher demographics. A return of 601 questionnaires (78.5 percent) was considered by the authors a high rate and was attributed to the interest in the topic among teachers. The authors found that teachers of the hearing impaired and emotionally disturbed report the most occupational stress. Teachers of other exceptionalities apparently experience high stress also, but report a greater sense of personal accomplishment. Teachers of the gifted expressed a high feeling of stress but also the highest sense of personal accomplishment. Teachers of pre-school exceptional students demonstrated a similar pattern. Teachers of junior high age exceptional students expressed the most stress for any student age group, however.

A final study reviewed relative to demographics and occupational stress was by Meadow (1981). He conducted a study of the experience of stress among professionals working with deaf students. Special education teachers,
administrators, supervisors, aides, and support personnel attending a conference completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory. A total of 240 responses were received. Teachers of the deaf reported significantly higher levels of stress (at .01 level) on the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the MBI than a sample of regular teachers reported by Maslach and Jackson. The author made no attempt to match the two groups in other characteristics. However, personnel working in demonstration schools reported higher burnout scores than those in residential, day or non-school settings. Meadow also found that scores on the four subscales of the MBI were linearly related to the degree to which the respondent found the job satisfying. The higher the reported sense of job satisfaction, the lower the score on the subscales of burnout.

School Factors

Studies reviewed and reported in this section relate to school factors, such as, professional task/role responsibilities, organizational support, personal coping and capabilities which affect special education teachers' perception of occupational stress.
Professional Task/Role Responsibilities. Writers in the field of special education have recognized the problem inherent in the multiple roles and tasks filled by special education teachers. Increased roles and tasks are the results of the P.L. 94-142 demands.

A pilot study was conducted by Mazur (1986) to generate feedback and to refine the test instrument. In the final questionnaire, the seven independent variables were demographic, experimental, environmental, health, principal, leadership style, organizational and personality. The organizational factors were developed from Cooper's "The Stress Check," and were categorized as role conflict, role ambiguity, decision making, responsibility and work overload. The personality factors were personality type as measured by Friedman and Rosenman's Type A/B personality scale, locus of control as measured by Levenson's locus of control personality rating scale, and self-concept as measured by Lynch's self-concept scale with semantic differential.

The questionnaires were administered to 200 teachers from nine suburban Boston high schools. Participation was of a voluntary nature and the questionnaires were completed at the teachers' convenience. The dependent variables were emotional exhaustion, personal
accomplishment and depersonalization as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Statistical analysis was made with factor analyses, stepwise multiple regressions, canonical correlations, and correlational analyses.

The major findings of the study were:

1. Leadership style is not a predictor of teacher burnout.

2. Organizational factors are predictors of teacher burnout, particularly work overload which accounted for 41 percent of the variance for emotional exhaustion.

3. Personality characteristics were predictors of teacher burnout, particularly anomie, self-esteem and personality type.

The finding that organizational and personality factors were major predictors of burnout was consistent with Durkheim's theory that division of labor results in anomie. The isolation of the teacher within the classroom for prolonged periods of time was viewed as harmful in that it produces anomie. The organization, therefore, may be a causal agent in anomie and ultimately burnout by virtue of the systemic isolation of the teacher.

The field of special education has not escaped its
share of stress-producing factors and burnout. Harmon (1985) designed a study to examine personal and professional variables of special education teachers, organizational stress factors of role conflict and role ambiguity, and teacher burnout.

Three hundred seventy-eight special education teachers in an urban school district in Kentucky completed the Stress Survey for Special Educators (SSSE). The survey contained three parts. In the first part, the participants were asked to provide general information about personal and professional characteristics. The second part of the SSSE contained the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the third part contained the Role Questionnaire.

To assess the relationship between role conflict or role ambiguity and personal and professional variables, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether the personal and professional variables, role conflict or role ambiguity were significant contributors to teacher burnout.

The significant findings were as follows:

1. Special education teachers who were 20 to 35
years of age perceived more intense feelings of emotional exhaustion than teachers who were 36 or older.

2. The age and sex of special education teachers and the degree of role conflict the teachers felt were three significant sources of intense feelings of emotional exhaustion, while the exceptionality that the special education teachers taught and the degree of role conflict and ambiguity they felt were three significant sources of frequent feelings of emotional exhaustion.

3. The age of special education teachers and the degree of role conflict and ambiguity they felt were significant sources of intense and frequent feelings of depersonalization.

4. The age of special education teachers was a significant source of frequent feelings of low personal accomplishment while role ambiguity was a significant source of both intense and frequent feelings of low personal accomplishments.

Oftentimes, special education teachers must assume the responsibilities of in-school team chairpersons. Therefore, studies of administrative stress are reported below:

Bishop (1986) investigated differences between district level administrators and school-based
administrators' perceptions of occupational stress factors in a large urban school district. Data were collected from 214 administrators in the Duval County School System, a large urban school district in Florida. Four occupational stress factors—role-based stress, task-based stress, conflict-mediating stress, and boundary-spanning stresses—were examined in relationship to type of employment, position held, age, sex, race, marital status, and number of years of administrative experience. Discriminant analysis identified 12 administrative Stress Index (Gmelch) items which could be used to correctly classify 90.8 percent of the administrators as school-based or district level. Multiple regression analyses of the data indicated a significant difference in perception of stress between school-based and district level administrators. Only conflict-mediating stress was substantially explained by the demographic variables ($r^2 = .54$). Of the variables described, type of environment, that is, district level or school-based was common to all four regression analyses.

Additional studies have considered the role of the special education teachers. Schwab (1981) sought to examine the relationship of burnout to the variables of
role conflict and ambiguity. He randomly selected classroom teachers from the Massachusetts Teacher Association rolls and received 469 responses to the Teachers' Stress Survey, which included demographic and role questions and the MBI. Through multivariate analysis of variance and regression procedures, Schwab assessed the differences in perceptions regarding role and burnout by demographic groupings, and the relationship among those variables when controlling demographics. Patterns among age and experience groups were found in perception of role conflict and ambiguity, and sex, grade level and age groups differed on particular burnout subscales. Across groups, perception of role conflict explained the most variance on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization burnout subscales, and perception of role ambiguity explained the most variance on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

Phillips and Lee (1980) reviewed the literature on teacher stress and found support for role conflict as a source of stress. They noted that most reactions to role conflict were maladaptive and include lack of motivation and job satisfaction, increased hostility, aggression, withdrawal, apathy, and depression, a
loss of self-esteem and increased psychosomatic disorders.

A study of 114 full-time professional educators reported similar findings (Bensky, Shaw, Gouse, Bates, Dixon, & Beane, 1980). Of the sample, 33.9 percent were self-contained special education teachers, and 41.3 percent regular teachers. The subjects completed a questionnaire regarding sources of stress, personal demographics and the influence of P.L. 94-142 mandates on perceived stress. The authors found that self-contained special education teachers reported less stress than either special education resource teachers or regular education teachers. The authors suggested this difference might be explained by the fact that responsibilities of self-contained teachers have not been changed significantly by P.L. 94-142, while those of regular teachers and resource teachers have. The data were analyzed with a multiple regression procedure and two significant predictors of general stress were found: the lack of role clarity, and the discrepancy between the individual teachers' perception of his/her role and others' expectations for the role.

The impact of regulation on the role of special educators has been examined in other studies. Price et
al. (1980) found that resource teachers used school time predominantly in the completion of their paperwork while self-contained special education teachers used more of their own time. In the former case, stress may result from guilt from not serving students while in the latter, from lack of time for personal activities and from exhaustion. Pattavina (1980) suggested that this might be the case and stressed that teachers need to know their own limits. Teachers are concerned about the accountability aspect of Individualized Education Plans.

An earlier study that examined the perception of the role of special education teachers was conducted by D'Alonzo and Wiseman (1978). They examined the perception of roles of high school LD resource teachers. Responses to a behavior scale developed from a review of the literature, interviews, observations, and professional jury reviews were gathered from 134 high school LD teachers. Teacher behaviors were rated on a three-point scale in terms of their occurrence as an actual and as a desired teacher role. Consensus was found on only six of the 38 items regarding their occurrence as an actual role, but there was considerable consensus regarding their status as a desired role. The
authors concluded: "The data appear to indicate that the role is not actually agreed on or defined" (p. 69).

Organizational Support Variables. Many writers have reported the influence of organizational support mechanisms on stress in the work environment. The relationship between perceived social support and perceived occupational stress was examined in a sample of 116 elementary school teachers from seven different school boards in Toronto by Shainfarber (1986). The following questionnaires were administered: Teacher Stress Questionnaire, Teacher Support Questionnaire, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (A Trait Scale), Social Relationship Scale, and a Personal Data Sheet. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with a selective sample of ten subjects.

Results of the study indicated that perceived teacher stress, a composite stress score and the time pressure factor were significantly negatively correlated with perceived helpfulness of the work and social network. The data indicated no significant relationships between network size and general stress indicators, but work network size was significantly negatively correlated with stress related to working conditions.
Regarding support activities, emotional support and feedback were the only activities significantly negatively correlated with the composite stress score, while tangible aid and sharing ideas were additional activities correlated with overall perceived stress. Regarding sources of support, the composite score was significantly negatively correlated only with the helpfulness of the principal or vice-principal; whereas, overall perceived stress was significantly negatively correlated with the helpfulness of spouse, friends, principal/vice-principal, other teachers, consultants and students. The study also identified a number of sources and types of support significantly related to four specific factors: pupil misbehavior, time pressures, working conditions, and school ethos. Multiple regression analyses revealed the following independent predictors of the various stress factors: trait, anxiety, helpfulness of principal, school enrollment, student social status, teacher's marital status, and feedback. A number of patterns of support use based on demographic characteristics were revealed. Trait anxiety scores were significantly negatively correlated with the measures of self-reported teacher stress, lending support to the construct validity of the Teacher Stress Questionnaire.
Various studies examined the relationship of the provision of social and emotional support of school leaders and job-related stress and/or burnout. In his study, Fimian (1986) sought to determine: (a) the relationship in either the strength or frequency of stressful events perceived by recipients or administrative support that would be evident in non-recipients, (b) whether the relationship would be evident in recipient versus non-recipients of peer support, and (c) whether group differences would exist in all three sets of samples (special education teachers). The findings of this study were:

1. Non-recipients, in comparison to recipients, of leadership support experienced significantly stronger personal and professional stressors, distress, discipline and motivation problems, emotional and physiological fatigue manifestations and total strength and frequency of stress.

2. For the most part, non-recipients experienced stressful events as significantly stronger and more frequent than did recipients of peer support. The recommendations of the study were that coping strategies as a part of pre- and in-service educational courses should be offered to potential and current teachers;
that school systems examine the nature and types of support which could be provided to minimize stress; and that types of support which school personnel provide to each other be explored.

Other studies which explored the relationship of social and moral support and self-reported stress include: Truch (1980) who found that lack of professional guidance led to stress, poor morale and teacher recidivism; Zabel and Zabel (1982) who identified a general lack of administrative moral support as a factor of special education teacher burnout; McHardy (1983) who found a significant relationship between role functions and stress and that inadequate supervision and feedback resulted in stress among special education teachers; and McKnab and Mehring (1984) who found a significant relationship between special education teacher attrition and support. Like Fimian (1986), these writers recommended that school systems provide training and/or some mechanisms for alleviating job-related stress.

Yvett's (1985) major focus was to determine the relationships as seen by regular classroom teachers who mainstream, among the independent variables of: (a) availability and importance of administrative supports
for mainstreaming, (b) teacher attitude toward mainstreaming, (c) degree of teacher participation in mainstreaming, and (d) the criterion, teacher perception of stress in their work situation. Differences of perception with regard to the relationship of availability and importance of administrative supports as indicated by special education district administrators and by regular classroom teachers who mainstream were also studied.

Special education district administrators from each of 13 districts and a sample of 381 regular classroom teachers drawn from their districts were asked to complete a personal data form, the Administrative Supports for Mainstreaming Questionnaire (ASMQ) and the Educational Attitude Survey (EAS). In addition, the teachers were administered the School Work Survey (SWS) as a measure of stress.

Based on the findings of the analysis of the data, significant correlations were seen to exist between teacher stress and each of the following: attitude toward mainstreaming, availability of 10 to 24 administrative supports for mainstreaming and past and current satisfaction with the experience of mainstreaming. Significant differences were also shown
for attitudes toward mainstreaming when the teachers were contrasted according to low and high availability groups.

When the perceptions of special education district administrators and regular classroom teachers who mainstream were compared regarding the availability of specific administrative supports in the ASMQ, there were especially large differences seen for specific administrative supports that emphasized interaction with colleagues. The findings of this study indicated that for the facilitation of mainstreaming, regular classroom teachers may require support from organizational designs that include opportunities for collegial dialogue and collaboration. Further, administrative designs in support of the needs of regular classroom teachers who mainstream at the school level need to be more tightly coordinated and monitored at the central district level. Failure to do so can result in pro forma compliance to the practice of mainstreaming by regular classroom teachers.

Other studies which explored the relationship of organizational support and occupational stress include Miller (1984), who explored the nature of stress and investigated the capacity of an education intervention
to reduce stress in an organization system. The study was part of a major research project to determine the tractability of organizational stress to educational interventions, and the particular intervention used in the study was an organization development program. The research design employed a treatment and control group and incorporated qualitative descriptions with quantitative procedures.

Pre-treatment data regarding stress were collected from a psychometric survey instrument designed for the study, individual interviews with treatment subjects and researcher observations. The treatment group participated in an organization development program after which both groups responded to a post-treatment version of the same survey and treatment subjects participated in a second set of interviews. Observation data were recorded throughout the entire process.

Factor analysis revealed that stress is a four-dimensional phenomenon, dimensions being Teacher-Student Role Performance, Bureaucratic Conflict, Career Dissatisfaction, and Role Conflict and Ambiguity. Analysis showed that while the general level of stress and stress for three dimensions did not decrease, stress did decrease in the dimension of Career Dissatisfaction.
Qualitative data suggest that certain forces impeded the stress reduction capacity of the organization development intervention. Findings suggest that degree of adherence to organization development principles, leadership style and personality, program time frame and administrative practices all may have influenced the degree to which the organization development program reduced stress in the study system.

The importance of social support in mitigating the effects of potentially threatening situations was studied by McLean (1979). Social support was defined as "a relationship with one or more persons that is characterized by relatively frequent interactions, by strong and positive feelings and by an ability and a willingness to give and take emotional and/or practical assistance in times of need" (p. 92). Such support allows employees to vent feelings, avoid a sense of isolation, and prevent burnout (Fimian et al., 1981a). Zabel et al. (1982) found that "perceptions of support from administrators, fellow teachers and parents are related to burnout, particularly for the measure of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Teachers who perceive external support for themselves and their programs experience less of both" (p. 12). The
availability of such support at work appears to be important since surveys indicate a reluctance to seek outside sources of support (Brozan, 1979).

**Personal Coping Capabilities.** Research efforts have continued to delineate sources of stress and have attempted to discover how individuals cope. Presently, there is limited data on special education teachers' coping abilities. The review of this literature included studies of special education teachers, elementary teachers, and principals.

Benz (1987) assessed the stress, strain and coping levels of public school teachers of seriously emotionally disturbed students. A secondary purpose was to determine if relationships existed between dependent variables stress, strain and coping and teacher experience and teaching assignment variables. The sample consisted of 500 teachers of seriously emotionally disturbed students in the southeast region of the United States. The useable return rate was 62 percent with N = 295.

Respondents completed a demographic information survey which provided data for these variables: sex, year of birth, highest degree earned, degree area,
experience in education, community size and present special teaching setting. The Occupational Environmental Scales, Personal Strain Questionnaire and Personal Resources Questionnaire developed by Samuel Osipow and Arnold Spokane (1981) were used to collect data on stress, strain and coping levels. Frequencies, means, standard deviations, medians and modes were computed for all variables. Pearson correlations and t-tests were calculated for teacher experience variables and stress, strain and coping. Chi-square and ANOVA procedures were completed for teacher assignment variables and the dependent variables.

The major finding of the study was that the majority of public school teachers of the seriously emotionally disturbed had low to average stress and strain levels, and above average coping skills. The sample of teachers of seriously emotionally disturbed students who participated in this study do not appear to be as stressed and strained as samples reviewed in other recent studies. This may be due to the nature of the sample.

Older teachers were found slightly less stressed, less strained and possessing slightly higher coping skill levels than younger teachers. There were no
significant relationships found between teaching experience variables and dependent variables of stress, strain and coping (Benz, 1987).

In a study of secondary school principals, Roberson (1986) investigated the relative frequencies and levels of intensities of selected stressors on Georgia public secondary school principals and the strategies they used in effectively coping with stress. A four-page instrument was developed to gather demographic information, the intensity and frequency ratings of selected job stressors, frequency and effectiveness of coping strategies used, and suggestions for organizational strategies to reduce stress. The questionnaire was mailed to secondary school principals in Georgia's public schools. Of the 242 questionnaire packages mailed, 176 were returned.

The majority of the principals rated their lives as "Moderately" to "Extremely" stressful, were in "Good" health, and used coping strategies which they rated as "Good" in effectiveness. They reported using physical coping strategies most often and destructive strategies least often. Mental strategies were considered to be most effective in reducing stress. From the frequency and intensity levels reported for the 10 stressors,
principals attributed most of their stress to time demands and work overload.

When seeking ways that the "organization" can reduce principals' job stress, the most frequent suggestions given involved hiring more assistant principals and staff members so that the workload could be shared and reducing the amount of paper work.

It was concluded that facing stressors frequently does not reduce stress, that stress levels and health are related, that working long hours and the frequency of stress are related, that principals using coping strategies that are relatively short term, and that principals may not be aware of the effectiveness of their strategies over a long period of time (Robertson, 1986).

Coping skills may be dependent upon teachers' attitudes. Wechsler (1983) examined teachers' attitudes toward their job and their students. Forty-six academic and vocational teachers were used in the study. Data were obtained by use of the Farber Teacher Attitude Survey.

Analysis of the data revealed a high burnout rate among the teachers studied. The variable which had the greatest impact on the teacher was lack of positive
feedback from the students. The students' lack of interest/participation and poor academic performance led to a feeling of helplessness among the teachers. The data also revealed that there was an attitudinal difference between vocational teachers and academic teachers. It was found that the vocational teachers were significantly less burned out than academic teachers. This difference in attitude/degree of burnout of vocational teachers was attributed to a number of factors. For example, vocational teachers had smaller classes, their schedules were more flexible, the physical environment of the vocational shops were more pleasant, and the availability of facilities allowed the creation of social support groups. The study demonstrated clearly that mediating factors in the work environment can affect stress levels and help prevent its end state--burnout (Wechsler, 1983).

Elementary school teachers may deal with stress in different ways dependent on several variables. Slan (1980) investigated the relationship between degree of stress and coping preferences among elementary school teachers. The population used in this study included 278 elementary public school teachers in the Livingston Parish School System. Two hundred and seventy-eight
questionnaires were mailed and 158 were completed and returned, representing a 56.83 percent return.

The study (Slan, 1980) examines the degree of anxiety in elementary school teachers and their utilization of specific coping preferences. Specifically, this study ascertained elementary teachers' level of anxiety and their related coping preferences.

Two instruments were used in this study, the IPAT Anxiety Scale measured teacher anxiety and the M.A. Roesch Coping Preference Scale analyzed reactions of teachers when dealing with stress.

The results of this study show that 32.38 percent of the elementary public school teachers in Livingston Parish School System experienced a high level of stress. The results of this study based on percentages also show that anxiety levels varied among elementary teachers depending on their age, years of experience, marital status and dependency status. The major findings indicated that single female teachers have a higher level of stress than married respondents. Female elementary teachers with dependents were highly anxious individuals. Female elementary teachers with 10 years of teaching experience and below showed a higher degree
of stress than those respondents with 11 years and above, while younger female elementary teachers showed a higher level of stress than older teachers (Slan, 1980).

The results of the study (Slan, 1980) based on percentages also show that elementary school teachers deal with stress in varying ways depending on their age, years of experience, marital status, and dependency status. The major findings indicated that the least experienced teachers preferred Factor 2 (Consulting Techniques) and Factor 4 (Extra-Work Activities), the more experienced teachers when compared to the least experienced teachers showed no clear coping preference. Younger respondents preferred Factor 4 (Extra-Work Activities) while the older respondents preferred Factor 7 (Change of Normal Routine). Married respondents preferred Factor 2 (Consulting Techniques), Factor 4 (Extra-Work Activities), Factor 6 (Time-Out Activities), and Factor 7 (Change of Normal Routine) while single respondents showed no clear coping preference. The general conclusion drawn from these results is that female elementary public school teachers usually use the same methods to cope with stress (Slan, 1980).

In a discussion of burnout among special education teachers, Weiskopf (1980) suggested the following:
1. Know the nature of the stress, for example, the characteristics of the students, ahead of time.

2. Set realistic goals.

3. Delegate non-teaching duties whenever possible.

4. Avoid isolation from other staff members.

5. Break up continuous, direct contact with students through mechanisms such as team teaching.

6. Stay mentally alert away from work through workshops or field trips.

7. Exercise.

8. Be creative to relieve job boredom.

9. Develop an expertise in another area through hobbies.

Bensky, Shaw, Gouse, Bates, and Dixon (1980) analyzed responses from 140 experienced teachers. Seven methods for dealing with feelings of stress accounted for 83 percent of the responses. In descending order, the following methods were mentioned: (a) discussing problems with others, (b) organizing and setting priorities, (c) doing relaxing activities, (d) "forgetting" about it, (e) leaving the environment or lowering expectations, (f) jogging and/or dieting, and (f) drinking, eating, taking drugs, or smoking. The authors noted that only the first two categories of
strategies, which account for one-half of the responses, deal directly with stress. The others may be termed avoidance behaviors (Bensky et al., 1980).

Summary and Critique of Related Research

Generally, the studies reviewed relative to Self-Report of Stress were descriptive and based on the perceptions of special education teachers. The Self-Report of Stress has been gathered primarily through questionnaires. Sources of stress were reported by Murphy (1986) and Carico (1985). The relationship between objective measured environmental stressors and employee perception was examined by Beehr et al. (1978), Kyriacou (1980), Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1979a), and Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1979b). The questionnaires in these studies do focus primarily on symptoms and sources of stress. The questionnaires used could assist administrators in identifying and solving stress problems.

The research on the relationship of specific demographics to the perception of stress was inconclusive. It was generally agreed that special education teachers' perception of the level of stress in a job is at least as relevant to research as any
objective measurement of that stress and may be equally accurate. Tupe (1985) and Calder (1984) agreed that significant background predictors of stress are race, sex, marital status and experience. Decreased stress level has been linked to older and experienced teachers (Holt, 1985). Johnson, Gold, Williams, and Fiscus (1981) reported that different levels of stress were attributed to experience and degrees. Increased professional education and/or training were found to be associated with high scores on scales of burnout/stress.

Past research indicated that the types of exceptional children that special education teachers teach appear to be influential in the perception of stress by special education teachers. Many researchers found a relationship between the handicap of the student and factors which cause stress to special education teachers. Some special education teachers reported significantly higher levels of stress than others (Etingoff, 1984). No significant differences between teacher groups on perceived satisfaction in teaching or the reported frequency of the symptoms of stress were found in Teacher Stress As A Function of Pupils' Behavior and Characteristics: Regular Versus Special Education. Itinerant teachers had less feelings of
depersonalization than teachers in self-contained classrooms (Dawson, 1985).

A survey reported that LD, EH, PH, and MH teachers were stressed due to overall responsibilities of these exceptionalities (Matuskey, 1981; Johnson et al., 1981). Teachers of the hearing impaired and the emotionally disturbed reported the most occupational stress. Teachers of the gifted and pre-school exceptional students expressed a high feeling of stress, also the highest sense of personal accomplishment. Options considered for reducing special education teachers' stress level were to train children to improve social interaction and to increase organizational support for special education teachers. The effects of the symptoms of stress and burnout may be long-lasting for the teachers and ultimately may take a toll on the education of the children.

The enactment of P.L. 94-142 in 1975, however, did give new significance to the special education teachers' role. It seems that the problems of stress for special education teachers may relate to the interaction of providing direct service to handicapped children while trying to fulfill the mandates of P.L. 94-142.

Some variables associated with special education
teachers' professional responsibilities and task/roles appear to be highly related to the perception of stress. Harmon (1985), Schwab (1981), and Phillips and Lee (1980) found that the degree of role conflict is stressful to special education teachers. Role ambiguity (Bensky et al., 1980), conflict-mediating stress (Bishiop, 1986), and work overload (Mazur, 1986) have all been found to be stressful for teachers, though apparently in different ways. Certain service delivery models seem to have special role requirements for which teachers are, perhaps, not professionally prepared (D'Alonzo et al., 1978). The interaction of individual and role variables may have more impact on stress than any other specific job-related stressors.

Lack of organizational support given to special education teachers may be a major cause of occupational stress and burnout. These teachers need the support of the administrators, co-workers, parents, etc. Studies were reviewed which related to organizational support. Shainfarber (1986) identified a number of sources and type of support significantly related to pupil misbehavior, time pressures, working conditions, and school ethos. Studies on the relationship of the provision of social and emotional support and
self-reported stress included: Fimian, 1986; Mehring, 1984; McHardy, 1983; Zabel and Zabel, 1982; and Truch, 1980. Yvette's (1985) findings indicated that for the facilitation of mainstreaming, regular classroom teachers may require support from organizational designs that include opportunities for collegial dialogue and collaboration. Miller (1984) reported that organizational systems can influence stress reduction and McLean (1979) emphasized the importance of social support. Such support was perceived necessary because of the increasing evidence of job-related stress and burnout and, consequently, problems among special education teachers. Like Fimian (1986), others recommend that school systems provide in-service or develop other strategies to minimize or alleviate job-related stress.

In order to learn more about occupational stress, the researcher reviewed several studies relevant to personal coping capabilities.

Benz (1987) reported that teachers of emotionally disturbed children had above average coping skills while secondary principals used coping strategies which were relatively short term. Roberson (1986) found that high stress individuals experienced a higher incidence of
physical problems, used coping techniques more frequently, and were less successful in coping with stress than low stress individuals. Wechsler (1983) reported that teachers' attitudes may influence coping capabilities. According to Slan (1980), various demographics impact coping capabilities. Weiskop (1980) and Bensky et al. (1980) listed several strategies for coping with stress. A majority of teachers of emotionally disturbed children had low to average stress and strain levels and above average coping skills (Bensky et al., 1980).

**Contribution of this Study to the Field of Special Education Administration**

A high prevalence of stress and burnout in the teaching profession has become a major concern to special educators. The review of the literature indicates that increased attention is directed toward examining special education teachers' perceptions of occupational stress. Emphasis is focused on the need for administrators/supervisors to address the problems related to occupational stress. With the advent of new demands and responsibilities of the mandate of P.L.
94-142, the need to recognize and reduce the ensuing work pressure seems particularly important.

Although this research study design is a descriptive survey, it will augment existing theoretical information in the field. This study will provide specific information relative to the special education teachers' perception of occupational stress. This study is expected to have direct implications for special education teachers, administrators, and students. Administrators should not hesitate to assess environmental conditions in stress situations and then plan, implement and evaluate intervention strategies aimed at reducing that stress. Furthermore, the administrators' concern must be not only for the individual special education teacher but also for the organization as a whole.
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the occupational stress experienced by elementary school special education teachers in relationship to selected demographic and school factors: age, tenure in present position, type of exceptionality, mode of delivery and organizational support, professional task/role responsibilities, personal coping capabilities, respectively. Additionally, the study sought to examine the occupational stress levels of the special education teachers.

Definition of Variables

The independent variables examined in the study were the selected demographic and school factors. The study sought to determine if there was a relationship between certain selected independent variables and occupational stress as perceived by the respondents in the study.

Independent Demographic Variables:

1. **Personal Factors of Subjects** - age, tenure in present position and total years of teaching.
2. **Type of Delivery Mode** - self-contained classroom or resource classroom in one school, and resource (itinerant) services in more than one school.

3. **Type of Exceptionality** - Behavior Disordered (BD), Hearing Impaired (HI), Interrelated (Inter), Learning Disabled (LD), Mentally Handicapped (MH), Physically Handicapped (PH), and Speech/Language (Sp.Lang.). BD includes Emotionally Disturbed (ED); MH includes all levels of severity; PH includes Orthopedically Handicapped (OH), Other Health Impaired (OHI) and Visually Impaired (VI).

Independent School Variables:

1. **Organizational Support** - Individuals' perception of the extent of support given by peers and superiors, as measured by the BAI, including: participation in decision making, receiving recognition and appreciation, developing a sense of belonging and establishing open lines of communication (items 43-59).

2. **Professional Task/Role Responsibilities** - Individuals' perception of the extent of their workload as measured by the BAI (items 60-71).

3. **Personal Coping Capabilities** - Individuals' perception of their ability to carry out the tasks assigned to them as measured by the BAI (items 72-82).
The Dependent Variable:

1. **Occupational Stress** - the extent of burnout as measured by the BAI (items 1-42), inclusive of such feelings as alienation from work, feelings of frustration because of the lack of recognition for efforts expended, and the lack of enthusiasm to complete tasks.

**Relationship Among the Variables**

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the Getzel and Guba Social System Theory, Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Herzberg Motivation and Hygenic Theory.

Getzel and Guba (1957) developed the conceptual model of the interaction of the nomothetic dimension (institution, role and expectations) and the ideographic dimension (individual, personality and needs). These researchers support that stress can occur when expectations, personal needs and organizational goals are not in agreement. When the organizational goals and individual goals are similar, decisions are simplified. However, disparity between the goals of the institution and the individual within the institution creates
conflict. Thus, Guba and Getzel (1957) support the Maslow theory.

Maslow (1954) stated that everyone has the same needs: safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. One cannot move to higher levels until the needs preceding them have been satisfied. The implication of the Maslow Need Hierarchy in relation to occupational stress is that when special education teachers' personal needs are not satisfied, they will not be motivated to obtain organization goals and will eventually become burned out. Stress leading to burnout has been singled out as a major cause for teacher dissatisfaction (Maslow, 1954).

Herzberg (1966), in his two-factor theory, postulates that one set of factors (motivators or satisfiers) -- achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement -- produce satisfaction while another set (hygienes or dissatisfactors) -- interpersonal relations, peers, supervision policy and administration, working conditions, and personal life produces dissatisfaction. Herzberg (1966) says that the qualification of certain factors, called motivators, increase job satisfaction beyond the neutral point, but when factors called hygienes are not gratified negative attitudes are created, producing job dissatisfaction.
Since the school is a complex system consisting of many interacting components, the relationship of the selected variables--demographic and school factors--to the behavior outcome of the persons within the system is critical. If persons within the system feel that the climate is not conducive for their feeling of worth and productivity, the behavioral outcome is stress. This stress may either be at a high level, moderate level, or low level, depending on the degree to which each of the variables affects the climate.

If special education teachers perceive that they do not have organizational support through an understanding and caring administrator and peers, they may have feelings of isolation and powerlessness which contribute to occupational stress.

Although teachers of special education may be adequately trained academically, they may not have the proper personality traits and understanding of what it takes beyond academics to become an effective special education teacher. Teacher-training institutions could do a more effective job of preparing teachers for possible sources of stress within the work environment rather than focusing exclusively on the academic aspect.

The organization must be cognizant of the personal
factors, ages and experience relative to levels of stress. Recognition should be given to older and experienced teachers for personal accomplishment and less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

The delivery mode and the type of exceptionality of the student seem to require differing amounts of time, patience, understanding and preparation on the part of the special education teacher. If these demands cannot be handled on a daily basis as expected by the institution, then stress can and will occur.

Special education teachers have different personalities and needs that must be recognized by the organization. In a stressful working situation, special education teachers may need to learn how to cope with stress and its often deleterious effect. The organization should be aware of the effects that the stress burnout process has on the special education teachers and the handicapped children.

In summary, the special education teachers' perceptions of occupational stress are shaped by two major factors: (a) psychological factors that grow out of the nature of the individual as expressed in a set of personal needs or desires that must be satisfied to some extent and (b) sociological factors that are related
more to the perceptions of teachers shaped by interactions, individual personalities, and personal needs and the demands that the school makes on the teachers in the organization.

**Research Questions**

The theoretical framework and explanation of relationships of variables suggest the following research questions:

1. Does a significant relationship exist between age and occupational stress?

2. Does a significant relationship exist between tenure of present position and occupational stress?

3. Does a significant relationship exist between the total years of teaching experience and occupational stress?

4. Does a significant relationship exist between type of exceptionality taught and occupational stress?
5. Does a significant relationship exist between the type of delivery model and occupational stress?

6. Does a significant relationship exist between organization support and occupational stress?

7. Does a significant relationship exist between task/role responsibilities and occupational stress?

8. Does a significant relationship exist between personal coping capabilities and occupational stress?

9. Which independent variables will have the greatest effect on the dependent variables?

10. What are the stress levels of the special education teachers?

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses which were tested for this research are as follows:
1. No significant relationship exists between age and occupational stress.

2. No significant relationship exists between tenure in present position and occupational stress.

3. No significant relationship exists between total years of experience and occupational stress.

4. No significant relationship exists between the type of exceptionality taught and occupational stress.

5. No significant relationship exists between the type of delivery mode and occupational stress.

6. No significant relationship exists between organizational support and occupational stress.

7. No significant relationship exists between professional task/role responsibilities and occupational stress.
8. No significant relationship exists between personal coping capabilities and occupational stress.

9. None of the independent variables will have a significant effect on the level of occupational stress.
CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of this research is a descriptive survey. Leedy (1980) defined the descriptive survey as "that method of research that simply looks with intense accuracy at the phenomena of the moment and then describes precisely what the researcher sees."

This research design was constructed in order to provide a vehicle for the collection and interpretation of data in reference to the statistical relationship of stated variables as viewed by the selected population. This design was formulated in reference to perception of the null hypotheses. However, the functions of the design were as follows: (a) it established the conditions for the comparison required by the hypotheses within the study and (b) it enabled the researcher, through statistical analysis of the data, to make a meaningful interpretation of the results of the study. Specifically, the school and demographic factors showed relationships which existed between variables and participants' perceptions of occupational stress.

The null hypotheses were measured at the .05 level of significance because this level is the most commonly
used in the field of education and the social sciences. This predetermined level of probability was the means of accepting or rejecting the null hypotheses. If a statistical null hypothesis is rejected at .05 level of significance, it indicates that the probability due to chance was five percent or less.

Population and Subjects

The population for this study consisted of the elementary special education teachers employed in 62 public schools (grades K-5) in the Atlanta Public School System. In May 1989, a list of schools was obtained from the Atlanta Public Schools' 1988-89 directory. From the directory, the researcher obtained the special education teachers' names and contacted them either personally or by telephone.

The entire population of elementary special education teachers were used to provide data for the study. Each of the 114 special education teachers was mailed a packet via the U.S. Postal Service on June 24, 1989 which included a letter of introduction, a set of instructions, the BAI, and a self-addressed envelope. Each special education teacher was asked to complete the three parts of the BAI and return (within two weeks of
receiving the packet but no later than August 10, 1989) the completed instrument in the envelope that was provided. Of the total mailing, 71 questionnaires were completed and returned, representing a 63 percent rate of return. A 63 percent rate of return was deemed adequate for this research.

Instrumentation

Data on all variables were secured through the use of the Burnout Assessment Inventory (BAI) Questionnaire developed by Clouse (1982) (see Appendix A). The 82 items included on the instrument are those which relate to the independent and dependent variables of this study and thus to the research questions.

The BAI is based on research data collected over the past few years. More than 4,000 educational administrators, teachers, and others from various geographic areas of the United States utilized this instrument. For each of the 82 items, respondents indicated the extent to which each item is true for him/her by means of a five-point Likert-type scale. In order to determine appropriate items for Parts I and II, Clouse (1982) reviewed Cherniss (1980), Cooper (1976), French (1973), Freudenbergrecher (1977), Lortie (1975), Nord
(1977), and Schact (1977). Questionnaire items which relate to the dependent variable are those listed in Part I (items 1-42).

Part II of the BAI relates to the independent variables: Organizational Support (items 43-59), Professional Task/ Role Responsibilities (items 60-71), and Personal Coping Capabilities (items 72-82). A demographic data page was included in the inventory so it was possible to determine to what degree certain teacher characteristics tend to be associated with occupational stress.

Based on item analysis and factor analysis, the instrument appears to be reliable and valid. The reliability is based on high Alpha scores ranging from .88 to .91. The validity of the instrument was determined through face validity and the results of the responses from a panel of experts.

Organization and Analysis of Data

Data secured for this research were analyzed descriptively. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-X) was selected as the vehicle for data formation and computation. This package is an integrated system of computer programs for the analysis
of social science and educational data. SPSS-X allows a great deal of flexibility in the format of data. It provides a comprehensive set of procedures for data transformation and file manipulation, and it offers a large number of statistical routines used in education and the social sciences.

The statistical procedures used were the Pearson $r$ and the step wise multiple regression. The established level of significance was $0.05$. This information was related to other available knowledge of occupational stress in the field of special education as reported in the review of related research and other conceptual literature.

The specific procedures to secure, organize and analyze data included:

1. Questionnaires accompanied by a cover letter were mailed via the U.S. Postal Service to all elementary special education teachers in schools K-5 during the summer of 1989.

2. Responses were reviewed for completeness and sorted according to exceptionalities.

3. Responses to the BAI instrument were tabulated and calculated statistically.

4. Frequency Distribution Tables were developed to describe the relevant demographic variables.
5. Pearson $r$ correlation coefficients were computed to determine correlations between selected variables.

6. Multiple regressions were computed to determine which independent variables had the greatest effect on the dependent variable.

7. The statistical and other data were presented, discussed and interpreted in terms of hypotheses and research questions.

8. The final report was written to include summary, findings and conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to an examination of participants' perceptions of occupational stress. The data rely heavily on retrospection and self-report which yield certain subjective errors. No attempt was made to show correlation between demographic data collected other than those selected for correlation. Results of the study may or may not reflect the general population, since it was done exclusively with special education teachers in K-5 elementary schools in the Atlanta Public School System.
The purpose of this study was to examine the occupational stress experienced by elementary school, special education teachers in relationship to selected demographic and school factors, such as, age, tenure in present position, type of exceptionality, mode of delivery as well as organizational support, professional task/role responsibilities, personal coping capabilities, respectively.

In this chapter, the data presented address the hypotheses and research questions. To secure the data, the researcher mailed the BAI Questionnaire to the entire population of 114 special education teachers in grades K-5. The questionnaire return rate was 63 percent. Participant responses were tabulated and calculated statistically using an IBM 4381 computer incorporating the Statistical Packet for the Social Sciences (SPSS-X) Program. The analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson $r$ correlation and multiple regression to determine relationships between/among variables. The .05 significant level was used to test the null hypotheses.
**Null Hypotheses**

Specific null hypotheses state that:

1. No significant relationship exists between age and occupational stress.

2. No significant relationship exists between tenure in present position and occupational stress.

3. No significant relationship exists between total years of teaching experience and occupational stress.

4. No significant relationship exists between the type of exceptionality taught and occupational stress.

5. No significant relationship exists between the type of delivery mode and occupational stress.

6. No significant relationship exists between organizational support and occupational stress.

7. No significant relationship exists between professional task/role responsibilities and occupational stress.

8. No significant relationship exists between professional coping capabilities and occupational stress.
9. None of the independent variables will have an effect on the dependent variable.

Description of Sample

The population consisted of the entire population of 114 elementary special education teachers in all schools (grades K-5) in the Atlanta Public School System. A total of 71 special education teachers participated in this study.

A frequency distribution of special education teachers by age is presented in Table 1. This statistical information showed that 56 percent (N = 40) of the special education teachers were 40 years of age or older, that 39.5 percent (N = 28) of these teachers were between the ages of 30-39, and that 4.2 percent (N = 3) were between the ages of 20-29. The largest percentage of special education teachers in this study were 40 years of age or older.
### Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Special Education Teachers by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or older</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A frequency distribution of tenure in present position is presented in table 2. These data show that 42.2 percent \( (N = 30) \) of special education teachers had 14-20 years tenure in their present position, 32.4 percent \( (N = 23) \) had 7-13 years tenure in their present position, 16.9 percent \( (N = 12) \) had 1-6 years tenure in their present position, and 8.5 percent had 21 or more years tenure in their present position. More special education teachers had 14-20 years tenure in their present position.
Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Tenure in Present Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 presents a frequency distribution of the total years of teaching experience of special education teachers. This statistical information shows that 49.3 percent (N = 35) of special education teachers had taught 21-30 years, 40.9 percent (N = 29) had taught at least 11-20 years, 7 percent (N = 5) had taught 1-10 years, and 2.8 percent (N = 2) had taught 31 years or more. The largest percentage of special education teachers had taught 21-30 years.
Table 3
Frequency Distribution of the Total Years of Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 or more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A frequency distribution of special education teachers' mode of delivery is presented in table 4. The data reflect that 56.3 percent (N = 40) of special education teachers taught in self-contained settings, 33.8 percent (N = 24) were resource teachers at two or more schools (itinerant), and 9.9 percent (N = 7) were resource teachers at one school. A larger percentage of special education teachers taught in self-contained settings.
Table 4
Frequency Distribution of Special Education Teachers' Mode of Delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Mode</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Contained</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources at one school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources at two or more schools (Itinerant)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A frequency distribution of the special education teachers' area of exceptionality is presented in table 5. The statistical information revealed that 32.4 percent (N = 23) of special education teachers were teachers of the Mentally Handicapped; 15 percent (N = 11) were teachers of the Behavior Disordered and Interrelated, respectively; 16.9 percent (N = 11) were teachers of Speech/Language Impaired; 7.0 percent (N = 5) were teachers of the Physically Handicapped; 7 percent (N = 5) were teachers of the Learning Disabled;
and 2.8 percent (N = 2) were teachers of the Hearing Impaired. The highest percentage, 32.4 percent, of the participants in this study were teachers of the Mentally Handicapped.

Table 5
Frequency Distribution of Special Education Teachers' Area of Exceptionality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Exceptionality</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Disorders</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally Handicapped</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impaired</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Handicapped</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Impaired</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrelated</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71 100.0
The Relationships of the Independent and Dependent Variables

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter III proposed ten research questions and nine hypotheses. The findings related to these hypotheses are discussed below.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship that exists between age and occupational stress.

Data reported in table 6 shows the results of testing the above hypothesis. The correlation coefficient of age in relationship to occupational stress was .06. There is no significant relationship to occupational stress at the .05 level of significance; therefore, this hypothesis is accepted with a computed probability of .282.

| Table 6 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship of Age to Occupational Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variable</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship that exists between tenure in present position and occupational stress. According to statistical data in table 7, the correlation of coefficient of tenure in present position and occupational stress was .06. There is no significant relationship between tenure in present position and occupational stress; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted with a computed probability of .294.

Table 7
Relationship of Tenure in Present Position to Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r^2</th>
<th>Probability 1 tailed significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in Present Position</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.0653</td>
<td>.294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship that exists between the total years of experience and occupational stress.
Data reported in table 8 show the results of testing the hypothesis. The correlation coefficient of total years of experience in relationship to occupational stress was .02. This is not significantly related to occupational stress at the .05 level of significance; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted with a computed probability of .425.

Table 8
Relationship of Total Years of Experience to Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( r^2 )</th>
<th>Probability 1 tailed significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Years of Experience</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.0229</td>
<td>.425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship that exists between the type of exceptionality and occupational stress. According to the statistical data in table 9, the correlation of coefficient of type of exceptionality and
occupational stress was .03. There is no significant relationship between type of exceptionality and occupational stress; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted with a computed probability of .371.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
<th>Probability 1 tailed significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Exceptionality</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.0396</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Five: Hypothesis five predicted that there is no significant relationship that exists between the type of delivery mode and occupational stress.

Data reported in table 10 show the results of testing the hypothesis. The correlation coefficient of the type of delivery mode in relationship to occupational stress...
was .12. This is not significantly related to occupational stress at the .05 level of significance; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted with a computed probability of .149.

### Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( r^2 )</th>
<th>1 tailed significant Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Delivery Mode</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.1254</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis Six:** There is no significant relationship that exists between organizational support and occupational stress.

Data reported in table 11 show the results of testing the above hypothesis. The correlation coefficient of organizational support in relationship to occupational stress was .12. There is no significant relationship to occupational stress at the .05 level of significance;
therefore, this hypothesis is accepted with a computed probability of .152.

Table 11

Relationship of Organizational Support to Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
<th>Probability 1 tailed significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Support</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.1254</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Seven: There is no significant relationship that exists between professional task/role responsibilities and occupational stress. According to the statistical data in table 12, the correlation coefficient of professional task/roles and occupational stress was .01. There is no significant relationship to occupational stress at the .05 level of significance; therefore, this hypothesis is accepted with a computed probability of .262.
Table 12
Relationship of Professional Task/Roles Responsibilities to Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r²</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Professional Task/Role
Responsibilities                  | 71 | .0117 | .262        |

**Hypothesis Eight:** There is no significant relationship that exists between personal coping capabilities and occupational stress. Data reported in table 13 show the results of testing the hypothesis. The correlation coefficient of personal coping capabilities and occupational stress was .40. There is a significant relationship to occupation stress at the .05 level of significance; therefore, this hypothesis is rejected with a computed probability of .000.
Table 13
Relationship of Personal Coping Capabilities to Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
<th>Probability 1 tailed significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Coping Capabilities</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.4067</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis Nine:** Hypothesis nine predicted that none of the independent variables will have an effect on occupational stress. Multiple regression analysis was used to test this hypothesis. The results are presented in table 14. From this table, it appears that the personal coping capabilities variable accounts for 15 percent of the variation in occupational stress. None of the other independent variables: age, tenure in present position, total years of experience, type of exceptionality and delivery mode, organizational support, professional
Table 14
Multiple Regression of the Dependent Variable: Stress

Variable(s) Entered on Step Number 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Multiple r</th>
<th>Analysis of Variance</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Sq.</th>
<th>Mean Sq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple r</td>
<td>.40665</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r Square</td>
<td>.16537</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2119.74369</td>
<td>2119.74369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R Sq.</td>
<td>.15327</td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>10698.73518</td>
<td>155.05413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>12.45207</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables in the Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig. T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>.739810</td>
<td>.200088</td>
<td>.405652</td>
<td>3.697</td>
<td>.0004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(constant)</td>
<td>110.708881</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables not in the Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig. T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.323</td>
<td>.6898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in Present Position</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.3349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Years of Experience</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.7148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Exceptionality</td>
<td>.968</td>
<td>.3367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Delivery Mode</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>.3503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Support</td>
<td>1.584</td>
<td>.1178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Task/Role Responsibilities</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>.3352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
task/role responsibilities show any effect on occupational stress. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected, because personal coping capabilities had some effect on occupational stress.

In addition to the hypotheses, the theoretical framework presented in Chapter III proposed 10 research questions. The research questions are:

1. Does a significant relationship exist between age and occupational stress?
2. Does a significant relationship exist between tenure in present position and occupational stress?
3. Does a significant relationship exist between total years of teaching experience and occupational stress?
4. Does a significant relationship exist between type of exceptionality taught and occupational stress?
5. Does a significant relationship exist between the type of delivery mode and occupational stress?
6. Does a significant relationship exist between organizational support and occupational stress?
7. Does a significant relationship exist between professional task/role responsibilities and occupational stress?

8. Does a significant relationship exist between personal coping capabilities and occupational stress?

9. What independent variables will have an effect on the dependent variable?

10. What are the stress levels of the special education teachers?

Research questions one through nine have been satisfied by data presented concerning hypotheses one through nine. Research question 10, which pertains to the stress levels of special education teachers, is answered in terms of mean scores. In table 15, the variable stress is presented showing the stress levels of the entire population. The mean stress score for the entire population is 137.63. All scores above and below the mean are indicative of high levels of occupational stress and low levels of occupational stress, respectively.
Table 15
Mean Stress Scores for Special Education Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Exceptionality</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Disorders</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>9.44</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>10.22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally Handicapped</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>17.98</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impaired</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Handicapped</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>11.68</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Impaired</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>8.99</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrelated</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>14.35</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptively, the data reveal that the hearing impaired (149), physically handicapped (141), learning disabled (140), and speech impaired (140) teachers scored above the mean 137.63, and they are experiencing higher levels of stress than the behavior disordered (135), mentally handicapped (136) and the interrelated (134) groups that scored below the mean.
Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the statistical analysis of the data with respect to age, tenure in present position, total years of teaching experience, type of delivery mode and exceptionality as well as organizational support, professional task/role responsibilities, personal coping capabilities, and occupational stress. A total of nine hypotheses were statistically examined. Only two hypotheses, eight and nine, were rejected. A significant relationship was found to exist between professional coping capabilities and occupational stress. The said independent variables did have a significant effect on the dependent variable. The level of confidence upon which acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses was based was set at the .05 level.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into four sections. Section one includes a summary of the purpose of the study together with methodology and statistical procedures. The findings of the study are summarized and conclusions are presented in section two. The implications of this study are presented in the third section and the recommendations for further study are presented in the fourth section.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if significant relationships exist between the independent variables--age, tenure in present position, type of teaching experience, type of delivery model and exceptionality, organizational support, professional task/role responsibilities, and personal coping capabilities--and the dependent variable, occupational stress.

In this study, nine hypotheses were formulated to achieve the major purpose of the study. The hypotheses
are restated in the summary of the findings presented in this chapter. The hypotheses were formulated to answer the following research questions:

1. Does a significant relationship exist between age, tenure in present position, total years of teaching experience, type of delivery model, type of exceptionality, organizational support, professional task/responsibilities, personal coping capabilities and occupational stress?

2. Which independent variable will have the greatest effect on the dependent variable and what are the stress levels of the special education teachers?

The population for this study consisted of the entire population of 114 special education teachers in elementary schools, K-5 in the Atlanta Public Schools. Data for the study were collected by using the BAI Instrument. The items on Parts I and II were rated on a scale from 1.00 to 5.00 (5.00 being high). Part I of the questionnaire measured the amount of occupational stress experienced by the special education teachers; Part II related to the school factors--organizational support, professional task/role responsibilities, and personal coping capabilities; Part III listed demographic factors to which subjects could respond.
During the month of June, 1989, the instrument was mailed to 114 teachers. In all, 62 percent (n = 114) of the special education teachers returned the questionnaires to the researcher.

Data were statistically tabulated and calculated using an IBM mainframe computer incorporating the SPSS-X. Program statistical procedures used were: correlational analysis using Pearson $r$ to analyze hypotheses one through eight and multiple regression was used to analyze hypothesis nine. Throughout the analyses, the .05 significant level was used to test null hypotheses.

Findings and Conclusions of the Study

A summary of the findings and pertinent conclusions are stated below. The results and the conclusions are presented with respect to each hypothesis.

Results and conclusions with respect to Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship that exists between age and occupational stress. This first hypothesis was accepted because no significant relationship was found to exist between age and occupational stress. The correlation coefficient of age in relationship to occupational stress was .06 (see table 6). Previous findings suggest that older teachers
had less stress, Holt (1985). Tupes (1985) stated clearly that age predicts different levels of stress. In spite of the findings of previous researchers, based on the results of the present study the conclusion is drawn that age was not a significant predictor of occupational stress. It is highly probable that older teachers had developed effective coping skills or realized that retirement was near.

Results and conclusions with respect to Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship that exists between tenure in present position and occupational stress.

This hypothesis was accepted because no significant relationship was found to exist between tenure in present position and occupational stress. The correlation coefficient of tenure in present position in relationship to occupational stress was .06 (see table 7). Thus, this finding indicates that tenure in present position did not affect occupational stress. Previous studies which found tenure in present position to affect stress related to teaching experience in general. In this study, tenure in present position was not a predictor of occupational stress. Recently, because of
the QBE mandate, special education teachers must teach in their area of certification. This, perhaps, has affected the relationship between the said variable and occupational stress.

Results and conclusions with respect to Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship that exists between total years of teaching experience and occupational stress. The aforementioned null hypothesis was accepted because no significant relationship was found to exist between total years of teaching experience and occupational stress. The correlational coefficient relation to total years of teaching experience and occupational stress is .02 (see table 8). Thus, this finding indicates that the total years of teaching experience did not affect occupational stress. Previous findings by Type (1985) and Calder (1984) revealed that experience predicts different levels of stress. Kass (1985) reported that experience and stress did not differ. In this study, it was concluded that total years of teaching experience was not a significant predictor of special education teachers' occupational stress. It appears that experienced teachers have developed appropriate coping skills through the years.
Results and conclusions to Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship that exists between the type of exceptionality and occupational stress. The aforementioned null hypothesis was accepted because no significant relationship was found to exist between the type of exceptionality and occupational stress. The correlation coefficient is .03 (see table 9). Thus, this finding indicates that the type of exceptionality did not affect occupational stress. Previous findings by Etingoff (1984) reported that some special education teachers reported significantly higher levels of stress than others. It has been shown that teachers of different exceptionalities may exhibit varying degrees of stress because different exceptionalities are faced with varying kinds of problems.

In this study, it is concluded that the type of exceptionality is not a factor that relates to occupational stress. It is possible that the number of participants per exceptionality affected the outcome of this study.

Results and conclusions to Hypothesis 5: There is no significant relationship that exists between the delivery mode and occupational stress.
Hypothesis 5 was accepted because results indicate that no significant relationship was found to exist between the type of delivery mode and occupational stress. The correlational coefficient relative to delivery mode and occupational stress is .12 (see table 12).

In this study, the majority of special education teachers were teaching in self-contained settings. The teachers did not experience the stress that itinerant special education teachers experienced such as adjusting to more than one work environment. Contrary to the findings of this study, Dawson (1985) reported that itinerant teachers had less stress than self-contained special education teachers. In this study, it is concluded that the type of delivery mode is not a factor which relates to occupational stress. It appears that teachers of self-contained classes may experience less stress because of their attachment and loyalty to one school, and the availability of resources in their respective schools.

Results and conclusions with respect to Hypothesis 6: There is no significant relationship that exists between organizational support and occupational stress.
The sixth hypothesis was accepted because no significant relationship was found to exist between organizational support and occupational stress. The coefficient correlation that exists between organizational support and occupational stress was .12 (see table 11). This finding indicates that organizational support did not affect occupational stress. The finding is contrary to Mazur's (1986) research which revealed that organizational factors were predictors of occupational stress. Finian (1986) reported that organizational support is related to stress. In spite of the findings of previous researchers, based on the results of the present study, it was concluded that organizational support is not a significant predictor of occupational stress. Perhaps participants in this study had reservations about responding truthfully to the questionnaire due to the sensitivity of this variable.

Results and conclusions with respect to Hypothesis 7: There is no significant relationship that exists between professional task/role responsibilities and occupational stress.
Null hypothesis 7 was accepted because no significant relationship was found to exist between professional
task/role responsibilities and occupational stress. The correlational coefficient of professional task/role responsibilities in relation to occupational stress was .01 (see table 12). Contrary to related findings, Harmon (1985) and Schwab (1981) found that the degree of role conflict is stressful to special education teachers. According to Mazur (1986), work overload and role ambiguity are also stressful to special education teachers. In spite of the findings of previous researchers, based on the results of the present study, it was concluded that professional task/role responsibilities was not a significant predictor of occupational stress. Perhaps due to recent federal and state mandates, professional roles and tasks have been clearly defined by the administration and clearly understood by the person whose responsibility it is to carry out these tasks.

Results and conclusions with respect to Hypothesis 8: There is no significant relationship that exists between personal coping capabilities and occupational stress.

Null hypothesis 8 was rejected because a significant relationship was found to exist between personal coping
capabilities and occupational stress. The correlational coefficient of personal coping capabilities in relation to occupational stress was .40 (see table 13). In this study, all items measuring personal coping capabilities were negatively stated. Responses that disagreed with these negative items indicated high levels of coping capabilities; while, conversely, responses that agreed with the items indicated low coping capabilities. The positive correlation, therefore, indicated that ability to cope correlated with low stress and inability to cope correlated with high stress. This finding supports previous findings with respect to personal coping capabilities and occupational stress. Benz (1987), for instance, reported that teachers had above average coping skills and low stress. Similarly, Roberson (1986) reported that there is a significant relationship between personal coping capabilities and stress. Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that personal coping capabilities is significantly related to occupational stress.

The participants in this study were predominantly black females who were 40 years and older with 14-20 years teaching experience in special education. Benz (1987) and Roberson (1986) have previously stated that
older and experienced teachers have high levels of coping skills.

Results and conclusions with respect to Hypothesis 9: None of the independent variables--age, tenure in present position, total years of teaching experience, type of delivery mode and exceptionality, organizational support, professional task/role responsibilities, and personal coping capabilities--will have an effect on the dependent variable, occupational stress.

Multiple regression analysis was used for this examination. Null hypothesis 9 was rejected because personal coping capabilities emerged as the variable that had the strongest influence on occupational stress accounting for 15 percent of variance in the dependent variable, adjusted r. sq = .15327 (see table 14).

Discussed below are additional major findings in relation to the research question: What are the stress levels of the special education teacher? Teachers of the hearing impaired, physically handicapped, learning disabled, and speech impaired exhibit higher levels of stress than others. The high stress score for the hearing impaired teachers may be due to the small number
of participants in the study. It is interesting to note that the majority of special educators who experienced high levels of stress were teachers of varying physical handicaps. Teachers of the physically handicapped students may exhibit higher levels of occupational stress due to the following: (a) the nature of the handicap, (b) the teacher's emotional attachment, (c) the need for additional adaptation, (d) the structure of the learning environment, and (e) the need for more supervision and personnel involvement.

Summary of Findings

1. There is no significant relationship which exists between age and occupational stress.

2. There is no significant relationship which exists between tenure in present position and occupational stress.

3. There is no significant relationship which exists between total years of teaching experience and occupational stress.

4. There is no significant relationship which exists between type of delivery mode and occupational stress.

5. There is no significant relationship which
exists between type of exceptionality and occupational stress.

6. There is no significant relationship which exists between organizational support and occupational stress.

7. There is no significant relationship which exists between professional task/role responsibilities and occupational stress.

8. There is a significant relationship which exists between personal coping capabilities and occupational stress.

9. The independent variable, personal coping capabilities, had the greatest effect on occupational stress.

10. Teachers of the hearing impaired, physically handicapped, learning disabled, and speech impaired exhibited the highest level of occupational stress.

Implications

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following implications are warranted.

1. This study implies that administrators should focus on the work environment to address those factors that cause occupational stress to special education
teachers. Specifically, administrators should provide inservice training and consultation relative to stress management, burnout prevention, and improving coping skills. It is vitally important that all who are concerned with teacher training and who will administer the education process understand and address the problem of occupational stress. Consequently, special education teachers will have fulfilling careers and provide handicapped students with the best possible education.

2. This study further implies that teachers of varying physically handicapped students experience higher levels of stress. Special education teachers should be aware of things that cause present stress for them so they can employ coping mechanisms where necessary. Also, special education teachers must realize the effect that teacher stress has on the handicapped student. Special education teachers need to know and understand themselves personally, their inner feelings and motivators so that they will be able to keep things in proper perspective and minimize or alleviate occupational stress. Whenever possible, special education teachers need to take responsibility
for their own professional well-being by having realistic expectations and goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study, the following recommendations are warranted:

1. Since the independent variables analyzed in this study (age, tenure in present position, total years of experience, type of delivery mode, type of exceptionality, organizational support, and professional task/role responsibilities) did not relate significantly to occupational stress, attempts should be made to try to identify other variables that may be found to be better predictors of teachers' occupational stress, such as, teacher personality, locus of control, job satisfaction, etc.

2. More research is needed to determine how people acquire coping strategies. One might identify special education teachers who have excellent coping skills and employ case history research techniques to learn how such skills are developed.
3. Special educators and other educational administrators should become familiar with the demands and expectations of the physically handicapped population and provide more support to the teachers of the physically handicapped in order to minimize/alleviate their levels of occupational stress.

4. Special educators and other educational administrators should seek means to help special education teachers strengthen their levels of coping skills in order to lower their levels of occupational stress.
REFERENCES


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APPENDICES
Appendix A

BURNOUT ASSESSMENT INVENTORY

Instructions:

The purpose of this inventory is to determine your level of occupational stress. The inventory is divided into three parts. The first two parts list a wide-range of situations related to you and your work environment, and Part III includes demographic data. Please read each item carefully and rank it on a scale from 1 to 5 as to your agreement or disagreement. There is no right or wrong answer. Attempts to give a "correct" response merely distort the meaning of your answers and render the inventory results valueless as a tool for personal learning and organizational improvement. Please respond to each item (by circling) as it relates to you and your current job assignment. Use the following scale to guide your response.

1- Strongly Disagree (SD) 4- Agree (A)
2- Disagree (D) 5- Strongly Agree (SA)
3- Neutral (N)

PART I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like my work very much.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My work has little meaning or importance to me except for the monthly paycheck.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sometimes I feel pressured in my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This organization is very concerned about me and my professional career.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sometimes I take a sick day if I don't feel well.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sometimes I feel a sense of powerlessness in this job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel a strong commitment to my work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My co-workers seem as if they don't care much about their work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My job is extremely important and I am considered a valuable employee.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I feel a sense of isolation within the work environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am disillusioned with the amount of good that can be accomplished at work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I am rewarded for my dedication and hard work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sometimes I have negative attitudes toward my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. This is an exciting place to work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I have growing doubts about my professional career.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Personal growth and development are limited in this organization.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Esprit de corps is high among my co-workers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I sometimes feel inadequate in my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The emotional overload is high in this work environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I have high ideals about my work and career.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A (continued)

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. I find that I tend to treat students in stereotypic fashions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. My work is not as rewarding as initially expected.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I am very involved in my work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Sometimes I feel inadequate in my job and that few results are ever achieved.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. My attitude toward my job is sometimes of a cynical nature.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. My colleagues and I usually discuss work-related items after work or during breaks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. I experience more and more mental separation from my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. I feel a sense of helplessness and hopelessness in my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29. This job has goals that are important to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30. The atmosphere here is impersonal.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Sometimes unreasonable demands are placed on me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32. My job is self-fulfilling.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>33. The initial expectations I held concerning my job were not fulfilled.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Increasingly, I experience exhaustion and fatigue related to my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>35. I have the opportunity to really help others in my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Co-workers rarely do things together after work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>37. My job absorbs my interest during the work day.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>38. This organization has victimized me on several occasions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39. We are crisis-oriented at work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. I have too many unimportant tasks to do.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. I am constantly under pressure to meet deadlines.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>42. It is hard to get new ideas accepted in this organization.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</table>

**PART II**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43. The leadership style of this organization has developed a good working environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44. The decision-making process used here is based on a problem solving technique.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>45. Communications are good between management and employees.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>46. I feel I have control over my work assignment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>47. We have a rule for everything here.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Sometimes favoritism is shown.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>49. This organization does not like boat-rocking.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>50. Bureaucratic regulations dominate our work environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>51. I am involved in the development of goals and objectives, especially as they relate to me and my department.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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### Appendix A (continued)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Promotion is not necessarily given on merit.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Policies are clear and concise.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>My involvement with policy decisions and planning is a satisfying experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Participating in departmental and institutional decision-making is a normal procedure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Personal contact with my supervisor is a satisfying experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Most employees feel a sense of belonging in this organization.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Recognition for extracurricular involvement is normal and appreciated.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>I feel the organizational structure and management systems used here encourage career burnout.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Sometimes I have growing doubts about my professional career.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>Frequently I am reluctant to go to work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>I feel inadequately prepared for many tasks assigned to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>Sometimes I am uninterested in departmental activities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Frequently I merge myself with my professional life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>Sometimes I am dissatisfied with my level of job performance.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>My professional skills are not utilized effectively.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>Frequently I am assigned additional responsibilities but without promotion or increased compensation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>Frequently I think seriously of changing professions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>Sometimes I feel burned out in my profession.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>It is difficult to measure professional advancement in this profession.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>Sometimes I think others in different professions look down on me and my profession.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>Frequently I like to socialize while at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>Sometimes I have a feeling of defeat.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>Sometimes I am just bored with work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>Frequently I find peers and/or administrators talking about me and my co-workers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>Frequently I just feel like staying at home that day.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>Politics are important for professional advancement at this organization.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td>I never seem to complete my work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.</td>
<td>Sometimes I have a feeling of helplessness concerning my job.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.</td>
<td>Absenteeism for mental health is just as important as for physical health.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81.</td>
<td>Sometimes I become cynical about my work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82.</td>
<td>Sometimes I feel burned out in my current job assignment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A (continued)

PART III. Demographic Information (Please circle the appropriate number to indicate your response)

A. Age
   1. 20 - 29
   2. 30 - 39
   3. 40 or over

B. Sex
   1. Male
   2. Female

C. Highest level of education completed
   1. Bachelor's degree
   2. Master's degree
   3. Specialist degree
   4. Doctorate

D. Tenure in present position
   1. 1 - 6 years
   2. 7 - 13 years
   3. 14 - 20 years
   4. 21 or over

E. Total years of teaching experience
   1. 1 - 10
   2. 11 - 20
   3. 21 - 30
   4. 30 or more

F. Type of delivery mode
   1. Self-contained
   2. Resource at one school
   3. Resource (Itinerant) at two or more schools

G. Type of exceptionality
   1. BD
   2. LD
   3. MH (MNH/MMH/SMH/PMH)
   4. HI
   5. HI (OH/OM/VI)
   6. SI
   7. Interrelated
Appendix B

3602 Franham Court
Decatur, Georgia 30032
May 1, 1989

Dear Dr. R. Wilburn Clouse:

This is a letter of request to use your Burnout Assessment Inventory (BAI) in my dissertation research in the Educational Leadership Department at Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia.

My study is entitled, "Selected Demographics and School Factors That Relate to Occupational Stress As Perceived by Special Education Teachers."

If permission is granted please send me the BAI, scoring key and other pertinent information such as reliability and validity of the instrument as soon as possible.

If you have any questions please contact me at 404-284-5481. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Patricia F. Smith
Researcher

Dr. Trevor Turner
Committee Chairperson
Educational Leadership Dept.
Atlanta University
Atlanta, Georgia 30314
May 12, 1989

Ms. Patricia F. Smith
3602 Farnham Court
Decatur, Georgia 30032

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you for your interest in the Burnout Assessment Instrument. The BAI has been used by several students to collect data for their dissertation research. I am enclosing some information about the BAI and a sample copy. You may request the number you need from Matrix Systems, Inc., 2120 Crestmoor Road, Nashville, Tennessee, 37215.

Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

R. Wilburn Clouse
Director
June 24, 1989

Dear Special Educator:

Here is an opportunity for you to participate in a stress study that pertains only to special education teachers. I apologize for infringing on your summer vacation, but would you kindly take a few minutes of your time to complete the enclosed questionnaire.

This questionnaire is pertinent to my dissertation study which is entitled: Selected Demographic and School Factors that Relate to Occupational Stress as Perceived by Special Education Teachers.

I only need the statistical information which the questionnaire will provide; therefore, all names utilized in the study will remain anonymous. Your input is critical to the outcome of this study. Please complete this questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed envelope by August 10, 1989.

Thank you so much for your valuable assistance.

Respectfully yours,

Patricia F. Smith

Enclosure