

A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATOR STRESS IN HIGHER
EDUCATION: DO I STAY, OR DO I GO?

A Dissertation

by

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

Common stress studies have explored educational stress through a quantitative lens, or with a faculty perspective, or through elementary or secondary perspectives (Antoniou, Ploumpi, & Ntalla, 2013; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Wells, 2013). This research attempted to understand occupational stress by comparing both higher education faculty and administrators. The purpose of this study was to explore how two faculty and two administrators described occupational stress at a Texas University. Grounded in interpretivism, this study incorporated three stress theories to examine stress in higher education: French, Caplan, and Harrison's (1984) Person-Environment Fit Theory, Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control Theory, and McGuire's (1983) Uncertainty Theory.

A multiple-case study approach was utilized to explore occupational stress and coping. For the purpose of this study, individual, single-case analysis occurred first. Each participant was examined through an independent lens, separate from all other cases. Secondly, within-case analysis was used to explore each group as a case: faculty and administrators. Categories and themes collected from each case helped determine similarities within the faculty and administrator stress experiences. Finally, cross-case analysis was used to explore the "thematic analysis across the cases" (Creswell, 2007, p.75).

Although each of the four research participants encountered stress differently, the findings revealed that each participant experienced stress on a psychological level. They dwelled on issues and contemplated their motives and the motives of others. They tried to understand and rationalize how and why they were dealing with their stressful situations. Each participant mentally assessed the role they and others had in causing the encounter to be perceived as

stressful. The findings demonstrated that no matter the job title, employees who have a negative working environment and/or negative relationship with their supervisors experience higher levels of stress. Employees who were pleased with their working environments experienced stress from pushing themselves to excel more and to be recognized for their efforts.

The research in this study revealed various implications for higher education institutions regarding supervisor and employee relationships. In developing a better understanding of internal conflict, institutions can maintain and/or improve employee relationships, which then have a positive impact on institutional operations.

DEDICATION

Thank you God!!!! Without You by my side protecting me as I travelled, comforting me through my challenges, or encouraging me along the way, this could not have been possible. I give all of the glory and honor for this huge accomplishment to You my Heavenly Father.

To my supportive husband, Jonathan Thomas, thank you for commuting with me and cheering for me throughout this journey! You were my biggest cheerleader and supporter. Thank you for staying up late with me as I worked, and thank you for being my sounding board when I needed to think things through. Thank you for encouraging me to keep moving forward and for never asking me to sacrifice my goals. I'm forever grateful to you, and I'll love you always! Most importantly, thank you for understanding me and staying by my side throughout this process. I know it wasn't easy. I was moody, emotional, and very forgetful. Thank you for not judging me and for loving me through this process and for knowing my heart. This degree is for us! Now, it's our time! Thank you, my love!

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Finally, I dedicate this to the next generation of educators and professionals who aspire to transform the workplace and enhance higher education. If a small-town, country girl like me can accomplish such a major ordeal, you can too! Make no excuses; accept no roadblock; and keep pressing forward! Motivate yourselves, stay focused, and achieve your goals! You can do it!

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The American Psychological Association noted that 69% of American workers reported experiencing stress at work (American Psychological Association Practice Organization, 2010). Stress is a syndrome usually associated with causing adverse psychological and physiological effects as a result of one's attempt to respond and interact with the pressures and changes of the environment (Michailidis & Asimenos, 2002). Folkman and Lazarus (1985) asserted that stress is brought on by one's perception and appraisal of situations. Stress is a complex phenomenon that encompasses numerous areas which include occupational stress. Approximately 50% of Americans work 35-44 hours per week, and 8% reported working 55-64 hours per week (Hamermesh & Stancanelli, 2014). This is more hours per week than workers in most other rich countries; this perceived "overwork" harms employees' "physical or mental health due to fatigue or stress" (Frase & Gornick, 2012, p. 700).

Although many researchers have attributed occupational stress to the negative aspects of the phenomenon, the issue has been frequently debated. For example, Michailidis and Asimenos (2002) defined occupational stress as a response to situations that require demands on a person that results in negative reactions and consequences. Babatunde (2013) described occupational stress as a universal workplace phenomenon that negatively impacts health, work place performance, and personal well-being. However, McGrath (1976) noted that various stressors may enhance institutional effectiveness and performance. Ablanedo-Rosas et al. (2011) asserted that stress could be used as motivational fuel for some individuals or everyday obstacles to achieve success. However, for the purpose of this study, occupational stress will be explored openly to determine how it impacts higher education employees, positively or negatively.

Within the last two decades, occupational stress in higher education has expanded due to the increased workload, ambiguity, and reduced autonomy associated with the changes caused by the globalization of higher education (Kebelo, 2012; Mark & Smith, 2012). While research on occupational stress has included education; it has been limited to elementary and secondary education (Antoniou, Ploumpi, & Ntalla, 2013; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Wells, 2013). Taris, Schreurs, and Van IJersel-Van Silfhout (2010) argued that the stressors that plague elementary and secondary education cannot be attributed to higher education faculty and staff due to the difference in job tasks: research, service, teaching, and management. Higher education occupational stress studies have been described as “scanty” (Kebelo, 2012, p. 173) and warrants further research.

There are five common sources of stress usually attributed to all higher education employees. This includes faculty, staff, and administrators—reward recognition, time constraints, departmental influence, professional identity, and student interaction (Gmelch, Wilke, & Lovrich, 1986). However, occupational stress among faculty and administrators in higher education is an increasing problem, and each group experiences and copes with different types of stressors (Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper, & Ricketts, 2005). Kebelo (2012) conducted an occupational stress study among 251 higher education administrators in the United States. The results indicated that over 35% of psychological strain of higher education administrators was attributed to role boundary, role overload, role insufficiency, and role ambiguity, which could be summarized as workload, control, and uncertainty (Kebelo, 2012). Furthermore, Winefield, Gissepie, Stough, Dua, Hapuarachchi, and Boyd (2003) conducted a study of 17 Australian universities to evaluate higher education occupational stress among executive staff, academic staff, and general staff. The study examined occupational stress by employing Karasek’s (1979)

Demand-Control Theory and French, Caplan, and Harrison's (1984) Person-Environment Fit Theory to examine the primary causes of occupational stress. Winefield et al. (2003) discovered that academic staff experienced higher levels of work-related stress due to increased job demands, added accountability standards, and decreased funding.

This study will expand on Winefield et al.'s (2003) research to gain an in-depth, qualitative understanding of how higher education administrators and faculty experience define occupational stress at one Texas University. Three theories were explored: Edwards, Caplan, and Harrison's (1998) Person-Environment Fit (PE-Fit) Theory, Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control Theory, and McGuire's (1983) Uncertainty Theory. PE-Fit Theory involves the evaluation of one's personal needs and the needs of the work environment (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). Winfield et al. (2003) explored this idea by exploring gender, employee age, and institutional age. They discovered that the older the institution the less the occupational stress, and the younger the institution, the more occupational stress is experienced by employees (Winfield et al., 2003). Demand-Control (D-C) Theory examines the relationship between the employee's level of control and the mental and physical impact the control level has on the employee (Karasek, 1979). Uncertainty (UC) Theory is defined as a person's inability to sufficiently respond or understand a situation (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2007). Thus, higher education employees are experiencing occupational stress due to conflicts within their personal and professional needs and expectations as well as the needs and expectations of the institution. Problems occur when personal needs collide with needs of the job task or work environment (Michailidis & Asimenos, 2002). When employees no longer feel they have control over their time, job tasks, or no longer have a voice within the institution, occupational stress arises. The absence of clear direction causes uncertainty, which negatively

affect employee personal satisfaction and job performance within higher education. In order to better understand the complexities of occupational stress within higher education, it is important to trace the historical origins of the phenomenon.

Background and Setting

Occupational stress became a prominent research phenomenon in the 1970s (Murphy & Hurrell, 1987). However, its roots can be found as early as Cannon's (1929) research with human emotional stressors and with Selye's (1936) research on stress in animals (Murphy & Hurrell, 1987). Throughout the years of occupational stress research, the central concept remains: the relationship between stressors and strain (cause and effect) (Mazzola, Schonfeld, & Spector, 2011). Stress is a complexity that is both situational and subjective based on how one appraises an event (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Occupational stress in higher education is a direct result of changes within the United States, economically, politically, and culturally.

When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, the United States renewed its value of science and technology, as well as increased importance on global competitiveness. To remain competitive internationally, the United States embarked on a mission to decrease the educational achievement gap. In doing so, the United States changed to embrace globalism in higher education (Archer, Hutchings, & Ross, 2005; Jacobs & Blustein, 2008). Globalism is an intense worldwide effort to expand beyond national boundaries and into international realms through finances, communication, education, military influence, and leadership (Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). Morrow and Torres (2000) asserted that perhaps no other sector has experienced as much of an influence from internationalization and globalization as higher education. Globalization has effected higher education policy making, governance, organization, academic work, and overall identity (Vaira, 2004). Academic employee stress levels have increased over the past two

decades due to continuous initiatives, goals, and career demands (Mark & Smith, 2012). These changes cause conflict within the university due to its competing values with higher education's foundational roots and globalization's new approaches and expectations (Vaira, 2004).

Four premises guide the idea of globalism in higher education: quality, assessment, accountability, and reduction (doing more with less) (Vaira, 2004). Many of the changes in higher education arose as a direct result from changes within the elementary and secondary school systems. President Johnson signed the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as a national response to provide educational opportunities to poor children, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status (Thomas & Brady, 2005). However, since the 1965 ESEA implementation, several ESEA revisions and purposes have occurred as attempts to increase academic gain. Seldin (1987) noted that the 1980s produced a generation of stressed out higher education staff due to political pressures associated with globalism (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Reagan's 1983 *Nation at Risk* report required academic action for educational attainment, quality (Thomas & Brady, 2005). President George H. W. Bush urged America for greater standards in 1989 with the America 2000 Campaign (Thomas & Brady, 2005). The America 2000 Campaign called for the establishment of national educational standards and voluntary assessments to be distributed in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades (New York State Education Department, n.d.).

In 1992, President Bill Clinton implemented Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which focused on student achievement and skill mastery (Thomas & Brady, 2005; Trolan & Fouts, 2011). President George W. Bush's 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) maintained the original goal of the ESEA, reducing America's educational attainment gap, but linked student achievement to federal funding (Thomas & Brady, 2005). President Obama's 2009 Race to the

Top plan strived to enhance college career and readiness (Office of the Press Secretary, 2009).

All of these initiatives have two common similarities: quality and accountability, both of which have been documented causes of stress within higher education (Winefield et al., 2003).

Commissioner Spellings (2006) called for a reform of higher education due to a decline in college students' literacy skills. This report indicated that college graduates were actually receiving degrees without having "mastered the reading, writing, and thinking skills" expected of college graduates (Spellings, 2006, p. x). Because of the decline in higher education quality, more institutions developed assessment instruments to monitor, track and report quality and progress to maintain accreditation status (Kuh, Janowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014).

As the United States transitioned to more of a business model for higher education, university administrators became more like managers overseeing change and implementing new initiatives rather than supportive leaders (Schulz, 2013). While the business model has many positive impacts on society, such as higher productivity, less crime, and less federal financial support, higher education administrators experienced a change in job duties and requirements (Ward, 2008). Ultimately, the roles and demands placed on higher education have increased and changed, which often leads to increased stress and strain on both faculty and administrators. While administrators are usually considered the primary causes of occupational stress, they experience work-related stress as well (Westerlund et al., 2010). The primary sources of administrative stress involve complex and continuous decision-making duties (Bush, 2006). Administrators' roles include supervision, collaboration, and faculty, staff, and student interaction (Gentry, Katz, & McFeeters, 2009). Administrators, then, delegate and pressure faculty to implement the designated changes, often with little to no additional funds to carry out the initiative, which increases levels of anxiety and stress (Karsli & Baloglu, 2006). Faculty, on

the other hand, are required to teach, conduct research, and provide service (Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, 2006). Faculty often pressure themselves to succeed and meet the expectations set by supervisors, and they may experience stress from actual or perceived pressure set forth by superiors, thereby leading to occupational stress and impacting productivity, efficiency, and job satisfaction (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001).

Hispanic Serving Institutions

The research site for this study occurred at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Texas. An HSI is a college or university composed of at least 25% Hispanic students (Santiago, 2006). Unlike other universities that are classified by mission, purpose, and program types, HSIs are classified by demographic characteristics, such as income and ethnicity (Nunez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2016). Ortega, Frye, Nellum, Kamimura, and Vidal-Rodríguez (2015) also asserted that HSIs usually have fewer resources than other colleges and universities. Because many students who attend HSIs are low-income or first-generation college students, staying close to home and family are important priorities, thus many students who attend HSIs are local students (Nunez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2016). HSIs have distinct characteristics. In addition to having higher levels of Hispanic students, HSIs also often have higher ratios of Hispanic faculty (Nunez, Crisp, Elizondo, 2016).

Few studies have explored faculty experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of teaching from an HSI perspective (Nunez, Ramalho, & Cuero, 2010; Hubbard & Stage, 2009). Nunez, Ramalho, and Cuero (2010) asserted that qualitative research is “well poised to shed light on the attitudes and behaviors [of those] who teach in HSI[s]” (p. 178). Thus, this study helps fill the gap in literature by providing a qualitative perspective of how faculty and administrators view working in an HSI. Hubbard and Stage (2009) conducted a quantitative study of faculty

perceptions of teaching at Hispanic Serving Institutions and Historically Black Institutions. Their results indicated that faculty from HSIs spend more instructional time with students, and also indicated being “less satisfied with their authority to decide their course content” when compared to dominantly white institutions (Hubbard & Stage, 2009, p. 278). Hubbard and Stage (2009) concluded that “faculty attitudes, opinions about students, and satisfaction with their profession, form an [*sic*] critical aspect of the conditions under which college students seek to learn” (p. 274). The authors encouraged both administrators and faculty to seek more ways to enhance the instructional environment by improving higher educational systems (Hubbard & Stage, 2009).

While most studies regarding employees at Hispanic Serving Institutions are focused on faculty or students, there is the notion of effective leadership within higher education for HSIs. Knouse (2013) stated that finding effective mentors in higher education is more difficult for Hispanics. The idea of Hispanic mentorship was used in the context of building effective relationships within the internal structure of higher education (Knouse, 2013). Therefore, references of mentorship within this section are closely associated with supervisor/employee relationships due to the guidance, expectations, and interactions exchanged between the two groups. Thus, the idea of higher education mentorship can also be expanded to include the necessity to build effective relationships between supervisors and employees within HSIs. The difficulty with effective mentorship relationships within HSIs is the lack of qualified mentors (Knouse, 2013). Mentors are perceived to provide a sense of community create a sense of family (Parillo, 2011). Additionally mentors should serve as role models to demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate workplace behaviors. They provide examples of how to interact and communicate with others within the workplace (Knouse, 2013). Because the Hispanic

community is grounded on the foundation of family (Parillo, 2011) many employees view their mentors as parental figures; thus, mentorship is usually done from an informal manner (Knouse, 2013). Thus, when the relationship do not evolve as expected, culture there are feelings of more disappointment. Additionally, Knouse (2013) asserted that Hispanics usually have a difficult time severing relationships because of the concept of extended family. Therefore, forming and maintaining positive and effective mentorship relationships within HSIs are both an institutional need for professional growth and development, but also a cultural need to feel safe, connected, and supported (Knouse, 2013).

Stress in Higher Education

Occupational stress is prevalent in higher education because of the uncertainties associated with remaining competitive, managing job demands and expectations, motivating staff, providing service, and increasing growth (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009). Five primary reasons are attributed to causing occupational stress in higher education: enrollment increase, business-oriented approaches, funding restrictions and regulations, curriculum changes, and publishing, teaching, and administrative roles (Kinman, 2011). These five reasons can be summarized into three dominant categories: uncertainty (Uncertainty), autonomy (Demand-Control), and workload (P-E Fit). Thus, the competitive nature, consumer demands, and expectations have pushed higher education in a strenuous direction that may negatively impact employees.

Uncertainty

One of the primary causes of uncertainty is change. Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) asserted that 70% of all change initiatives fail due to resistance, caused by unknown variables

and stress associated with the change. Gibb, Haskins, and Robertson (2013) compiled a list of the uncertain conflicts plaguing higher education institutions:

- the continuous philosophical change of the university,
- the commercialization of university knowledge and skill,
- the collaboration and involvement of industry stakeholders,
- the partnerships of the “Triple Helix” model: government, specialized industries, and higher education,
- the quality of marketable skills and graduate employability,
- the intentional response to the ‘massification’ of higher education demand,
- the globalization of universities,
- the changing of cultural knowledge and expectations,
- the pressures to respond and engage within societal constructs,
- the governmental pressure to increase innovation and global relevance and competitiveness,
- and the independences and funding of universities. (p. 10)

Higher education administrators and leaders are responsible for handling all of these stressors regularly. With the continuous changing of higher education presidential platforms, state initiatives, assessment committee recommendations, and curriculum standards, higher education remains a melting pot of uncertainties.

Amidst conforming to the expectations posed on higher education, faculty and administrators often have conflicting job duties in terms of time, priorities, and resources included in their job descriptions that lead to stress (Beehr & O’Driscoll, 1990; Heereman & Walla, 2011). Administrators are expected to market and uphold the university reputation by

supporting the university president, maintaining and balancing the budget through the use of solid business practices, effectively managing, staffing, and motivating faculty (including adjuncts), and ensuring faculty quality and productivity (Ward, 2008). Thus, administrators are often forced to straddle the fence and uphold the institutional mission, government initiatives, university executive orders, and faculty/staff expectations (Ward, 2008). Gmelch and Burns (1993) compared higher education administrative leadership to “the Roman god Janus, with faces oriented in opposite directions” or the “swivel” effect (p. 1). Because many administrative positions such as academic chairs also have faculty roles, they attempt to manage both the stressors of an administrator and faculty member (Gmelch & Burns, 1993). This conflict of doing what is best for the employees and what is best for the institution coupled with increased duties contribute to uncertainty, which causes occupational stress (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). The uncertainty is not only due to the moral and role conflicts associated with higher education administration, but also funding and resource allocations (Gibb, Haskins, & Robertson, 2013).

Faculty often encounter uncertainty due to time constraints, resources, and support. According to a faculty survey conducted by the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (2008), higher education faculty listed tenure standards as their primary area of uncertainty, which also coincides with the idea of autonomy and academic freedom. Higher education faculty reported stress caused by the uncertainty of financial and job security because non-tenured faculty members are often employed on a quarter or semester basis (Reevy & Deason, 2014). Higher education non-tenured faculty have documented higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, since the 2008 recession (Reevy & Deason, 2014). Non-tenured faculty are also more likely to experience workplace stressors, and because of continuous

ambiguity and work-related insecurities, they reported having feelings of causing harm to themselves and/or to colleagues (Reevy & Deason, 2014).

Autonomy/Control

Occupational stress in higher education was often excluded as a high-stress occupation due to the perceived autonomy (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dau, & Stough, 2001). However, there are a few ways in which the quest for academic autonomy can cause faculty stress, tenure and academic freedom. Tenure, for example, is a stressful journey towards autonomy. In the world of academia, tenure is the ultimate prize. It represents job security and an elitist group of accomplished professionals who have contributed substantially to the field of education and research. Diamantes (2003) described tenure as “one of the most difficult and challenging experiences a person can have” (p. 323). For many faculty, tenure represents academic freedom, longevity, and security (Diamantes, 2003; Youn & Price, 2009). However, there is considerable stress associated with chasing the dream of tenure.

Tenure positions are highly competitive and approximately 70% to 75% of faculty work without tenure (Reevy & Deason, 2014; Samuels, 2014). Non-tenure track positions are often temporary or funded on an as-needed basis, which causes financial and job insecurity (Reevy & Deason, 2014). When tenure is denied, serious repercussions may arise as a result of prolonged stress. For example, in 2010 Amy Bishop, a professor at the University of Alabama, shot and killed three of her colleagues and wounded two others during a biology department meeting over frustration and stress due to denial of tenure (Reeves, 2012; de Montigny, 2011). The denial of tenure causes emotional pain, fear, embarrassment, and denounces, and reduces the creditability of one’s work and research (de Montigny, 2011). de Montigny (2011) described the denial of tenure as an “eviction notice” (p. 4) and causes employees to feel rejected, unworthy, and casted-

out. Lee and Leonard (2001) noted that tenure denial has numerous psychological effects on faculty: depression, sleep deprivation, sadness, and experiences of “fight or flight” syndrome, which often causes the person to become consumed or violent with the situation. Thus, striving to attain the ultimate sense of autonomy and job security is extremely stressful for faculty.

Academic freedom is also another concern. It is also considered as a form of faculty control (Enders, de Boer, Weyer, 2013). The American Association of University Professors (n.d.) discussed the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which addressed three primary components of academic freedom. First, “teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results...and should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution” (American Association of University Professors, n.d., “Academic Freedom,” para. 6). Second, “teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject” (AAUP, n.d., “Academic Freedom,” para. 7). Third, although college and university teachers have individual humanistic rights and can speak freely as citizens, they must at all times remember they are representatives of an institution, and their personal viewpoints can be inaccurately and unintentionally associated with the university and its beliefs (AAUP, n.d., “Academic Freedom,” para. 8).

Thus, while employees of higher education institutions have rights as people, it should be remembered that higher education employees are considered representatives of the organizations first. Also, each of the three components listed by the AAUP has an underlying disclaimer that it must be up to the approval of the institution to determine whether or not something is appropriate or too extreme/radical towards the university’s mission and overall image. Beckham and Dagley (2002) noted that when academic freedom is challenged, the legal system tends to concede to the

institution as the primary authority over what should be deemed academic freedom (p. 176).

Thus, while the outward perception is that higher education faculty have freedom, that freedom is limited and subjective based on institutional preference and opinion which may jeopardize employment, thereby enhancing occupational stress rather than reducing it.

Although faculty often seek autonomy, administrators are generally assumed to have a great deal of control because of their decision-making power. However, administrators often do not have the amount of autonomy as perceived. Educational administrators operate more under what is considered as *regulatory autonomy*, which focuses primarily on aligning higher education with governmental goals and improving performance (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2013). The concept of higher educational organizational autonomy is constantly changing (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2013). With the continuous mission to massify higher education, external and governmental pressures increase (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2013; Moses, 2007). Moses (2007) noted that the primary focus of educational leaders was to be accountable for “taxpayers’ money” as well as quality, productivity, and community engagement (p. 264). The increased pressure limits the amount of control higher education administrators have to make decisions, other than those in favor of the external entities, rather than the internal needs of the institution.

Enders, de Boer, and Weyer (2013) categorized the levels of autonomy within higher education, Governance Autonomy oversees the governing structure within the institutions, of which most is prescribed by law. Legal Autonomy refers to the status of the university (e.g. public or private); Financial Autonomy provides freedom to decide how to fund the institution, governmental or external funding (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2013). Policy Autonomy allows institutions to make decisions regarding the quality and quantity of services provided by the

institution, and Managerial Autonomy gives administrators control over making financial and staffing decisions (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2013). Ordorika (2003) agreed with these various distinctions of higher educational autonomy, but also added that the employees charged with these important levels are considered as *university elite*. University elite are those higher education employees who have high-demand jobs of making centralized or local level decisions within the university (Ordorika, 2003). The university elite represents a group of employees who partake in the political and moral aspects of higher education that extend beyond that of teaching (Ordorika, 2003). Thus, while higher education administrators have the power to make decisions, their decisions are guided by the political, governmental, external, and community perceptions of what should be priority. These pressures may often lead to increased stress and workload.

Workload

Workload and the amount of time available to complete work tasks has been heavily claimed as a primary stressor within higher education. Educational leaders must wear multiple hats as they fulfill their institutional missions. Mid-level administrators must now participate in budget meetings; serve in administrative capacities (i.e. department chairs); write grants; hire instructors; plan, manage, and implement assessment; and oversee initiatives and use of campus resources (June, 2013). Higher education administrators have become less academically involved and more of department managers whose primary duties involve carrying out institutional initiatives (June, 2013).

Administrative workload also involves intense, continuous decision-making abilities. Higher education leaders must make numerous important decisions, often times with little time to do so. Thus, higher education administrators are only as effective as their ability to problem-

solve, interact with internal and external university and collegiate partners, and their ability to remain calm and objective during troubling situations. Toreli and Gmelch (1993) reviewed how administrators experience stress when dealing with conflict resolution among faculty and disciplinary actions of students. They also attributed stress to personality types and option to choose how to respond in various situations (Toreli & Gmelch, 1993). Thus, administrators must be able to be diverse and handle stress effectively in order to manage and lead others through trials for the betterment of the university, this includes being understanding of and knowledgeable of faculty concerns.

Higher education faculty have duties that go beyond that of the classroom (Russell, 2010). Their duties often include conducting research, facilitating service, serving on departmental committees, as well as teaching (Dennison, 2012). Faculty members often have a full load, depending on the department and subject area, full-time faculty can teach between three to five courses per semester (Dennison, 2012). Dennison (2012) divided the faculty workload: 9 hours classroom time, 16-18 hours classroom prep, grading, and student meetings, 10-15 hours facilitating research or developing innovative strategies, and 5 or more hours engaged in meetings and service. Research serves as a key element in enhancing the institutional mission and acquiring and maintaining grant funding sources. However, faculty must often work nights and long periods of time, unpaid, to successfully carryout this duty (Dennison, 2012; Hamermesh & Stancanelli, 2014). The limited amount of time faculty have to conduct research is often filled with “mundane, bureaucratic work” that increases faculty frustration and stress (Russell, 2010, p. 62).

Senior faculty described increase job dissatisfaction due to lack of effective communication, poor allocation of resources, and little support (Russell, 2010). Senior faculty

noted that stress levels would decrease if they had the necessary resources to help with minute tasks; these resources should come in the form of graduate assistants, clerical support, and technological assistance (Russell, 2010).

Costs of Occupational Stress

Most often associated with globalization and neoliberalism, higher education occupational stress comes at a cost, which includes financial, health, and decreased productivity. Neoliberalism in higher education is usually associated with the economic gain and marketability (Kandiko, 2010). Examples include reduced public spending and the adoption of the business model (Samuels, 2014). Employees in higher education must accommodate and adapt to the globalization and neoliberalism concepts within their workplace. In doing so, the adjustment becomes expensive for organizations, including higher education. The average cost of stress-related illnesses in the United States is \$200 to \$350 billion dollars annually, which also includes funds lost due to absences, medical costs, and reduced organization productivity (Nixon, Massola, Bauer, Krueger, & Spector, 2011).

Being that higher education is recognized as a high quality environment (Marshall, Orrell, Cameron, Bosanquet, & Thomas, 2011), decreased instructional and work quality, lowered employee satisfaction, and poor internal/external relationships are also all caused by occupational stress (Mark & Smith, 2012). Higher education employees have been known to exhibit symptoms of stress-related health issues, both physiologically and psychologically (Liu, Spector, & Shi, 2008). Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dau, Stough, & Hapuararchchi (2002) posited that approximately 50% of higher education staff were at risk of developing health-related illnesses such as depression or anxiety due to occupational stress. However, with employees who could possibly experience an average of 5.2 stressful encounters per week

(Mazzola, Schonfeld, & Spector, 2011), institutional quality and productivity is reduced. Higher education employees who experience occupational stress exhibit signs of decreased decision-making ability, reduced creativity, and impaired memory (Viljoen & Rothmann, 2009). Absenteeism, employee turnover, reduced morale, and decreased productivity are also a few examples of how organizations are impacted by employee work-related stress (Mostert, Rothmann, Mostert, & Nell, 2008).

Nixen, Mazzola, Bauer, Kruegar, and Spector (2011) conducted a meta-analysis that explored the relationship between work-related stressors and health quality. The study examined eight common work-related stressors: interpersonal conflict, control, organizational constraints, role ambiguity, role conflict, work hours, and workload (Nixen et al., 2011). The study demonstrated that role conflict, work hours, and control had both physical and mental impacts on employees (Nixen et al., 2011). Role conflict was closely associated with dizziness, back pain, eyestrain, and gastrointestinal diseases (Nixen et al., 2011). The type and length of work hours was also linked to decreased appetite, fatigue, sleep deprivation, eyestrain, and gastrointestinal pain (Nixen et al., 2011). Finally, employees' lack of control demonstrated positive connections with headaches, sleep problems, fatigue, and gastrointestinal problems (Nixen et al., 2011). Note that gastrointestinal problems were associated with each of these three categories, role conflict, work hours, and control, because it is considered as one of the most immediate responses to stress (Nixen et al., 2011). When the body attempts to cope with a stressful encounter, there is internal chemical reaction (Nixon et al., 2011).

Seyle (1936) described the stress experience as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), which has three primary stages. The first stage is the alarm stage when the body analyzes the potential threat (Seyle, 1936). During the second stage, the body attempts to adapt itself to the

stressor, and in the third stage of GAS, the body becomes exhausted (Seyle, 1936). When the body experiences prolonged stress, chronic side effects such as digestive disorders, cardiovascular disease, and depression may occur (Viljoen & Rothmann, 2009).

Stress causes both acute and chronic bodily responses. Acute reactions occur almost immediately because of an increase in the adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) (Nixen et al., 2011; Yehuda, Golier, Halligan, Meaney, & Bierer, 2004). The increased release of ACTH causes increased heartbeat, elevated blood pressure, and sweating (Michailidis & Asimenos, 2002; Nixen et al., 2011). This is the body's attempt to assess and cope to the stressor (Seyle, 1936). Nixen et al. (2011) attributed organizational constraints and role conflict as key causes of chronic occupational stress. Furthermore, job-demands and organizational expectations were also noted as primary causes of absenteeism and reduced health (Bakker, Demerouti, de Boer, & Schaufeli, 2003; Mostert, Rothmann, Mostert, & Nell, 2008). Acute stress was attributed to being caused by interpersonal conflict, such as relationships with others (Nixon et al., 2011). Thus, the inclusion of theories such as Person-Environment Fit, Demand-Copontrol, and Uncertainty from a qualitative perspective, help to further examine specific examples of when, why, and how these stress reactions develop within higher education employees.

Rationale

Stress is an extremely popular research topic. However, occupational stress studies in higher education are less frequently conducted. Studies concerning occupational stress in higher education have been conducted; however, the focus has been in countries other than the United States such as Australia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Love, Hagberg, & Delive, 2011; Tytherleighh, Webb, Cooper, & Ricketts, 2007; Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua, Hapuarachchi, & Boyd, 2003;). Even fewer studies explore how P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and

Uncertainty qualitatively impacts higher education faculty and administrators in the United States. This study adds to the conversation of occupational stress by examining the different work- and role-stressors of higher education administrators and faculty. This qualitative study explored the perceptions, symbolic triggers, and relationships of occupational stress. In order to better understand employee relations, productivity, and satisfaction, organizational causes of stress and coping mechanisms must be examined (Mark & Smith, 2012; Vladut & Kallay, 2010).

Quantitative occupational stress studies generate important data about who experiences stress and the basic or general characteristics associated with the syndrome (Mazolla, Schonfeld, & Spector, 2011). However, these studies lack practical perspectives for ways to cope and combat the phenomenon by providing a reflective lens through which people perceive the world and stressors (Mazolla, Schonfeld, & Spector, 2011). Thus, human resources representatives in organizations are often open to occupational stress theories, coping strategies, preventative measures, and internal and external modifications to help combat the negative effects of this syndrome (Ablanedo-Rosas, Blevins, Gao, Teng & White, 2011; Doby & Caplan, 1995).

Elfering, Grebner, Semmer, Kaiser-Freiburghaus, Lauper-Del Ponte, & Witschi (2005) discovered that employees experience an average of 5.2 stressful work-related events per week. This indicates that employees experience at least one stressful work-related event per day. Few qualitative studies further examine the quantity and specific examples of work-related stress incidents that employees experience (Mazzola, Schonfeld, & Spector, 2011). This qualitative study adds to the conversation and widens the depth of understanding how often and to what extent higher education employees experience occupational stress. This study explored how two higher education faculty and two administrators described and experience occupational stress based on areas of P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty. Through the use of interpretivism,

which helps researchers understand how people assign meaning to their experiences both “socially and historically” (Costantino, 2008; Creswell, 2007, p. 21), this research will help inform the literature to better understand triggers and stressors of higher education occupational stress. Therefore, this study will seek to provide an in-depth analysis of how higher education participants experience occupational stress, how they interpret stressful encounters, and how they interact with the meanings they assign to stressful triggers/interactions.

Occupational stress research has turned toward exploring the direction of stress as it pertains to change. Saksvik and Hetland (2009) explored the psychological aspects of change, and Rafferty and Griffin (2006) examined how change impacted perceptions of work environments. Ultimately, these studies revealed that change enhances uncertainty, which alters job satisfaction and work performance (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014). This study adds to the research of these scholars as it seeks to acquire rich stories, examples, and perceived meanings of work-related experiences as a result of occupational stress caused by work-personality misfit, control, and uncertainty.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how two higher education faculty and two higher education administrators described occupational stress through the lens of Person-Environment Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty at one Texas University. Four research questions guided this study:

1. How do higher education faculty and administrators experience occupational stress due to conflicts between personality and work environment?
2. How do higher education faculty and administrators describe stress related to work tasks and control?

3. What do higher education faculty and administrators consider as work-related stressors due to uncertainty?
4. What are the outcomes of occupational stress among higher education faculty and administrators?

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, six operational definitions are employed:

- Administrator - A full-time employee, working a minimum of 40 hours per week who have program or personnel supervisory and/or decision making obligations within the university. For the purpose of this study, the terms “administrator,” “supervisor,” and “manager” will all refer to higher education administrators.
- Control - The amount of autonomy one has to carryout job tasks and make decisions, as well as the ability to influence change throughout the work environment (Luchman & Gonzalez-Morales, 2013; Karasek, 1979; Ganster & Fusilier, 1989).
- Faculty Member - Educators at four-year colleges and universities whose primary job duty is to teach or instruct students by teaching three to five courses per semester (Dennison, 2012).
- Job Demands - Job demands are any characteristics of the work-related task, workload, time commitment, skills, and knowledge (Luchman & Gonzalez-Morales, 2013; Karasek & Theorell, 1990).
- Occupational Stress - A mental or physical response caused by a negative environment or event in the workplace that causes strain due to an imbalance between job demands and the employee (Ivancevich & Ganster, 1986; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

- Stress - A complex phenomenon that usually has adverse effects upon one's physiological and psychological state as a result of inability to adapt and react with pressures or the environment (Michailidis & Asimenos, 2002).
- Stressor - Internal or external demands or attitudes that require a physical or mental response (Hinshaw, Richter, & Kramer, 2010).
- Uncertainty - One's inability to adequately understand and/or respond to a task, expectation, or situation (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2007).

Methodological Framework

While there are numerous quantitative studies on occupational stress, for the purpose of this study, occupational stress within higher education faculty and administrators will be explored qualitatively. The qualitative methodological framework is imperative to this research because no one person experiences or interprets stress in the same manner. Qualitative inquiry is a multidisciplinary methodology that seeks to understand "the world of lived experience" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 11). Qualitative research, in essence studies the nature of human experiences as they experience and perceive it (Bhattacharya, 2007). Thus, for the purpose of this study, the goal was to understand the stories and details of the lived experiences of occupational stress, of which qualitative inquiry best fits. Murphy and Hurrell (1987) stated that because "job stress implied so many events and processes that it was (and to many is still) a nebulous construct difficult to study in a scientific manner" (p. 30).

Stress is an individual and situation reaction (Seyle, 1973) that can be interpreted in numerous ways. Thus, using interpretivism to gain a deeper understanding of how one views the world fits well within the boundaries of gaining a deeper understanding through qualitative inquiry. Through qualitative multi-case study analysis, this study explored the occupational

stress phenomenon from the perspective of two higher education faculty and administrators. As people grow, modify, and adapt, so do the meanings they assign to social stimuli and context.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism was the primary methodological framework guiding this study. Emerging in the 19th century with key scholars such as Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and Max Weber (1886-1920) leading the way (Costantino, 2008), interpretivist philosophy is one of the “classical” research paradigms used when facilitating educational research (Husen, 1999). Interpretivism spreads over broad topics ranging from text interpretation through hermeneutics, lived experiences via phenomenology, and social meaning through social constructivism (Bhattacharya, 2007; Creswell, 2007).

To gain a full understanding of human sciences, Dilthey believed humans should be studied within their social and cultural environments to better “understand the meaning humans give to their experiences” (Costantino, 2008, p. 116). Husserl added to Dilthey’s perspective by widening the interpretivism definition to include phenomenology and getting to “the roots” of human interaction through personal narratives, perceptions, and beliefs (Costantino, 2008; Husen, 1999). Weber evaluated interpretivism from a sociology perspective; he noted that sociology is a key component in understanding or interpreting social action and human cause and effect interactions (Crotty, 1998). According to Constantino (2008), Weber’s belief to understand human experiences through meaning and value is “essential for trying to explain why an action occurs” (p. 117). Research seeking to understand motivations is derived from Weber’s impact on interpretivism (Constantino, 2008). Weber’s overall assumption was that the “ideal” outcome for interpretivist research is “the outcome of persons acting under a common motivation and choosing suitable means to the ends they have in view” (Crotty, 1998, p.69).

Interpretivism operates with the epistemological understanding of how the researcher acquires knowledge and understanding (Cordella & Shaikh, 2006). The researchers play a key role: “the researchers’ values and dispositions influence the knowledge that is constructed through interaction with the phenomenon and participants through inquiry” (Constantino, 2008, p. 118). The researcher and participants are “interactively linked” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 111). Researcher’s perceptions and subjectivities also guide interpretivist research in an attempt to understand how knowledge between the inquirer and participant develop through the research process itself (Constantino, 2008). Although the researcher and participants maintain close linkage, researcher objectivity is the goal (Mertens, 1998). Interpretivism generally encompasses two dimensions: the process in which humans interpret meaning of lived experiences and how lived experiences affect personal actions and the actions of others (Cordella & Shaikh, 2006). Theoretically, interpretivism helps researchers understand how humans give meaning to their experiences both “socially and historically” (Costantino, 2008; Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Guba and Lincoln (2005) asserted that people can experience various realities of one particular concept or phenomenon depending on the environment or situation. Merten (1998) also believed that mental constructions may conflict others and that reality perceptions can change depending on varying stimuli.

Additionally, interpretivism helped frame this study due to its attempt to understand the changing and multiple realities in which the participant experiences career burnout in his/her natural settings (personal and professional social environments). The aim was not to understand the contextual aspects or hidden meanings of higher educational occupational stress, nor was it to evaluate the essence of human lives, as in phenomenology (Bhattacharya, 2007). The purpose was to understand the participant’s interpretation and reality of occupational stress as they

experienced it: to better evaluate their perceptions and the reality of their experiences (Bhattacharya, 2007). Crotty (1998) asserted that each interview and participant experience is the sole component of interpretivist research; Crotty's theory was also influential in developing a deeper understanding of occupational stress in higher education and the participant's experiences and perceptions. Weber (1968) also described the subjective nature of participant experiences and actions in an interpretative study; so while the participant's experiences are the key component of the research, it's important to understand the subjective and continuously changing circumstances that inform these perceptions (as cited in Crotty, 1998).

Case Study

Case study was the primary methodology used for this study due to its openness and flexibility to accomplish multiple purposes: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Yin (1994) defined case study as an investigation of a "phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Although occupational stress has been heavily studied, there is no conclusive link between occupational stressors and employee reactions. This is because of the subjective nature of occupational stress and how the stressor is perceived as well as how the employee assigns meanings to their experiences. Case study research explores one issue through one or multiple cases within one setting or context (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998).

Case study also harmonized well with this occupational stress study in that a goal of qualitative case study inquiry is to "help bridge the gap between formal scientific evidence and clinical practices..." (Jones & Lyons, 2004, p. 70). Due to the limited amount of research exploring occupational stress among higher education administrators, utilizing case study helped expand on current research and provide more holistic evidence of occupational stress within

higher education. Moreover, Merriam (1998) asserted that case study provides an opportunity for researchers to investigate complex social issues based on real life events as they occur within their natural environments. Thus, the case study methodology helped to uncover the complexity of occupational stress and coping as described by the participants according to their lived reality and perceptions.

Substantive Theoretical Frameworks

Although there are several theories that examine occupational stress, this study will utilize three primary stress theories as its foundation: Person-Environment Fit, Demand-Control Theory, and Uncertainty Occupational Stress Theory.

Person-Environment Fit

Person-Environment Fit Theory was introduced by French, Rodgers, and Cobb in 1974 (Caplan, 1987). However, the concept of occupational fit can be traced to Parson's (1909) theory of occupational guidance (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010). Several scholars have modified and coined different versions of P-E Fit (Caplan, 1987; Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, & Pinneau, 1973; Edwards, Caplan, Harrison, 1998). The basic premise of P-E Fit is that an individual and its environment have separate needs which may enhance or conflict with one another, thereby causing a match or mismatch (Caplan, 1987). Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison (1998) noted that stress is not a product of one element, personality or environment, but it is a collective response to both.

Edwards, Caplan, and Harrison's (1998) version of P-E Fit was utilized for this study because its premise coincides well with higher education faculty and administrators due to the objective and subjective components associated with higher education occupational stress. In order for P-E Fit to be explored, three conditions must exist: (a) there must be a clear separation

between the individual and the environment; (b) the individual and environment must contain both objective and subjective components (reality vs perception); and (c) there must be an association between individual and environmental needs, demands, and supplies (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998; Caplan, 1987). P-E Fit examines employees and their work environment through three primary approaches: atomistic, molecular, and molar (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006). Atomistic measures perceptions of individuals and environments separately; Molecular assesses the discrepancies between individuals and environments; and Molar examines the perceived match or similarities between individuals and environments (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006).

P-E Fit Theory is a multi-dimensional theory containing numerous sectors (Michael, 2009; Sun, Peng, & Pandey, 2014). Caplan (1987) argued that it is important to explore multiple facets of P-E Fit Theory to gain an accurate depiction of how well an employee matches with the work environment. Thus, numerous variations were created to suit work-place needs. Some variations of P-E Fit include: Needs-Supplies Fit and Demands-Abilities Fit (Caplan, 1987; Gostautaite & Buciuniene, 2010). Needs-Supplies and Demand-Abilities Fit both contain two key job satisfaction predictors: autonomy and control. Needs-Supplies Fit is defined as the match between one's needs and environmental rewards (Gostautaite & Buciuniene, 2010). Higher education faculty often complain of not having administrative support and acknowledgement. For those who complain or experience stress due to lack of work-place rewards, there is a Needs-Supplies Misfit between the employee and work environment. Demand-Abilities Fit evaluates whether or not an employee contains the abilities and skills needed to fulfill the demands of their work tasks and environment (Caplan, 1987). Thus, P-E Fit Theory was used to assess how higher education faculty and administrators perceived their

personal and work needs and how any potential discrepancies in needs, control, or overall job design caused P-E Misfit leading to occupational stress.

Demand-Control Theory

Just as in P-E Fit Theory, Demand-Control (D-C) Theory has numerous assumptions and dimensions associated with this model (Dollard & Winefield, 1998). The Demand-Control (D-C) Theory was spearheaded by the research of Karasek (1979). The D-C model measures both the positive and negative psychological strain created between work demands, skill level, and control (Karasek, Brisson, Kawakami, Houtman, Bongers, & Amick (1998). Karasek (1979) asserted that, when isolated, high-job demands alone do not cause high levels of psychological strain. However, when coupled with low levels of autonomy/control, there is a significant increase in the amount of psychological strain (Karasek, 1979; Wall, Jackson, Mullarkey, and Parker, 1996). Within the D-C model, demand is considered as the stressor, which contains overall job design, characteristics, tasks, overload, time constraints, conflicting demands, and uncertainty (Mcclenahan, Giles, & Mallett, 2007; Westerlund, Nyberg, Bernin, Hyde, Oxenstierna, Jappinen, Vaananen, & Theorell, 2010). Control, however, is viewed as the moderator of stress; meaning, the amount of control one has determines how they will cope with the overall job demand (McClenahan, Giles, & Mallett, 2007). Turner, Chimiel, and Walls (2005) described demands as the “pace and pressure” of job tasks, and control is the “individual autonomy” one has over how to distribute time and carryout tasks (p. 505).

Karasek and Theorell (1990) expanded on the D-C Theory to include the Demand-Control Support model. This model asserted that when employees with high stress tasks and low control have little social support, they experience the highest levels of stress (Dollard & Winefield, 1998). The social support aspect strongly related to the relationship between the

employee and supervisors; thus supportive leadership is imperative in the Control-Demand-Support model (Westerlund et al., 2010). Noblet, Rodwell, and McWilliams (2006) asserted that the lack of support within the Control-Demand Support model is referred to as *isostrain*, and is when the demands are inappropriately matched with levels of autonomy and/or support from either supervisors or colleagues. When there is lack of perceived control over making work-related experiences, uncertainty may occur, which leads to further occupational stress.

Uncertainty Stress Theory

Uncertainty is a psychological theory that deals with perceptions (Beehr & O'Driscoll, 1990). The uncertainty model contains two primary variables: job stressors and individual strain; in other words, the job demands and personal perception (Beehr & O'Driscoll, 1990). The Uncertainty Theory of occupational stress (Uncertainty Theory) utilizes the Expectancy Theory of Motivation as its foundation, which suggests that humans act based on self-motivation and interest to maximize or increase the probability of positive outcomes (Isaac, Zerbe, & Pitt, 2001). Expectancy Theory of Motivation involves both the internal and external factors that stimulate people's efforts and actions (Beehr, 1998). In addition to motivational expectancy, Beehr (1998) asserted that the Uncertainty Theory of occupational stress also incorporates the perspective of assertive personalities as its guiding premise; this has also been referred to as people as problem solvers (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Beehr (1998) also noted that Uncertainty Theory assumes employees are innately equipped with the personal desire to succeed and achieve goals and expectations. Thus, the Uncertainty Theory of occupational stress is a combination of proactive human choice guided by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as a means to achieve positive outcomes (Beehr, 1998).

The Uncertainty Theory is multi-dimensional. It encompasses uncertainty, importance, and duration (Beehr, 1998). Figure 1 outlines the formula for the theory of uncertainty (Stress Experienced = Perceived Uncertainty of Obtaining Outcomes X Perceived Importance of These Outcomes X Duration of the Perceived Uncertainties) (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985).

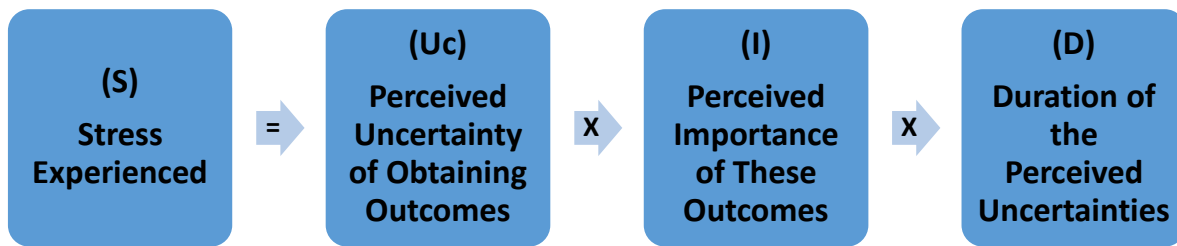


Figure 1. Adapted from “The Themes of Social-Psychological Stress in Work Organizations: From Roles to Goals,” by Terry A. Beehr, 1987, *Occupational Stress and Organizational Effectiveness*, p. 91. Copyright 1987 by Praeger Publishing.

The Uncertainty Theory of occupational stress is not based on an employee’s actual ability to successfully carryout a task, rather it examines the employee’s perception of uncertainty with the probability level of positive outcomes (Beehr, 1998). Perceived uncertainty of obtaining outcomes is when an employee is ambiguous on how to organize and approach a task to meet expectations and outcomes (Beehr, 1998). Thus, perceived uncertainty of obtaining favorable outcomes is “in a sense, a helpless situation in which the proactive person has goals (desired outcomes, but has not clear way of know how to obtain them” (Beehr, 1998, p. 10). Finally, the Uncertainty Theory notes that in order for stress to occur, the task must involve a combination of ambiguity/uncertainty and a level of importance. Additionally, the longer one experiences both uncertainty and importance (duration), the more likely the increased occupational strain (Beehr, 1998).

Limitations

Length of Study

There was one primary limitation of this study: length of the study and participant types. Data were collected over the course of four months in between semesters: summer and fall. Thus, I was able to gather data and observe the participants' occupational stress experiences during the summer and get a glimpse of fall stressors. This included how faculty prepared when they did not have classes to teach during the summer, such as Lorraine, and when faculty relaxed standards when they did teach during the summer, such as LaDoctor. When I first met Aguilar, he was busy planning for various summer projects, so he did have to interact with employees, but there was not a full scope of the level of daily interruptions and demonstrations of conflict resolution he discussed during his interviews. Cynthia was also working during the summer; however, the summer did not accurately reflect the heavy workload she described during the full terms. Additionally, Lorraine stated that the bulk of her stress occurred in the spring, and this research data collection did not extend into the spring term. Thus, although participants were able to recall stressful experiences, some participants, such as Lorraine, sometimes found it difficult to think back and recall those stressful events. She was, however, able to recall the major stressful situations that left a lasting impression on her.

Significance of the Study

The field of occupational stress has been widely examined in a variety of career fields and professions. This study adds to occupational stress research in that it seeks to include higher education administrators as active participants of the stress phenomenon rather than causes of the occupational stress. Higher education administrators have not been thoroughly researched and compared with faculty, thus this study adds an additional dimension and well-rounded

perspective to the higher education occupational stress experience. The study seeks to understand the situations and examples of how administrators and faculty experience occupational stress either similarly or differently from a qualitative perspective, which is needed to add depth to the field of study.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study adds a dimensional perspective to occupational stress by exploring how people make meaning of stressful experiences. Furthermore, it provides rich, detailed stories of the human experience, and examines the cognitive processes of coping as it relates to occupational stress. Overall, this research seeks to identify the how three areas: Person-Environment Fit Theory, Demand-Control Theory, and Uncertainty Theory are experienced by university faculty and administrators. This research identifies any similarities and/or differences, in four research participants: two faculty and two administrators, which helps to better understand the dynamics and relationship between administrators and faculty. This study will help higher education closely examine employee relationships, dynamics, and perceptions of the institution.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter establishes the long-standing history and diversity of occupational stress within higher education through the lens of Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) Theory, Demand-Control (D-C) Theory, and Uncertainty Theory. Researchers have carefully examined the numerous occupational stressors and attempted to summarize them into a few components. Ablanedo-Rosas et al. (2011) noted four common occupational stress traits: (a) task demand, (b) job security, (c) work overload, and (d) physical conditions. Cooper (1987) argued that there are six common occupational stressors: job demands, employee role, career development, inter-organizational relationships, organizational culture, and balancing work and home. Gmelch, Wilke, and Lovrich (1986) specifically examined higher education academic staff and indicated five common perceived stress dimensions: (a) reward recognition, (b) time constraints, (c) departmental influence, (d) professional identity, and (e) student interaction. This literature review explores career burnout, origins of occupational stress, personality conflicts, environmental uncertainty, and higher education administrator and faculty stress experiences.

Career Burnout

Occupational stress research has often been associated with career burnout (Antoniou, Ploumpi, & Ntalla, 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). While occupational stress has been widely studied, it often presents broad triggers of burnout, rather than campus and demographic specific examples of phenomenon. Thus, this section provides a brief overview of career burnout and general outcomes of this complicated phenomenon. The purpose of this study was not to explore career burnout; however, this section also demonstrates a need for further exploration in higher education occupational stress studies by highlighting areas that may be understudied.

Burnout Definition

Psychiatrist Freudenberg (1974) described burnout as a state of emotional depletion and lack of motivation (Chang, 2009). Maslach and Jackson (1981) described burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do “‘people work’ of some kind” (p. 99). van Tonder and Williams (2009) added to the definition and described career burnout as being mentally and physically overwhelmed from work conditions that leave subjects feeling exhausted, tired, and worn down.

Burnout is a complex, circumstantial, and environmental syndrome, and each person experiences it differently. Although burnout is a widely studied phenomenon, the problem continues to grow due to the “fundamental changes in the workplace and the nature of our jobs.” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p.1). Maslach and Leiter (1997) described burnout as an “erosion” that diminishes the value of human concern and investment. Vladut and Kallay (2010) also noted that burnout symptoms have profound effects on one’s psychological, physiological and social aspects.

Through the creation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Maslach and Jackson (1981) identified three primary dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and personal accomplishment or ineffectiveness to help recognize, define, and access burnout (Chang, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The MBI is a survey consisting of the 47 items concerning the three major dimensions of burnout with an optional fourth: involvement and was designed to help measure the various components of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The emotional exhaustion survey items evaluated “feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101). Depersonalization items analyzed “an unfeeling and impersonal response towards

recipients of one's care or service" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101). The personal accomplishment survey items reviewed "feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101).

Causes of Career Burnout

There are numerous causes of burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2008) determined that the primary cause in burnout was contributed to exhaustion during high-demand tasks without the opportunity to recuperate during less demanding work periods. Vladut and Kallay (2010) contributed burnout to one's inability to adapt to job stressors or expectations. Control was also identified as a contributing factor to career burnout; employees needed to prove themselves and contribute something to an organization (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). While the information acquired in the MBI is useful in better understanding generalizable causes of burnout, it does not provide specific details of how people perceive emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or personal accomplishment. Exploring occupational stress qualitatively provides in-depth examples of how participants perceived stressful triggers and why they were perceived that way. Burnout out studies explain that control is a "stressor" (Maslach & Leiter, 2008), but most research does not indicate the context in which the term "control" is used or perceived by burnout employees. Additionally, burnout studies lack specific examples of emotional exhaustion and the causes and stressors associated with the exhaustion. It is clear that stress leads to burnout, however, this study provides concrete examples of the types of occupational stressors, contextual situations, and environmental conditions that cause stress in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI).

History of Occupational Stress

Occupational stress became a prominent research phenomenon in the 1970s (Murphy & Hurrell, 1987). However, the most common associations of occupational stress have been attributed to Selye's (1936) research on stress in animals (Murphy & Hurrell, 1987). The occupational stress phenomenon has been described using several definitions. Selye (1950) referred to occupational stress as a physical or mental reaction to environmental or situational stressors. Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, and Pinneau (1975) described occupational stress as a perceived threat due to job requirements or environment. Furthermore, Cooper and Marshall (1976) defined occupational stress as a negative reaction or response associated with one's job. One characteristic seems to remain among the definitions: occupational stress is perceived as a stimulus/response phenomenon associated with job environments (Smith, 2005). There are numerous occupational stress models that have been developed over the years to fully capture the essence of the work stress phenomenon. To establish the interrelationship between occupational stress theories, this chapter reviews Selye's (1936) Stress theory, Harrison's (1978) Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) Theory, Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman and Oldman, 1975) Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control (D-C) Theory, Uncertainty Theory, and Stress and Coping by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) to gain a well-rounded understanding of the occupational stress experience.

Stress Theory

As the years have passed, the expansion of the occupational stress research phenomenon has continued to evolve with general beginnings of stress to the development of diverse frameworks. Selye (1907-1982) first investigated stress and stimulus/response reactions in rats by injecting them with ovarian and placental extracts (Levi, 1998). After numerous attempts and

subjecting the rats to various hormone injections: formalin, extracts of kidney, skin, and spleen tissues, Selye (1936) discovered that the rats responded differently to the stimuli to which they were exposed (Levi, 1998). Experiments demonstrated that when the rats were severely damaged by acute stimuli, such as cold or adrenaline, each developed a biological response that Selye described as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) (Murphy & Hurrell, 1987).

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) occurred in three stages; during the first alarm stage, the rats experienced rapid decrease in size of organs, disappearance of tissue, drop in body temperature, and digestive and stomach erosion (Murphy & Hurrell, 1987). The alarm stage is the immediate response to the stimulus (von Onicul, 1996). During the second, resistance stage, 48 hours after the injury, the rats' body growth ceased; Selye (1936) regarded this as an indication of emergency need. During stage two treatment was administered to the rats, and their bodies attempted to adapt to the conditions to which they were exposed (Selye, 1936). Because the alarm stage is not maintained overtime, the body then begins to develop survival strategies to combat the stressor (von Onicul, 1996). The third phase of the rat experiment syndrome was exhaustion (Selye, 1936). The exhaustion stage is when the body is distraught and can no longer meet the demands of the stressors; this may include emotional exhaustion, physical exhaustion, mental dysfunction, burnout, or post-traumatic stress disorder (von Onicul, 1996).

Selye's (1936) work continued refine the stress theory by undergoing several adaptations. Selye (1936) first defined stress as the wearing of the physical body caused by general existence. Selye's (1973) more definition of stress was more specific to the realm of biologic stress; he stated that stress was an individualized response from the body based upon external stimuli (Mikhail, 1998; Selye, 1973). Selye (1973) claimed that when the body has increased demands, it attempts to adapt; while the demand itself is non-specific, the reaction is

an individual biological response to adjust and conform to the new demands. Selye (1973) noted that stress was unavoidable and not limited solely to animals and humans; he noted that even organisms with no nervous systems could experience stress, such as plants. Thus, stress is essentially a product between a living organism and its environment.

Person-Environment Fit Theory

Person-Environment Fit Theory (P-E Fit) is a complicated (Caldwell, 2011) cognitive phenomenon (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006) that has been explored and expanded for over a century, being tracked as far back as Parsons's (1909) Theory of Occupational Guidance (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Gostautaite & Buciuniene, 2010). P-E Fit is a multi-dimensional concept with numerous models to highlight specific components of occupational fit: Person-Organization Fit, Need-Supplies Fit, Demands-Abilities Fit, Person-Team Fit, and Person-Supervisor Fit, to name a few (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998; Gostautaite & Buciuniene, 2010; Michael, 2009; Sun, Peng, & Pandey, 2014).

- Person-Group (P-G) or Person-Team (P-T) Fit applies to a newcomer's ability to mesh and blend well with a previously established group in terms of interpersonal skills and personal abilities to contribute to group tasks (Werbel & Johnson, 2001).
- Supplies-Values (S-V) Fit predicts that people or agents experience increased strain when their supply exceeds or falls short of the employee's need for the task (Shaw & Gupta, 2004). Edwards (1996) also noted that S-V fit "refers to the match between a person's values and the environmental supplies available to fulfill those values" (p. 294)
- Needs-Supplies (N-S) Fit was defined by Gostautaite and Buciuniene (2010) as a match between one's needs and environmental rewards.

- Demands-Abilities (D-A) Fit relates to one's personal abilities and the requirements or demands of the task or work environment (Edwards, 1996; Gostautaite & Buciuniene, 2010).
- Person-Organization (P-O) Fit occurs when there is a positive relationship between the employee and organization's values, needs, and goals (Michael, 2009).

All of these models, however, are rooted in the basic P-E Fit concept, which assumes that stress arises from an incompatible relationship between an employee and the work environment (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998).

The work of several scholars (Caplan, 1987; Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, & Pinneau, 1973; Harrison, 1978) contributed to the formation of the Person-Environment Fit Theory (Edwards, Caplan, Harrison, 1998). P-E Fit was designed as a technique to predict the likelihood an employee would fit well within an organization by examining their personal needs and the company needs (Caplan, 1987). The overarching premise of P-E Fit is that stress does not arise by one independent element, personality or environment, but it is a combination of the two variables working together concurrently that cause stress (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). P-E Fit predicts the positive or negative association between the person's (P) "abilities, needs, and values" and the environment (E) "task demands, job attributes, social environment, [and] organizational culture" (Gostautaite & Buciuniene, 2014, p. 505).

The P-E Fit model requires three conditions to exist. First, there must be a clear distinction between personality type and environment (Caplan & Harrison, 1998; Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). Thus, when studying the P-E Fit model, one must be able to identify and isolate each variable independently first before examining the relationship between personality and work environment (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). The second condition

is that objective and subjective components of both environment and personality must exist (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). Objective person refers to the actual personal attributes; whereas the subjective person concept refers to the person's perceptions of themselves (Caplan, 1987). Objective environment refers to the environment as it actually stands, and the subjective environment refers to how the actors perceive the environment or environmental events (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). The third P-E Fit condition is that it associates personal abilities and needs with environmental demands, needs, and supplies (Caplan, 1987).

Cabel and Edwards (2004) discussed two forms of fit, Complementary Fit and Supplementary Fit. Complementary Fit is when either the employee or the organization fulfills the needs of the other, and in Supplementary Fit, both the employee and organization share similar characteristics (Cabel & Edwards, 2004; Sun, Peng, & Pandey, 2014). In either case, organizations must then decide whether the work environment need requires the attention of one employee or a team of employees. In Person-Team Fit, a group of employees are selected to complete the needs of the job; this model enhances the interpersonal relationship among co-workers, which fulfills the needs of employees to have additional support and resources, while fulfilling a need of the institution (Sun, Peng, & Pandey, 2014).

P-E Misfit has two different sets of outcomes: "psychological, physical, and behavioral strains" and "coping and defense" (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998, p. 35). The psychological misfit traits include anxiety, insomnia, restlessness, and dissatisfaction (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). Physical strains include health issues such as elevated blood pressure, overeating, and chronic illness (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). Behavioral abuse refers to substance abuse, overeating, and absenteeism (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998).

Edwards et al. (2006) noted described three commonly used approaches to understanding P-E fit:

- Atomistic approach: “measure the perceived person and environment separately and combine them in some fashion to represent the concept of P-E Fit.”
- Molecular approach: “directly assesses the perceived discrepancy between the person and environment, such as whether work rewards exceed or fall short of the person’s needs.”
- Molar approach: “directly measure the perceived fit, match, or similarity between the person and environment, as in studies that ask respondents to rate the fit between themselves and their organization” (p. 803).

These three approaches were adapted from Edwards, Caplan, and Harrison’s (1998) P-E Fit Theory to provide information regarding work-demands and capabilities. In order to better understand work demands, it is important to gain a better understanding of how job designs function (Luncheon & Gonzalez-Morales, 2013). Thus, a discussion of Job Characteristics Theory is needed to lay the foundation for Demand-Control Theory.

Job Characteristics Theory

Hackman and Oldham (1975) studied work redesign approaches based on personal need and job characteristics, naming their theory Job Characteristic Theory. The Job Characteristics Theory was used by organizations and researchers to examine “how job characteristics and individual differences interact to affect the satisfaction, motivation and productivity of individuals at work” (Casey & Robbins, 2010, p. 78). In this theory, it was hypothesized that employees have more internal motivation to produce quality work when five key job dimensional traits work together: skill variety, task identify, task significance, autonomy, and

feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Oldham, Hackman, and Pearce (1976) clearly defined the five job trait characteristics:

- Skill variety: The extent to which the job allows the employee to utilize a variety of different techniques, skills, and personal abilities to carry out the task.
- Task identity: The degree to which the task can be completed in entirety with the ability to see the outcome.
- Task significance: The level to which the task impacts or influences the organization internally or externally and others professionally or personally.
- Autonomy: The amount of control and freedom the employee has to make decisions regarding how the task should be accomplished.
- Feedback: The amount of precise feedback the employee receives about the quality and effectiveness of the work done on the project.

In addition to the five job dimensions, job characteristics theory also involves three primary psychological traits of employees:

- Experienced meaningfulness: The perceived importance of the work or task.
- Experienced responsibility: The level of personal accountability one has for the final product/task outcome.
- Knowledge of results: The regular assessment of the observed task outcome.

(Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975; Oldham, Hackman, & Pearce, 1976).

Job Characteristics Theory notes that when the five job dimensions and three psychological traits are present, employees have higher degrees of internal satisfaction, motivation, and work quality (Oldham, Hackman, & Pearce, 1976).

The Job Characteristics model consists of the interrelated categories: job characteristics dimensions are linked with psychological states which connect to persona and work outcomes. The five job characteristics are separated into three categories. Category 1: skill variety, task identity, and task significance, which contributes to one's experienced mindfulness of their work (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Puddy, 1975). Category 2: autonomy, is associated with the psychological state of one's experienced responsibility for outcomes (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Puddy, 1975). Category 3: job feedback, is interrelated to one's knowledge of the actual results of the tasks (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Puddy, 1975). The three psychological states help predict personal and work outcomes. The final component of the Hackman and Oldham (1974) model is the close relationship of employee strength and growth, as illustrated in Figure 2. When there is a positive association between the job characteristics, personal work, and outcomes, employees become stronger and grow in their abilities to strengthen themselves as overall employees.

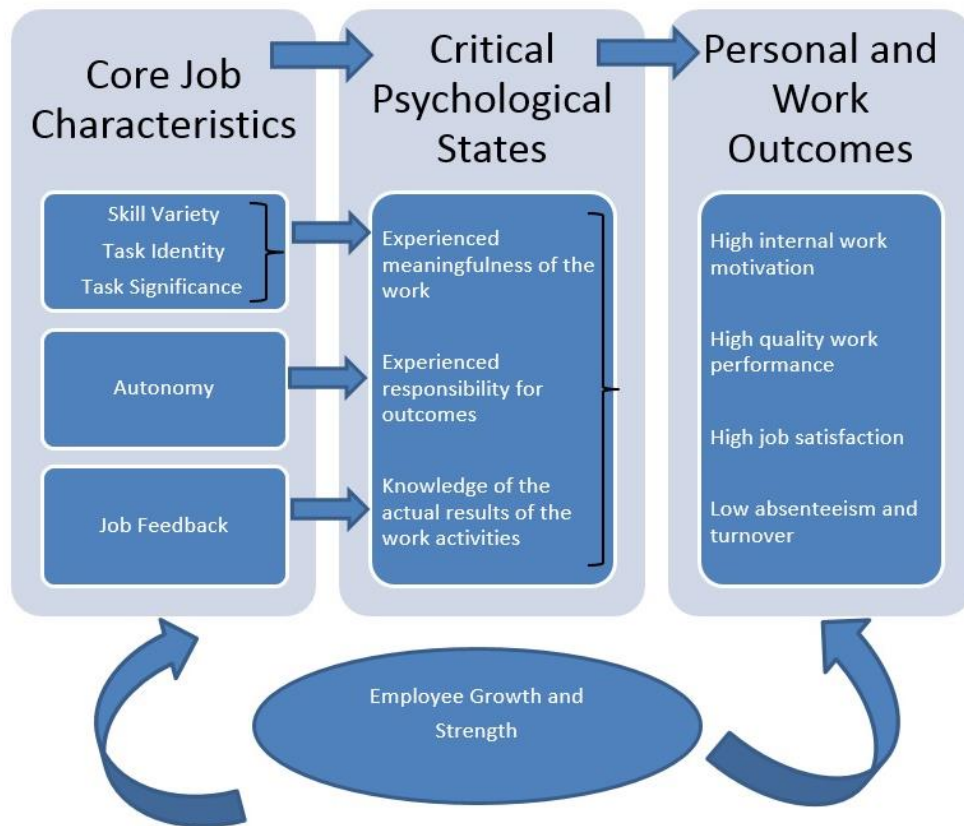


Figure 2. The Relationships Among the Core Job Dimensions, the Critical Psychological States, and On-the-Job Outcomes. Adapted from “The Job Diagnostic Survey: An Instrument for the Diagnosis of Jobs and the Evaluation of Job Redesign Projects,” by J.R. Hackman and G.R. Oldham, 1974, Technical Report No. 4, Yale University Department of Administrative Sciences, p. 6. Copyright 1974 by Yale University.

Job Characteristics Theory is grounded in the motivation theory, which can be defined as the “psychological forces that determine the direction of a person’s level of effort, and a person’s level of persistence in the face of obstacles” (Casey & Robbins, 2010, p. 79). The concept of work redesign was important to organizations because it carried the potential to change behavior based on internal and external motivation (Casey & Robbins, 2010). External gratification refers to incentives, monetary increase, or compliments (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975).

Internal motivation is the personal gratification an employee receives by forming quality work or doing a good deed (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975). Oldham, Hackman, and Pearce (1976) stated that internal motivation and job satisfaction are present when employees have both internal motivation to grow and internal satisfaction (Ali, Said, Yunus, Kader, Latif, & Munap, 2013). This, however, is also coupled with one's ability to gain feedback, fully utilize skills, and have decision making authority (Oldham, Hackman, & Pearce, 1976).

Demand-Control Theory

The Demand-Control (D-C) Theory is most commonly associated with Karasek (1979) (Mark & Smith, 2008; McCleanhan, Giles, & Mallet, 2007). The D-C Theory is a prominent occupational theory because it incorporates the psychology aspect of the interrelationships between job demands and employee control (Luchman & Gonzalez-Morales, 2013). Control has been viewed as a powerful tool that equips agents with confidence and physical and mental well-being (Pelfrene, Vlerick, Mak, De Smet, Kornitzers, & De Backer, 2001; Spector, 1998). Control is considered as the moderator between the agent and the stressor (McClenahan, Giles, & Mallett, 2007). Westerlund et al. (2010) defined control as the inability to make decisions regarding one's work. Demands are viewed as the stressors (McClenahan, Giles, & Mallett, 2007) which include "work overload, pressure, and conflicting demands" (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Westerlund, Nyberg, Bernin, Hyde, Oxenstierna, Jappinen, Vaananen, & Theorell, 2010, p. 72).

Karasek's (1979) initial D-C Theory assumed that one's level of job control has both mental and physical impacts on employees (Noblet, Rodwell, & McWilliams, 2006). D-C Theory suggested that employees are motivated if demands and control are high; however, low demand and low control negatively impact occupational environments such as reduced

productivity (McCleanhan, Giles, & Mallet, 2007). Karasek (1979) identified these working environments as active jobs and high-strain jobs. Active jobs are those that provide engaging learning opportunities for employees, which increases feelings of work competency and reduces strain (Karasek, 1979; Parker & Sprigg, 1999). Lovelace, Manz, and Alves (2007) assert that managerial and administrative positions are often considered active jobs due to the high demand-high control relationship. High-strain jobs are those that have negative health impact; this occurs when occupational demands are high and employee control is low (deJonge, Bosma, Peter, & Siegrist, 2000; Lovelace, Manz, & Alves, 2007). High-strain jobs also diminish feelings of occupational proficiency and/or mastery (Parker & Sprigg, 1999).

The D-C model was later expanded to include social support, thereby being referred to as Demand-Control-Support Theory (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Westerlund et al. (2010) argued that the social support aspect of the D-C-S model was strongly related to an employee's leadership style. Westerlund et al. (2010) stated that employees value a "relationship-oriented leadership style" rather than a task-oriented depersonalized leadership style (p. 76). Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan (2004) also asserted that the interrelated relationship between supervisors and employees collaborative sense of control could reduce and/or resolve negative associations with uncertainty.

Uncertainty Theory

Uncertainty can be defined as a person's inability to adequately understand or respond to a task, expectation, or situation (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2007; Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Uncertainty is a key component to both occupational and environmental research studies (Bordia et al., 2007). Uncertainty Theory can be examined from an individual, group, or organizational level (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Bordia

et al. (2004) noted that uncertainty is also caused by a lack of information, ambiguous, or conflicting information.

McGuire (1983) described two guiding-idea theories that make up the Uncertainty Theory: (a) Systems-Theory and (b) people as problem-solvers. Systems-Theory operates under two assumptions: (a) that any person, organization, or group is a part of and survives within and from its environment, and (b) that any person, organization, or group can become a sub-system of any primary system (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Systems-Theory helps frame the UCT in that it creates an interdependent relationship between the individual and the group or organization (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). In systems-theory idea each system can be embedded within another system becoming an intertwined system dependent upon each other (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Thus, it allows the researcher to examine the relationship of how the systems can be merged or embedded between one another. For example, one higher education faculty member interacting within a group of colleagues, or one administrator serving on an institutional committee within the university. These examples place one system within the context of a larger system.

The second guiding-idea component of McGuire's (1983) Uncertainty Theory is the concept of people as logical and purposeful problem-solvers (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). When people are posed with a problem, they encounter what Folkman and Lazarus (1985) identified as the appraisal phase where one assesses the threat or problem and determines whether to take action by solving the problem or become emotionally engaged with the situation. In the problem-solving guiding idea, people must ask themselves, "What will I do now" (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987, 144). The problem-solving concept helps frame the

Uncertainty Theory because action must take place in order for the Uncertainty Theory to be employed (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987).

McGuire (1983) combined both a taxonomic and process component into developing the uncertainty framework. Taxonomic theories are smaller more manageable categories within large organizations (McGuire, 1983). Uncertainty has been typically broken down into three taxonomies, each slightly differing depending on the researcher. One model attributed to Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh (1987) included the three units of analysis: individual, organization, and group (Bordia et al., 2004). Buono and Bowditch (1989) identified their three taxonomy levels as external (such as economy, or technological advances), organizational, and individual. Bordia et al. (2004) combined the taxonomies of Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh (1987) and Buono and Bowditch (1989) to offer their own uncertainty categories of uncertainty stressors. Bordia et al.'s (2004) model was only designed to be applied to the individual and included strategic (organizational rationales for change and its sustainability), structural (internal departmental operations within an organization), and job-related (security, roles, and promotion).

Table 1 demonstrates the taxonomy also included the sources of uncertainty, attributes of information that relate to uncertainty, moderators of the uncertainty-reaction link, short-term reactions to uncertainty, and longer-term consequences of uncertainty (Jackson, Schuler, & Vredenburgh, 1987).

Table 1

Uncertainty Taxonomy

Units of Analysis	Sources of Uncertainty	Uncertainty Attributes	Uncertainty Moderators	Short-Term Reactions	Long-Term Consequences
Institution/ Organization	Supplier Competitors Creditors Government Agencies Unions Customers and Clients	Unavail- ability Ambiguity Rate of Change Pattern of Change Lack of Consensus Novelty Number of Elements	Time Pressure Control Perceived Threats Perceived Opportunities Personality Past Experiences	Information Seeking Information Distribution Information Distortion Use of Rules Avoidance Anxiety	Structuring Strategy Development Conflict Cooperation Learning Creativity Performance Change Withdrawal
Group	Intra- organization groups Technology				
Individual	Task Procedures Role Expectations Supervisors Peers Subordinates Non-Work				

Note. Adapted from “Managing Stress in Turbulent Times,” by S.E. Jackson, R.S. Schuler, and D.J. Vrendenburgh, 1987, *Occupational Stress and Organizational Effectiveness*, p. 145. Copyright 1987 by Praeger Publishing.

According to McGuire’s (1983) uncertainty taxonomy, sources of uncertainty for the individual are due to tasks and role expectations. Group uncertainty stressors arise from within the organization and technology (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). The overall organizational uncertainty stressors are suppliers, competitors, creditors, government, unions, customers, and clients (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Adding to the stressors of

uncertainty are also the circumstances or situational aspects of the stressors themselves such as ambiguity, predictability, complexity, and rate of change (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014). Responses to uncertainty are also dependent upon the amount of control provided to the agent, the time/pressure, personality styles, subjectivities, and assessment of the task (threat or opportunity) (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987; Mushtaq, Blad, Schaefer, 2011). Stressors can also cause both short-term and long-term effects on its participants (Spector, 1998). Short-term effects include the seeking, distribution, or distortion of information, use of rules, avoidance, and anxiety (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Long term effects on uncertainty result in structuring, strategy development, conflict or cooperation, creativity, performance change, or withdrawal (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Notice that while some on the long-term effects of uncertainty are negative, there are positives; thus, reconfirming that the uncertainty stress theory operates under the assumptions that people will adopt the fight or flight response and that people are innately motivated to do well (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985; Zaccaro & Riley, 1987).

The process component of McGuire's (1983) Uncertainty model (see Figure 3) establishes a connection between the steps and events that join the components. The process of the uncertainty model is one that is continuous in nature. Knowledge uncertainty is situated at the center of the model. Figure 3 illustrates the seven steps within the uncertainty process:

- External information regarding the task is acquired
- The information is made available to the group, organization, or individual.
- The individual, group, or organization then encounters some level of uncertainty regarding expectations from others, personal expectations, or role ambiguity. This

stage coincides with McGuire's (1983) situational attributes within the taxonomy process.

- The individual, group, or organization processes and selects a response to the event.
- The participant then responds with the fight or flight response. Action has two options: problem-solve and engage or withdraw and disengage.
- The outcomes of the actions are assessed.
- The internal discussion occurs, which then causes more uncertainty, and the cycle continues again by reprocessing, deciding on a course of action, evaluating outcomes, and acquiring additional external information if needed and/or available. (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987)

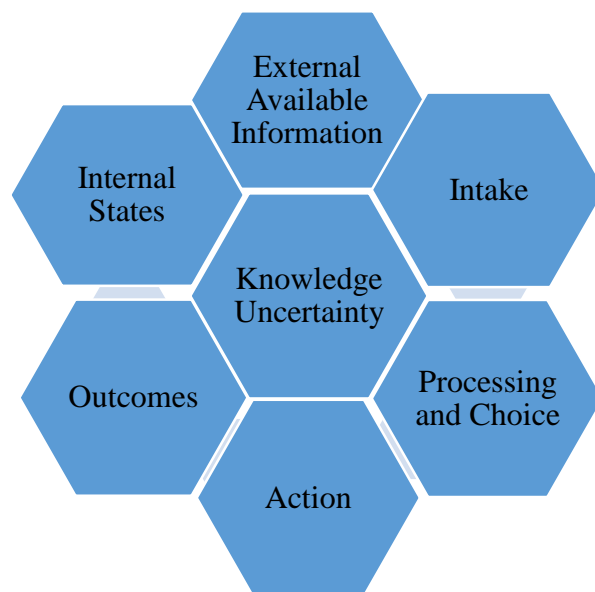


Figure 3. McGuire's (1983) process component of the uncertainty framework. Adapted from "Managing Stress in Turbulent Times," by S.E. Jackson, R.S. Schuler, and D.J. Vrendenburgh, 1987, *Occupational Stress and Organizational Effectiveness*, p. 146. Copyright 1987 by Praegar Publishing.

Together the taxonomy and process components demonstrate the complexity of and systematic process within McGruer's (1983) Uncertainty Theory (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987).

Consistent with other stress research, uncertainty is also viewed as a negative construct (Bordia et al., 2007). Ambiguity, lack of communication, role conflict, and control have all been associated with uncertainty (Bordia et al., 2007; Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue 2014). Bordia et al. (2007) stated, "Not knowing something about ourselves or the environment around us is maladaptive as we cannot prepare for or deal with the unknown" (p. 348). Within the stress Uncertainty Theory, the primary stressors are ambiguous or inaccurate perceptions of personal ability and inaccurate or ambiguous perceptions of task importance (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985). De Burgundy (1995) supported McGuire's (1983) inclusion of information gathering into the uncertainty stress model; he noted that information acquisition and dissemination were key steps to both creating and reducing uncertainty. De Burgundy (1995) stated that the relationship between managers and employees is continuously strained due to the lack of efficient information exchange. De Burgundy (1995) noted two primary foundations that organizations should keep in mind: "happy workers are productive workers," and "well-informed workers will support managerial endeavors" (p. 52). Therefore, it is important for organizations to understand what causes employee stress and the best ways to help them cope with work-related stress.

Appraisal and Coping

Lazarus' (1985) Theory of Cognitive Appraisal fits well with the Uncertainty Theory in that it examines the "cognitive appraisal processes that are the common factor in experiences that are stressful" (Beehr, 1998, p. 9). The Theory of Cognitive Appraisal examines how one assesses or appraises stressful situations and the coping strategies utilized to mentally and

emotionally deal with the situation (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Stress can be divided among three primary categories: systemic stress (internal tissue disturbances), psychological (cognitive), and social (relationships) (Monat & Lazarus, 1985). Stress is often coupled with a stimulus response reaction based on how one appraises the potential threat (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described two appraisal processes that people employ determine how they will respond to a potential stressful event or situation: primary and secondary appraisal.

During the primary appraisal process, people determine the whether or not it is worth getting upset over; primary appraisal focuses on the mental well-being (Kleinke, 2007). The secondary appraisal process allows one to assess the physical threat or level of danger by asking themselves “What can I do?” (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985, p. 152; Kleinke, 2007). How one appraises the situation determines how they will respond and cope to the event (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

Folkman and Lazarus (1985) defined coping as the “cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage (master, reduce, or tolerate) a troubled person-environment relationship” (p. 152). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two primary forms of coping: problem-focused coping and emotion focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves seeking ways to improve or resolve the stressful situation (Monat & Lazarus, 1985). During the problem-focused coping process one uses physical action, planning, and perseverance to cope with the situation (Aldwin, 2011). Problem-focused coping was deemed more common when people deemed the situation as changeable (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Emotion-focused (palliative) coping is derived from thoughts or actions that do not modify or change the situation: seeking emotional support, worry, avoidance, blame, and wishful thinking (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Mark & Smith, 2012). Aldwin (2011) also included prayer and finding meaning as positive aspects of emotion-focused

coping. Emotion-focused coping is associated with situations that are appraised as unchangeable (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Monat and Lazarus (1985) asserted that people utilize a “complex combination” of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping to combat stress depending on the situational, environmental, and social factors surrounding the situation. Higher education leaders use both problem- and emotion-focused coping to make complex decisions daily.

Helping Profession

Helping professions are usually considered very stressful, and stress is often related to environmental factors, as well as relationship oriented issues (Stamler, 1997). The helping profession includes work that promotes healing and education, such as nurses, counselors, law enforcement, mental health practitioners (Fiabane, Giorgi, Sguazzin, & Argentero, 2013), as well as doctors, social workers, and teachers (Newsome, Waldo, & Gruszka, 2012, Stamler, 1997). Helping professions are traditionally defined as occupations that involve taking care of others; however, the definition of the helping profession expanded from being only service-centered to also including person-centered as well (Sadao, Gonsier-Gerdin, & Smith-Stubblefield, 2004).

Few studies directly associate higher education as a helping profession; however, connections include items such as time, care, personal investment, and service (Barsky, 2014; Castro-Atwater, & Hohnbaum, 2015; Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011; Hosler, 2011; Sadao, Gonsier-Gerdin, & Smith-Stubblefield, 2004). Teaching at the college and university level is considered one of the most stressful professions (Bachkirova, 2012). Higher education should be considered as a helping profession due to the amount of time and care invested in each student. Higher education faculty are often associated with three primary duties: teaching, research, and service (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011). Service, however, is a broad, and sometimes ambiguous, job descriptor. Service has five key realms: public service, discipline based/professional service,

institutional service, collegial service, and student service (Macfarlane, 2011). The student service realm makes higher education a helping profession due to the amount of time, care, and consideration employees invest on the students' behalf. "Examples include giving formative feedback on student work, acting as a student counsellor, coaching students for job interviews, writing references for student or representing a student's interests at an examination board" (Macfarlane, 2011, p. 70-71).

Making the case to include higher education in the helping profession, should also extend to higher education administrators. Administrators also facilitate in the helping and growth process of others. Mark and Smith (2012) stated that administrators become exhausted and experience stress due to the numerous decisions that must be made on a regular basis and also because of the constant interaction with employees. Administrators often serve as the problem-solvers within the department, guide employees, and manage staff (Ward, 2008). While there are numerous competing definitions of the purpose of higher education, the general consensus is to invest into the lives of students by helping them succeed (Saichaie & Morpew, 2014), thereby coinciding with the idea of being both service-centered and person-centered. Stoves (2014) asserted that working in higher education requires employees to be emotionally connected to their roles and the people they assist. However, the relatively isolated working environments of higher education faculty and administrators can also disrupt or prevent social bonds and lead to stress (Cruces, Venero, Pereda-Perez, & De la Fuente, 2014).

Faculty work in relative isolation as they prepare for classes, engage in research, and participate in institutional and community service. Additionally, changes to the profession have required faculty to complete more paperwork, teach more course, adopt a business mind-set, and increase community involvement to satisfy administrators and stakeholders (Shin, & Jung,

2014). Administrators operate in high demand situations, requiring them not only to work in relative isolation but to also interact with others in situations that can be filled with redundancy of procedures, challenging relationships, poor management, conflicting job responsibilities, and increased workload (McClellan, n.d.). Moreover, there is a perception that the academic environment is deteriorating where faculty and administrators are being placed under more stringent job requirements for more accountability, less autonomy, corporate style of management, more regulations, declining job security, and reduced resources, all leading to less job satisfaction and higher stress (Melin, Astvik, Berbard-Oettel, 2014; Russell, 2010; Shin, & Jung, 2014), particularly if there is a lack of social support or few self-care strategies to help deal with stress on the job (Christopher, Christopher, Dunnagan, & Schure, 2006).

Occupational Stress in Administrators

Managers and supervisors have often been perceived as the stressors causing work-related stress (Beehr & O'Driscoll, 1990; Westerlund et al., 2010). Hogan and Kaiser (2005) asserted that 65 to 75% of employees in "any given organization" report their immediate supervisor as the "worst" component of their jobs (p .175). However, research has indicated that occupational stress can also impact managers, administrators, and supervisors as well (De Burgundy1995; Beehr & O'Driscoll, 1990). Lovelace, Manz, and Alves (2007) posited that leaders traditionally have high stress levels due to their high levels of demands and responsibilities. Sulsky and Smith (2005) asserted that occupational stress is associated with the job type and role. For example, office assistants, farmers, public servants (e.g. education), and sales managers, and physical laborers were all reported to have above average reports of occupational health incidents (Sulsky & Smith, 2005).

Research suggests that managers and supervisors differ from employees in how they experience occupational stress (Zaccaro & Riley, 1987). Heereman and Walla (2011) attributed administrative or managerial stress to multitasking and juggling complex tasks with numerous interruptions. Bush (2006) suggested that academic supervisors experience stress due to the laborious and extensive decision making process, which is both time consuming and “cumbersome” (p. 9). Reynolds, Owens, and Rubenstein (2012) offered a moral stress theory to describe managerial stress; the authors attributed the stress associated with moral obligations as the primary contributing cause to managerial stress. Moral stress was defined as “a psychological state (both cognitive and emotional) marked by anxiety and unrest due to an individual’s uncertainty about his or her ability to fulfill relevant moral obligations” (Reynolds, Owens, & Rubenstein, 2012, p. 492). Based on the moral stress theory, managers experience two conflicting demands: role identity demands and stakeholder demands (Reynolds, Owens, & Rubenstein, 2012). Huhtala, Feldt, Lamsa, Mauno, and Kinnunen (2011) supported this idea noting that managers spend much time on workplace ethical and moral culture: making, sound and fair decisions, focusing on the employee and organizational needs, and create a positive atmosphere conducive for work-place productivity.

Gentry, Katz, and McFeeters (2009) offered manager derailment as a contributing occupational stressor for universities. Derailment occurs when a manager’s anticipated career path stalls, when the leader is demoted, or when a leader resigns (Williams, Campbell, & McCartney, 2013). Gentry, Katz, and McFeeters (2009) identified five characteristics of derailment:

- problems with interpersonal relationships (organizational isolation, described by others as being authoritarian, cold, aloof, arrogant and insensitive);

- difficulty leading a team (failure to staff effectively, failure to build and lead a team, unable to handle conflict);
- difficulty changing or adapting (inability to adjust to a supervisor with different managerial or interpersonal style, inability to grow, learn, develop and think strategically);
- failure to meet business objectives (overly ambitious, lacking follow-through, poor performers); and
- too narrow functional orientation (not prepared for promotion, unable to manage outside current function). (p. 336)

Williams, Campbell, and McCartney (2005) attributed managerial derailment to Person-Environment Misfit, and estimated that administrative derailment could reach as high as 50% to 75%. Academic managerial derailment may occur due to competing responsibilities and conflicting demands (Gentry, Katz, & McFeeters, 2009). Therefore, university administrators experience occupational stress and must also be informed of how to balance their job demands and personal needs (Gentry, Mondore, & Cox, 2006).

In terms of coping with occupational stress, managers seem to view stress from more practical perspectives and adopt the “fight or flight” stress response, when they are posed with stressful situations (Zaccaro & Riley, 1987). Perhaps this general comfort or acceptance with stress is due to the amount of insider information available to the manager. Zaccaro and Riley (1987) noted that managers usually have more experience understanding the link between job demand/expectations increase and job performance expectation increase. De Burgundy (1995) asserted that both managers and workers have the same overall goal; however, they differ in roles, methods, control, and techniques in accomplishing these goals.

Although the roles differ between administrators and faculty, administrator experience role conflict and uncertainty as well as faculty (Reynolds, Owens, and Rubenstein, 2012; Bordia et al., 2004). Identity salience refers to the multiple roles managers must fulfill, and stakeholder saliency refers to the organizational needs (Reynolds, Owens, & Rubenstein, 2012). Thus, managers experience moral stress when they experience conflicting roles between their role identity saliency and stakeholder saliency (Reynolds, Owens, & Rubenstein, 2012). Researchers agree, however, that administrators' decision-making abilities are diminished by role-conflict and other stressors of occupational stress (Bordia et al., 2004). Heereman and Walla (2011) noted that when decision makers experience emotional stress their ability to make sound decisions decreases. Furthermore, Singh and Dubey (2011) asserted that the stress associated with role-conflict is a recurring stress condition that negatively impacts job satisfaction.

Occupational Stress in Faculty

Much research has been conducted on job satisfaction with elementary and secondary school teachers; however, these results should not be generalized as the experiences of higher education faculty (Taris, Schreurs, & Silfhout, 2010). A common source of stress in higher education is the increased demands and expectations (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009). The role of higher education faculty members has morphed from research, teaching and service to one that includes administrative responsibilities (Mamiseishvili, 2012). This addition is due to the globalization and massification of higher education—budget restraints, technological advances, and increased quantity and quality standards—which contributes to faculty occupational stress (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). Faculty are expected to expand their knowledge and technological ability as a way to conform to the needs of the student population, institutional mission, and technological advances (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007).

Additionally, salaries and tenure-track positions have reduced, thereby causing additional stress and pressures (El-Amin, 2013; Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001).

Organizational theorists have often theorized that “the happy worker is the productive worker” (Locke, 1970, p. 484). However, researchers have also offered a contrasting theory indicating that some productive workers are also dissatisfied with their jobs and are pressured into working long periods of time due to organizational expectations, occupational demands, and task time lines (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011). Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) noted that in 2003, 47% of faculty indicated working 55 hours per week, whereas, only 13% reported working an excess of 50 hours per week. Thus, the increased amount of time faculty are now dedicating to organizations cause additional internal and external stressors to produce increased quality and quantity to maintain job security (Mamiseishvili, 2012). Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dau, Hapuarachchi, and Boyd (2003) concluded that employees are not dissatisfied with their jobs, but they are dissatisfied with the way the organization is managed, the promotion and reclassification system, rate of pay, and relationships between supervisors and staff. Thus, occupational stress among higher education staff goes beyond a single problem and solution into an internal view of numerous factors within the organization.

Higher educational occupational stress is a global phenomenon. Employees at all higher education institutions experience job-related stress. Ahmady, Changiz, Masiello, and Brommels (2007) examined occupational stress within medical school faculty in Iran. The study specifically focused on the concept of role conflict (Ahmady, Changiz, Masiello, & Brommels, 2007). With a survey response rate of 66.5%, results indicated that medical faculty members experienced high levels of role-related stressors due to six key reasons:

- too many tasks and everyday workload;

- conflicting demands for colleagues and superiors;
- incompatible demands from their different personal and organizational roles;
- inadequate resources for appropriate performance;
- insufficient competency to meet the demands of their role;
- inadequate autonomy to make decision[s] on different tasks;
- and a feeling of underutilization. (p. 1)

Taris et al. (2010) examined the consequences of occupational stress within a Dutch university among law department staff and discovered that staff experienced lower levels of strain, less psychological stress, and fewer feelings of work detachment when they possessed control. Thus, they posited that occupational stress for university staff are due to the internal and organizational components of their jobs, thereby proving that job task is a high occupational stressor for higher education faculty (Taris et al., 2010). Tytherleigh et al. (2005) examined occupational stress in the United Kingdom and found that although faculty experienced high levels of occupational stress and strain, they did not report having low institutional commitment. The UK results did, however, indicate that among all higher education staff studied, job uncertainty was the highest source of occupational stress (Tytherleigh et al., 2005). Ultimately, regardless of the demographical location studied, occupational stress is linked to being caused by several general factors: uncertainty, demand-control, and environment. These stressors have both short- and long-term negative impacts on the employees and the organization.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the literature of occupational stress within higher education and the historical complexities surrounding this phenomenon. While each stress theory has its unique traits they each are interrelated at the roots of exploring the phenomenon. Each theorist

built upon existing knowledge and expanded it to add depth to occupational stress research. Selye (1976) identified two key components of stress: stress is an individualistic and subjective syndrome and it contains non-specific responses to stimuli (Levi, 1998; Selye, 1976), thereby supporting the idea of linking stress and uncertainty. Additionally, this chapter has provided literature on the occupational stress experiences among higher education faculty and administrators, attempting to document the difference within each group's experiences. Thus, the occupational stress phenomenon is a complex web of interrelated theories that attempt to describe how employees experience stress and how organizations both impact and are impacted by uncertainty, job demands, employee abilities, and employee-organization fit.

While numerous theories have been discussed and interrelated to occupational stress, the primary focus of this study is to explore the assumption that higher education administrators experience less occupational stress and serve more in the role of job stressor. This research will inquire as how higher education administrators experience occupational stress and how those experiences relate to those of higher education faculty. Researchers have conflicting views as to the level of administrative occupational stress and the roles they play. This study positions itself around the idea that administrators experience just as much, if not more occupational stress than faculty because stress is an inescapable phenomenon (Mehta, 2013; Selye, 1936). Albeit, the experiences and length of the occupational strain may vary, the stress phenomenon can be attributed to any dynamic. The experienced stress differences may be attributed to the differing in individual appraisal processes, character traits, and levels of control between faculty and administrators. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how Person-Environment Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty contribute to higher education job-stress experiences.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Just as stress is considered a complex phenomenon, so are humans. To better explore how stress impacts higher education faculty and administrators, a qualitative, case study approach was utilized. This study sought to explore how higher education faculty and administrators experience occupational stress differently or similarly. Additionally, through the use of interpretivism, this study explored how higher education employees assigned meanings and interacted with those assigned meanings within the workplace. Thus, the rich details, scenarios, and work-specific examples collected from this multi-case study design enhanced the understanding of occupational stress within higher education.

The purpose of this study was to explore how two higher education faculty and two higher education administrators described occupational stress through the lens of Person-Environment Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty at one Texas University. There were four research questions guiding this study:

1. How do higher education faculty and administrators experience occupational stress due to conflicts between personality and work environment?
2. How do higher education faculty and administrators describe stress related to work tasks and control?
3. What do higher education faculty and administrators consider as work-related stressors due to uncertainty?
4. What are the outcomes of occupational stress among higher education faculty and administrators?

Case Study

As a methodology, case study has been debated regarding its function. Tight (1010) debated whether case study was a methodology, design, strategy, or approach. However, case study, for the purpose of this study, was used as a methodology to inquire into the “real-life context” of the occupational stress phenomenon (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Merriam (1998) defined case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) based their approach of case study within constructivism, which seeks to understand the ways in which people construct meaning in the world around them (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Yin (2003) identified a few components of case study design: (a) the behavior or culture being examined cannot be manipulated by the researcher; (b) contextual conditions relevant to the phenomenon should be examined; and (c) the borders between the phenomenon and context are unclear. This study conforms to Yin’s (2003) case study design components in that the researcher explored how education faculty and administrators experienced and coped with occupational stress. There was no manipulation or intervention to create or reduce stressful situations or stimuli to enhance the study. Additionally, participants were observed in their natural settings in which occupational stress may occur: inside the classroom, during departmental meetings, and during office hours. Because the nature of this qualitative, interpretive study was to understand administrator and faculty occupational stress, case study fit best.

Hancock and Algozzine (2006) wrote, “Case study research is generally more exploratory than confirmatory; that is, the case study researcher normally seeks to identify themes or categories of behavior and events rather than prove relationships or test hypotheses” (p. 16).

Case study requires a significant amount of time evaluating and collecting data in the field to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Eisenhardt (1989) claimed that case study seeks to understand the dynamics within settings. Tight (2010) also confirmed that educational case studies employ empirical enquiry that is “conducted within a localized boundary of space and time” (p. 333). Therefore, the overall research design of observing participants within the space the stress is perceived to occur coincides with case study research design.

Multiple-Case Study

A multiple-case study approach was utilized to explore occupational stress and coping within higher education. The multiple-case study approach allows the researcher to discover differences within and between each case (Yin, 2009; Baxter & Jack, 2008) by employing within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. For the purpose of this study, individual, single-case analysis occurred first. Each participant was examined through an independent lens, separate from all other cases. Secondly, within-case analysis was used to explore each group as a case: faculty and administrators. Categories and themes collected from each case, allowed me to determine similarities within the faculty and administrator stress experiences. Finally, cross-case analysis was used to explore the “thematic analysis across the cases” (Creswell, 2007, p.75). I explored shared themes between the faculty and administrator groups to respond to the research questions regarding how faculty and administrators experienced occupational stress similarly and/or differently.

Creswell (2007) stated that qualitative researchers utilizing the multiple-case study method should include no more than five participants in order to acquire enough in-depth data on all participants without slighting any one participant. This multiple-case study explored the

occupational stress experiences of four participants: two full-time higher education administrators and two full-time higher education faculty members. Figure 4 represents the overall structure of this multiple-case study approach incorporating within-case analysis and cross-case analysis using Creswell's (2007) Template for Coding a Case Study (Using Multiple or collective Case Approach) model and Yin's (2009) Multiple-Case Study Design.

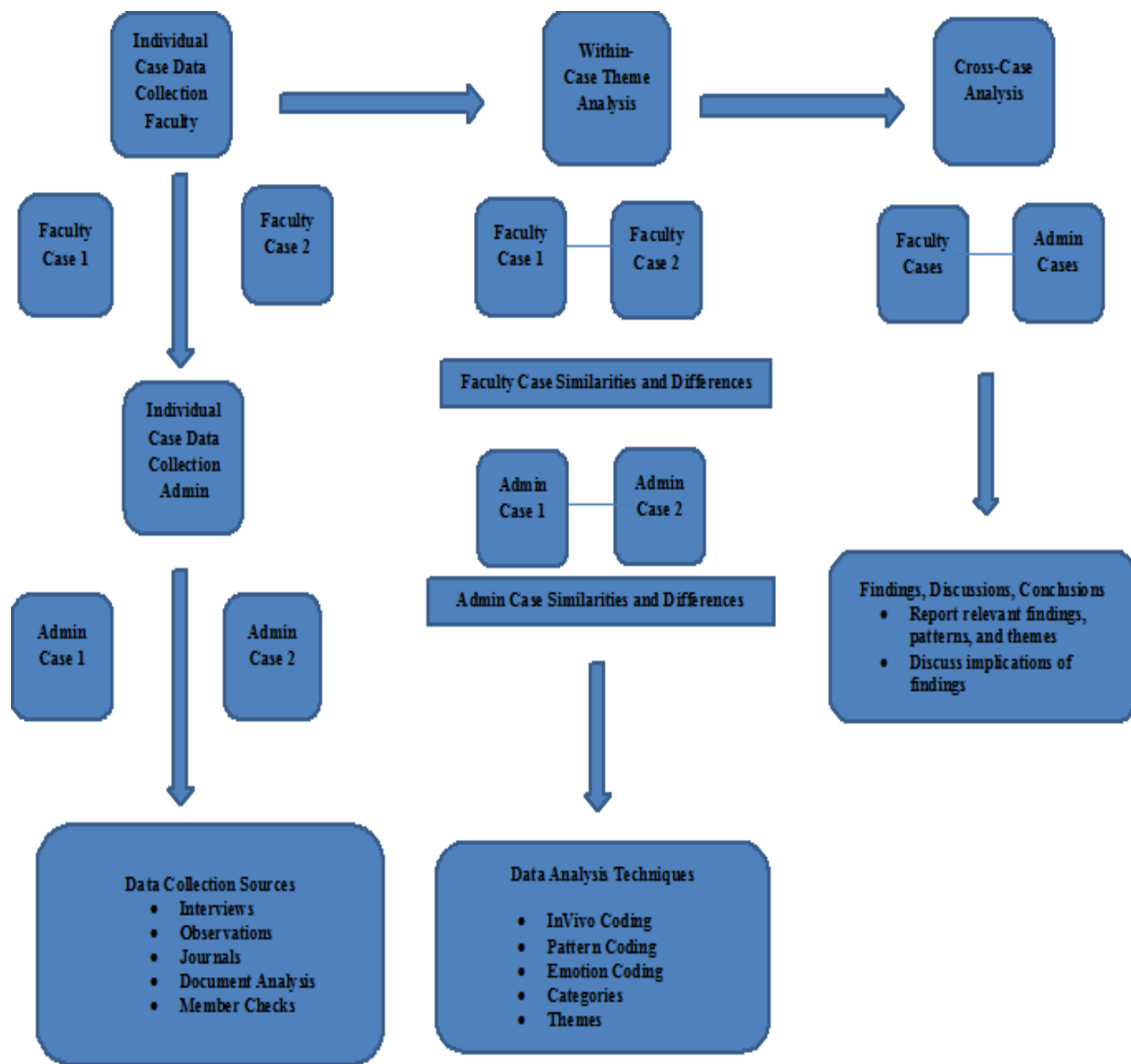


Figure 4. Higher Education Multi-Case and Cross-Case Analysis. Adapted from *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, by J.W. Creswell, 2007, p. 75. Copyright 2007 by Williams Publishing. Adapted from *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, by R.K. Yin, 2009, p. 46. Copyright 2009 by Sage Publishing.

Theoretical Framework

Interpretivism was the primary methodological framework guiding this study. Emerging in the 19th century with key scholars such as Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and Max Weber (1886-1920) leading the way (Costantino, 2008), interpretivist philosophy is one of the “classical” research paradigms used when facilitating educational research (Husen, 1999). Interpretivism spreads over broad topics ranging from text interpretation through hermeneutics, lived experiences via phenomenology, and social meaning through social constructivism (Bhattacharya, 2007; Crewsell, 2007).

According to Constantino (2008), in order to gain a full understanding of human sciences, Dilthey believed humans should be studied within their social and cultural environments to better “understand the meaning humans give to their experiences” (p. 116). Husserl added to Dilthey’s perspective by widening the interpretivism definition to include phenomenology and getting to the source of human interaction through personal narratives, perceptions, and beliefs (Costantino, 2008; Husen, 1999). Weber evaluated interpretivism from a sociology perspective; he noted that sociology was a key component in understanding or interpreting social action and human cause and effect interactions (Crotty, 1998). According to Constantino (2008), Weber believed that to understand human experiences through meaning and value was “essential for trying to explain why an action occurs” (p. 117). Research seeking to understand motivation was derived from Weber’s influence on interpretivism (Constantino, 2008). Weber’s overall assumption was that the “ideal” outcome for interpretivist research was “the outcome of persons acting under a common motivation and choosing suitable means to the ends they have in view” (Crotty, 1998, p.69).

Interpretivism operates with the epistemological understanding of how the researcher acquires knowledge and understanding (Cordella & Shaikh, 2006). The researchers play a key role because “the researchers’ values and dispositions influence the knowledge that is constructed through interaction with the phenomenon and participants through inquiry” (Constantino, 2008, p. 118). The researcher and participants are “interactively linked” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 111). Researcher’s perceptions and subjectivities also guide interpretivist research in an attempt to understand how knowledge between the inquirer and participant develop through the research process itself (Constantino, 2008). Although the researcher and participants maintain close linkage, researcher objectivity is the goal (Mertens, 1998). Interpretivism generally encompasses two dimensions: the process in which humans interpret meaning of lived experiences and how lived experiences affect personal actions and the actions of others (Cordella & Shaikh, 2006).

Theoretically, interpretivism helps researchers understand how humans give meaning to their experiences both “socially and historically” (Costantino, 2008; Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Guba and Lincoln (2005) asserted that people could experience various realities of one particular concept or phenomenon depending on the environment or situation. Mertens (1998) also believed that mental constructions may conflict others and that reality perceptions can change depending on varying stimuli.

Additionally, interpretivism helped frame this study due to its attempt to understand the changing and multiple realities in which the participants’ experience occupational stress in his/her natural settings (personal and professional social environments). The aim was not to understand the contextual aspects or hidden meanings of faculty and administrator stress, nor was it to evaluate the essence, as in phenomenology, (Bhattacharya, 2007) of human lives. The

purpose was to understand the participant's interpretation and reality of occupational stress as they experienced it, to better evaluate their perceptions and the reality of their experiences (Bhattacharya, 2007). Crotty (1998) asserted that each interview and participant experience is the sole component of interpretivist research; this was also influential in developing a deeper understanding of occupational stress in higher education and the participants' experiences and perceptions. Weber (1968) also described the subjective nature of participant experiences and actions in an interpretative study. Thus, while the participants' experiences were the key component of this research, it was important to understand the subjective and continuously changing circumstances that inform these perceptions.

Subjectivity Statement

After working in higher education for the last decade, I have functioned in numerous roles: Adjunct English Instructor, Interim Tutor Coordinator, Supplemental Instruction Coordinator, and Writing Center Director, often fulfilling multiple roles simultaneously. What I have learned is that no position is completely exclusive to only the items detailed in the formal job description. There is one phrase that ensures that employees are required to perform additional tasks and roles, "and other duties as assigned." In my role as Writing Center Director, I was classified as 75% administrator and 25% faculty simultaneously. This helped me gain a broad scope of expectations and occupational stress from two different viewpoints. The occupational stress occurred when there were numerous demands of my time and a lack of support from either the administrative or faculty side. The ambiguous role-stressors create unexpected stress. Although I was only required to teach one course per semester, essentially an adjunct, I was asked to serve on program committees, assist as a faculty mentor, and facilitate group meetings—none of which fit into the job task of teaching one composition course per

semester. This went beyond the identified expectation of a traditional adjunct, and was not considered a part of my administrator duties. Thus, the faculty job demand exceeded the environmental resources, time, and compensation needed to devote full attention to this task, which led to added occupation stress, coupled with my personal ambition to successfully accomplish tasks and exceed expectations.

The administrator role was also coupled with stress. The “other duties as assigned” job descriptor made numerous and seemingly endless possibilities, especially during staff shortages and budget crunches. For a time, there were budget restrictions, which prevented me from filling vacancies. So, I often found myself helping and tutoring students or doing clerical work to reduce student wait-time and maintain quality and quantity of office traffic. Thus, this often prevented me from accomplishing other administrative projects, resulting in stress. Juggling all of these projects and expectations quickly drained energy and motivation, especially when no positive reinforcement or feedback is provided, thus causing occupational stress.

Although I personally experienced occupational stress and career burnout, it was imperative, that I did not allow my experiences and perceptions to guide the study. My subjectivities were three fold:

- most higher education employees fulfill additional roles and duties not specifically outlined in their job descriptions;
- the addition of roles and duties not outlined in the job description become taxing on employees due to personal achievement and managerial expectations; and
- the long-term commitment of additional duties with no added compensation, time, or resources to accommodate the tasks leads to occupational stress, low job satisfaction, and career burnout.

Throughout this research, I was cognizant of my subjectivities and avoided asking leading questions that could have influenced the participants to arrive at the same conclusions I held. I strived to remain objective and withhold my personal feelings and allowed the participants the opportunities organically speak, develop, and create their own revelations and beliefs about their experiences with occupational stress and coping.

Design of the Study

Two primary research processes were utilized in the overall design of the study: Rosenberg and Yates' (2007) Case Study Schematic and Creswell's (2007) Data Collection. Rosenberg and Yates' (2007) case study schematic was used to help understand the overall case study design. The schematic included nine elements needed for a case study research design:

- pose the research question;
- identify the underpinning theories;
- determine the case—its context and the phenomena of interest;
- determine the specific case study approach;
- identify the data collection methods most suitable to answer the research questions;
- select analysis strategies appropriate to each of these data collection strategies;
- refine the analysed [sic] data through the analytical filter;
- use matrices to reduce data into manageable chunks and conceptual groupings; and
- determine conclusions and develop a case description. (Rosenberg & Yates, 2007, p. 449)

Creswell's (2007) Data Collection Circle guided the data collection process for this study, as exhibited by Figure 5. The model includes seven primary stages in acquiring data for a

qualitative study: select the site, gain access, select participants, collect data, document information, resolve issues, and store data.



*Figure 5. Data Collection Process. Adapted from *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, by J.W. Creswell, 2007, p. 118. Copyright 2007 by Williams Publishing.*

Thus, when conducting research, the combined processes of Creswell (2007) and Rosenberg and Yates (2007) helped create a well-rounded data collection process that was qualitatively sound and consistent with the case study research design.

Research Site

The research location chosen for this study was a bachelors, masters, and doctoral granting university located in Texas. Interviews and data collection occurred on-site in the participant's offices, classrooms, regular work settings, or privately reserved meeting rooms on

campus. All interviews and observations took place on-site via face-to-face interaction. In addition to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, I also gained site access by acquiring IRB approval from the research location; this also demonstrated additional steps taken to enhance academic rigor, maintain research ethics, and protect research participants.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Creswell (2007) defined purposeful sampling as a major issue in case study research. Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted that qualitative researchers usually work with small samples; therefore, only four participants were selected to participate in the study. Two full-time university faculty members and two full-time university administrators were invited to participate in the study. Scott-Jones (2000) asserted that recruitment through archival data bases can be utilized during the research process. Thus, for the purpose of this study, an employee directory was acquired from the Office of Public Information at the site location.

Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers conducting case studies are also allowed to find a “maximum variation” of cases (p. 120). Therefore, there were established parameters for this study. All participants were at least 18 years of age. Additionally, participants were full-time employees of the research site and were classified as either a faculty or administrator. Invited based on Office of Public Information Open Records Request, 374 employees (168 administrators and 206 faculty) were emailed a Participant Invitation Letter (see Appendix A) to solicit participation. Once participants responded to the Participant Invitation Letter, they were asked to complete a Pre-Assessment Inquiry (see Appendix B) to self-report their stress experiences. The Pre-Assessment Inquiry consisted of five demographic questions, six

occupation questions, and thirteen stress-related questions. Each of the stress questions coincided with the substantive theoretical frameworks: P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty. Of the 374 requests, only eight participants fully completed the Pre-Assessment Inquiry necessary to participate in the study. Other people responded; however, they said they were apprehensive of speaking out, fearful of being identified, or lacked the time to complete the Pre-Assessment.

Creswell (2007) noted that researchers should select participants “who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas” (p. 133). Moreover, Rubin and Rubin (1995) stated, “The interviewer...should be, if not a friend to the interviewee, at least a partner or collaborator” (p. 37). Thus, employees with whom I had prior relationships with were not omitted from the participant pool of eight responders. This allowed participants the comfort to speak freely and allowed me, as the researcher, to question participants in-depth more quickly than if the participants and researchers were unfamiliar with one another.

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) noted that qualitative purposeful sampling allows researchers to “intentionally select participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or key concept being explored in the study” (p. 173). Thus, participants were selected based on their level of self-reported experiences that coincided with the substantive theoretical frameworks for this study: P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty. To maintain consistency, participant responses were compiled into a Participant Selection Grid (see Appendix D). The Participant Selection Grid included the employee label (faculty or administrator), pseudonym, gender, marital status, number of children, hours worked, and ethnicity. This provided a snapshot of other potential stressors that could emerge from the study. Additionally, questions regarding participants’ perceived amount of control, amount of work stress, amount of clarity,

stress associated with time, task demands, personal ambition, and decision making were also included. Participants were asked to rate their experiences within these fields on a scale of 1-10, one being the lowest and ten being the highest. From there, participants who had the highest stress averages were selected to participate in the study. This study sought to explore how faculty and administrators experienced occupational stress similarly and/or differently, rather than to thoroughly explore why they did not experience occupational stress. Thus, only the participants with higher amounts of perceived stress were included. Additionally, to ensure confidentiality, participants selected pseudonyms. The faculty pseudonyms were Lorraine and LaDoctor, and the administrator pseudonyms were Cynthia and Aguilar.

Researcher's Role

The researcher's role in case study highly informs the study (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (1998) stated that in qualitative research, the primary tool for data collection and analysis is the researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) stated that qualitative research is heavily guided by how the researcher views the world. Researchers are "bound" to their epistemological and ontological constructs; this may often guide how the researcher investigates the phenomenon and analyzes the data (Bateson, 1972). To ensure that all data collection mirrored the participants' experiences within the occupational stress phenomenon, Rosenberg and Yates' (2007) case study schematic was used to help understand the overall case study design. The schematic's nine elements helped inform the researcher's process and guide the data collection process. Thus, the researcher's knowledge and skill level with qualitative data collection and analysis were essential to this study.

As a researcher, I had both an insider and outsider role within the discovery process (Merriam et. al, 2001). My role as researcher was from an insider perspective, since I was

familiar with the university school system and had experience with administrative roles within the system. However, my experiences and subjectivities differed from participants due to years of service, social interactions, departments, roles, job duties, and supervisor expectations. I also served in the capacity as an outsider, in that I had no full-time faculty experience in higher education. Although I had adjunct teaching experience, that differed significantly from full-time faculty due to course load, students taught, time availability, and program expectation.

Data Collection

Data was collected over a period of four months during which interviews, document analysis, and observations were utilized to understand the occupational stress phenomenon. Data collection is essential in qualitative research. Yin (2003) noted six primary case study data evidence sources: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifact. All were used throughout this study with the exception of physical artifacts.

Interview Methods

The recorded interviews were a combination unstructured and semi-structured conversational interviews (Saldana, 2009; Creswell, 2007). Qualitative interviews are intended to function as a conversation (Creswell, 2007), so this allowed participants to speak more comfortably regarding their experiences with this phenomenon. Fontana and Frey (2008) noted that unstructured interviews provide great depth. Therefore, I conducted the interviews in the participants' work environment with an informal tone for a more natural and thorough depiction of stressful experiences. Through numerous interview questioning techniques: tour questions, open-ended questions, descriptive questions, example questions, and structural questions, I

gained a broader perspective of higher education faculty and administrative job-related stress experiences.

Creswell (2007) recommended that researchers develop an interview protocol form for each interview. The protocol form should contain four to five open-ended questions, space for notes, time, date, location, interviewee pseudonym, interviewer, and description (Creswell, 2007) (see Appendix E). Thus, although each interview was unstructured or semi-structured, there was a preliminary plan in place. However, additional interview questions emerge from the stories and participant responses. Because of the unpredictable nature of qualitative research, it is important to understand that the primary research plan may gradually alter once in the field; therefore, it is important to understand that “qualitative interviewing design is flexible, iterative, and continuous” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43).

Using Creswell’s (2007) interview protocol method, each interview had a central theme and five primary questions. Each participants’ interview protocol forms differed based on his/her Pre-Assessment Inquiry responses, informal conversations, or overall job roles. However, all of the lines of questioning were consistent with the particular theme interview. The theme for Interview 1 Protocol Form (see Appendix F) was Job Duties and Stress Overview. Participants were asked five general questions regarding their job duties, personal expectations, typical workdays, and feelings of stress. During the second and third interviews, participants were asked follow-up questions from the previous interview, observations, or casual discussions. Interview 2 Protocol Form (see Appendix G) sought to explore participants’ stressors associated with P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty. During the first interview, participants each expressed differences between stress and anger, so follow-up questions focused on clarification, job stressors, and Pre-Assessment Inquiry follow-up questions. The final interview, Interview 3

Protocol Form (see Appendix H), asked follow-up questions regarding perceived changes within their departments they wanted and/or needed, and questions about their stress level since the start of a new semester. The five thematic questions were regarding a consistent pattern that emerged with all participants, helping.

Document Analysis

Research has shown that employees often experience job dissatisfaction due to their perceived job demands and how it corresponds with their job descriptions and compensation. Therefore, job descriptions and salary information were reviewed to determine whether employees at the site location experienced stress associated with the conflict job demands and personal needs and expectations. Job descriptions provided clear information regarding the basic expectations of employees; therefore, job description and salary information were requested through an Open Records Request from the Office of Public Information. This helped determine how faculty and administrators perceived their work load in comparison to compensation, as well as the amount of effort and dedication they devoted to each task. Employee perception and effort helped capture and describe the occupational stress triggers for both faculty and administrators.

Observations and Journals

Participants involved in this study were observed two times in their work settings, which included meetings, workshops, classrooms, or offices. Following Gmelch and Burn's (1990) daily stress journal, participants were asked to complete a daily stress journal for a period of two weeks. Participants were asked to identify "the most stressful single event [and] the most stressful series" (p. 5) they encountered each day. Participants were also asked to include summaries and details of stressful encounters, feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity,

interpretations of how the interaction occurred, and perceived cause of stress. This data would have provided a snapshot of participants' daily interactions and information about how levels of stress may vary or remain consistent. Although participants were asked to complete a daily journal, only Aguilar attempted to keep the journal. However, he ultimately did not finish a complete entry and said he found it easier to informally discuss his stressors as they occurred. Lorraine did not complete the journal; she indicated feeling stressed just recalling and "reliving" stressful experiences. The other two participants LaDoctor and Cynthia did not express why they did not complete the journal.

Data Management

Data management is imperative in qualitative research in that it influences feasibility of quality analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) also suggested using the data management technique that works best for the researcher; therefore, I had multiple methods of data storage. Using electronic graphics and maps to link key themes, electronic storage with individual participant files, and visual data correlation visuals helped organize data and encourage smoother analysis and synthesis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Creswell and Clark (2011) suggested that qualitative researchers utilize an electronic data management system to help code, develop themes, and categorize the data. Thus, NVivo 11 was used to help analyze the data, through the coding, categorizing, and theming processes. Additionally, the primary dissertation 2.0 GB USB flash drive, was backed up with a secondary 8.0 GB USB flash drive. All of the electronic data was protected with a password only known to the researcher. Additionally, any hard copies printed were stored in a locked filing cabinet according to date and participant in my office, which is also locked when unoccupied. All hard copies only contained pseudonyms.

All interviews and observations were recorded using a Livescribe ECHO smartpen, which electronically records audio and written notes when used with the Livescribe dot paper (Livescribe, 2014). The documents were transferred electronically using a primary 2.0 Gig electronic USB flash drive. This allowed me to have both written and electronic documents in the event of technological failure. The information was uploaded into the Livescribe Desktop software for Windows. Participant pseudonyms were used on all documents, other than the signed documents stored in the locked filing cabinet. Once the notes and audio were uploaded onto the desktop or online connect portal, I was able to search for content written in notes by keyword, time, or date. The pen also allowed me to replay recorded audio with corresponding written notes. This helped manage data, enhanced transcribing, and informed member checking.

Reciprocity, Ethics, and Risks

Reciprocity and Benefits

Participants did not receive any monetary or tangible compensation for participating in this study. However, each research participant had the opportunity to better evaluate their work, effort, and professional goals and relationships. Additionally, participants were able to identify triggers and better cope with occupational stress, thereby enhancing their perceived overall job satisfaction, work productivity, and effectiveness. If the need arose, participants would have been provided with information to the career counseling to help them cope with job demands and personal needs. The same would have applied for employees who felt the need to seek emotional counseling. However, none of the participants expressed a need for career counseling or emotional counseling.

During the final interview, participants were each asked to describe their thoughts on participating in the study. Each confirmed that it was an eye-opening experience for each of

them. Aguilar and Lorraine said this study helped them see how others perceive them and helped them to identify their weaknesses. Cynthia said this study helped highlight how others perceived her, her feelings of mistreatment within the workplace, and how she reacted to various situations. Thus, it was a reflective experience for her. LaDoctor also expressed that this research helped her refine her thoughts on how she perceived herself and how others perceived her. Thus, each participant within this study gained key insight regarding their personality, work place environment and relationships, and stress triggers that seemed to have a lasting impression on them, thereby supporting the intent to provide reciprocity and benefits within this study.

Ethics

Maintaining strong ethics is a key concern in all research. To protect participants, each signed a Consent Form (see Appendix C), which included maintaining confidentiality, to protect themselves, their peers, their employment, and their reputations. Each participant selected pseudonyms for notes, interviews, and observations; this ensured that no names are mentioned throughout the study when recording. As a researcher, my goals were to protect the participants from any harm or wrongdoing as a result of participating in this study. Any names or titles of co-workers the participant divulges were also assigned pseudonyms to minimize participants' employment and personal risks. Institutional Review Board approval was acquired prior to beginning the study, and each participant received and sign Consent Forms. To cross-check the accuracy of interpretations, participants had opportunities to review the analyses to determine whether their experiences were accurately captured and conveyed. Mero-Jaffe (2011) advocated for transcript member checks, stating that it helps "safeguard" the researcher (p. 241). Mero-Jaff (2011) also stated that it is the researcher's obligation to inform the interviewees of the transcripts and data analysis.

Anticipated Barriers and Risks

While positive data collection and rapport was expected, the close nature and pre-existing relationships with some of the participants could have affected data collection, in that participants could have assumed I felt the same way they did based on previous conversations. Participants could have also felt the need to falsify or exaggerate experiences to provide information they assumed I needed or want to help me complete the research. Additionally, I anticipated that there might be certain areas where the participants only wanted to mention certain things “on the record.”

Although these were all anticipated barriers, I prevented them by refraining from engaging in side conversations during the interview. Also, I attempted to be mindful of non-verbal reactions such as head nods, to avoid indicating that I agreed or disagreed with the participants’ point of view. There were a few times when participants expressed sensitive topics or private topics; however, they were not included as a means to preserve confidentiality and to maintain positive rapport with participants.

Adding to the anticipated research barriers were some perceived risks for participants. Prior to the beginning of the study, it was important that each participant felt comfortable with the study. They needed to know their identities are concealed and that no one would know they were participants in the study. Because some of the occupational stress experiences were direct results of co-workers or supervisors, the consequence of having their identities revealed could have resulted in retaliation or reprimand from superiors, negative peer relationships, increased job load, negative evaluations, or loss of employment. Therefore, confidentiality was imperative.

Additionally, participants may run the risk of experiencing emotional stress because the research calls for them to recall stressful situations. This causes a potential threat to the research methodology (McCosker, Barnard, & Gerber, 2001); therefore, it was important to follow sensitive research protocol. McCosker, Barnard, and Gerber (2001) suggested that sensitive research may cause immediate or delayed physical and/or psychological impact on research participants and recommend having participants participate in a pre-study preventative workshop. Thus, participants in this study could have participated in stress management workshops; however, no one requested to participate in them.

The primary goal of confidentiality is to maintain privacy (Folkman, 2000). Parker and Ulrich (1990) noted that there is a difference between research and intervention. While the researcher should not act as a “counselor,” the researcher should allow the participant time to cry or express emotion (Parker & Ulrich, 1990). Wilde (1992) described such occurrences as contributing depth to the data. When participants displayed emotion, they were allowed the appropriate pauses needed, and given the opportunity to stop the interview or continue, but no advice was provided to help console them. Folkman (2000) noted that researchers, who are not trained clinicians should also use wise judgment when interpreting data and determining the need to intervene on a participant’s behalf to consult a third party. Folkman (2000) stated that maintaining confidentiality, even when participants indicate statements out of emotion occur, such as involving a third party counselor, could easily be misinterpreted and should be done so with extreme caution. Therefore, participants were allowed to speak freely to express emotions regarding their stress experiences.

Analytical Methodology

Because inductive analysis is based on the ideas that the researcher does not have a pre-determined hypothesis (Bhattacharya, 2007) it was essential to attempt to remove all assumptions about possible causes of occupational stress. Using thematic analysis, interviews, observations, and document analysis methods, the organized structure of discovering connections and relationships within the data were helpful and essential to this study. Rubin and Rubin (1995) stated, “the purpose of the data analysis is to organize the interviews to present a narrative that explains what happened or provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behavior” (p. 229). The participants provided brief stories that unfolded (Creswell, 2007) throughout the study to help supply in-depth understanding of their stressful experiences. Because data analysis is a recursive process (Saldana, 2009), a combination of analytical tools were used to code and evaluate the data using techniques in the coding process.

Throughout the data analysis process, it was important to employ coding and categorizing to the documents, observations, and interview transcripts. “In analytic induction, researchers scan their data in search of categories and relationships among the data” (Bhattacharya, 2007, p. 75). Additionally, Saldana (2009) contended that coding may undergo numerous cycles in order to fully yield the depth of the phenomenon. Therefore, it was expected that after establishing themes in First and Second Cycle coding, there would be some unanswered questions regarding themes and categories; therefore, the data was coded a third and fourth time to clearly determine dominant categories by combining and omitting others. “Coding is not just labeling, it is linking,” (Saldana, 2009, p. 8).

Being a novice qualitative researcher, I first started incorporating In Vivo coding manually with the research participant Cynthia, since I began interviewing and observing her

first. Although the examples provided in this section only chronicle Cynthia's data analysis process, this process was done in its entirety for each of the participants' first interviews. The process, however, did shift to only using Nvivo software after I had established a trend of consistency within the analysis. The following section details the coding, categorizing, and theming process during the data analysis phase.

Coding

During the First Cycle of data coding, In Vivo Coding was used to analyze the data, assign codes, and determine categories and themes. In Vivo Coding is a technique used to describe data by assigning a word or brief phrase (Saldana, 2009). Saldana (2009) stated that In Vivo is appropriate for all qualitative studies; primarily for novice researchers. Because In Vivo Coding serves as a tool to maintain the pureness of the participant's voice, this method was key to further explore the occupational stress phenomenon from the participants' perspective. In Vivo codes were also used to help avoid transferring my own subjectivities and perceptions onto the participant. For each participant's first interview, I placed all the text on one side of the page and left the other side blank to include codes line by line. I used In Vivo Coding by selecting exact words or brief phrases from the participants to summarize and code the data. The In Vivo codes were hand-written in black ink to the right side of the paper, as represented in Figure 6.

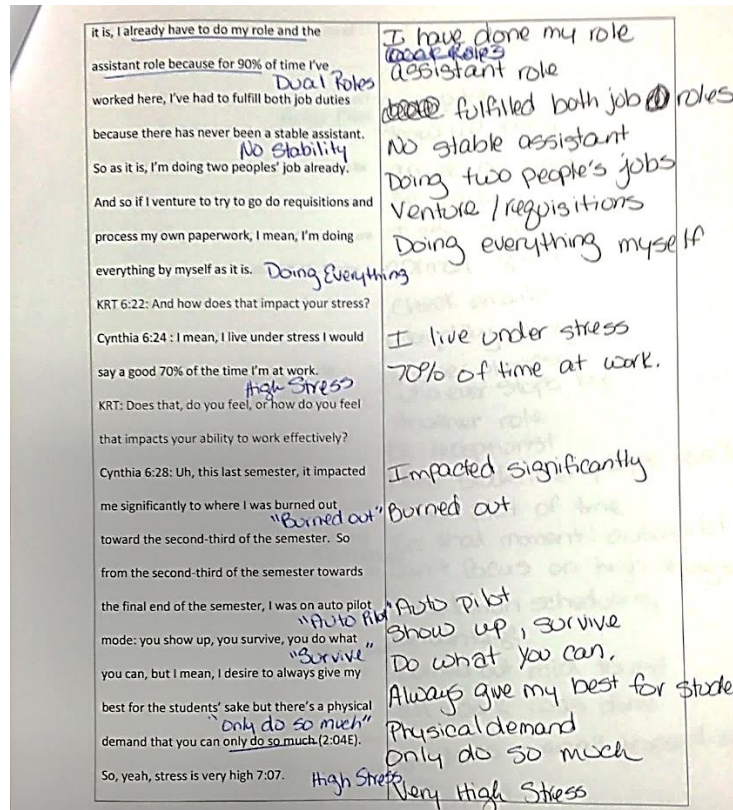


Figure 6. Visual representation of manual In Vivo and Emotion Coding, using Cynthia's Interview 1 as an example.

During the Second Cycle coding process, Emotion codes were used. Continuing with the manual mode of coding, I went through the interviews a second time, only this time, I summarized exact emotions or inferred emotions throughout the document. Emotion codes were written on the right side of the page in blue ink, as illustrated in Figure 6. Thus, In Vivo codes were in black and Emotion codes were in blue. Emotion codes represented participants stated emotions and the emotions I perceived from their speech, behavior or mannerisms (Saldana, 2009). Additionally, Emotion codes were influential in helping me better analyze the data through inferencing and interpretation. Saldana (2009) stated that a researcher's "ability to 'read' nonverbal cues, to infer underlying affects, and to sympathize and empathize with [his or her] participants, are critical for Emotion coding" (p. 86). Throughout the process, I was able to

sympathize and empathize with the participant. Thus, Emotion Coding aided in helping to bring the data to “life.” Multiple coding methods were used to uncover the layers within the stress experience.

As the data analysis continued and I became more comfortable coding, I also utilized Pattern Coding to further explore the data when trying to explore connections and form emerging categories. Pattern Coding was utilized to develop common links as to why the participant experiences occupational stress. Saldana (2009) asserted “explaining ‘why’ something happens is a slippery task in qualitative inquiry” (p. 154). However, with Pattern Coding the outcome is to allow the researcher to develop a working justification or explanation of why the something is happening (Saldana, 2009). Thus, Pattern Coding complemented both the methodological framework of interpretivism, Cycle One In Vivo Coding, and Cycle Two Emotion Coding. This was also a valuable way to cross-check data and assertions by taking the participants’ own language and developing a hypothesis to support the research. Miles and Huberman (1994) determined that Pattern Coding is helpful in developing major themes, examining social networks and human relationships, and determining explanations and causations within the research and codes. Additionally, Miles and Huberman (1994) mentioned that not all Pattern codes lead to major themes. Saldana (2009) described pattern codes as metaphors; this helped establish connections and patterns between the participants’ perceptions and realities of their occupational stress experiences.

Thus, initial coding process incorporated In Vivo codes to capture the obvious top layer: language. And, Emotion coding uncovered the inner feelings of the participant and help remove my subjectivity of associating unhappiness with stress. The Emotion codes provided depth to the

participants' experiences. Pattern codes helped lead to categories and themes for depth and richness.

Categories

Saldana (2011) described categories as the researcher's "best attempt to cluster" similar topics collected from the data collection process (p. 91). He asserted that categorizing is not "perfectly bound," but organizes the data into a concise order to help dissect the material (Saldana, 2011, p.91). Thus, all codes collected from each participant's interviews were combined into categories based on relevance.

During the manual data analysis process, the codes were then transferred to mini Post-it notes to assist in the categorizing phase. Each In Vivo code was written on multi-colored Post-its, while the Emotion codes were written on yellow Post-its. Based on the post-it In Vivo codes, I created initial categories. Still using Cynthia's first interview as an example, her first interview categories included: coping, personal values, workload, multiple roles, interoffice conflict, supervisor relationships, organizational change, communication, understaffing, boundaries, expectations (supervisor), responsibilities, work habits, personality traits, personal employee expectations, personal goals, supervisor perceptions, employee perceptions, information sharing, symbols, supplies and needs, time, job duties, skill set/job knowledge, service, and other duties as assigned, devalued, job security, equality, compensation. Categories were then condensed and duplicates were removed. Then, each category was written on an 8x10 colored sheet of paper, and the corresponding codes (written on Post-its) were placed on the category sheet, as represented in Figure 7.

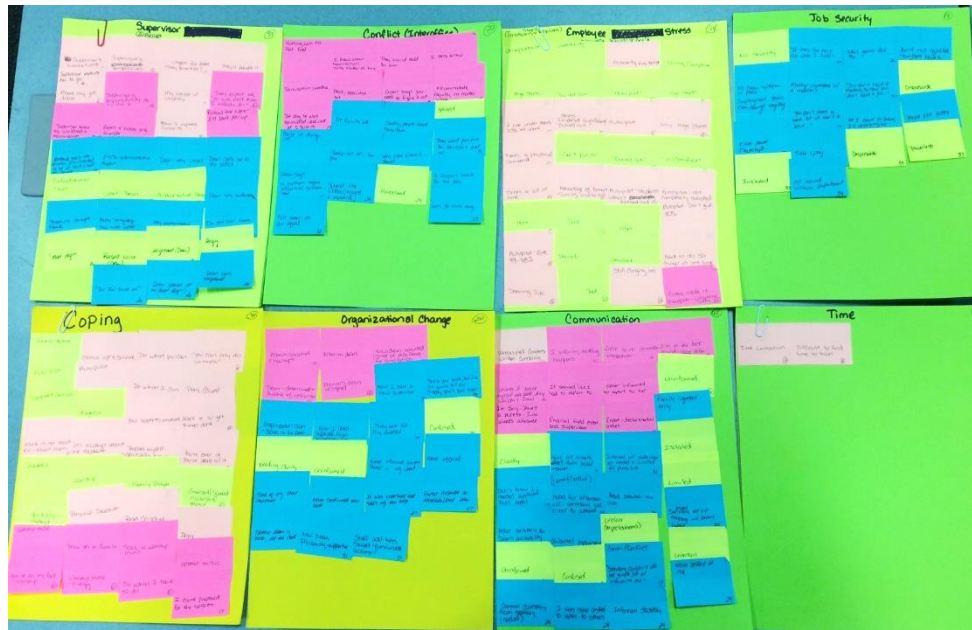


Figure 7. Post-It Manual Categorizing. Visual representation of manual categorizing process based, using Cynthia's Interview 1 as an example.

The codes from each category were counted; categories with few or no codes were removed or condensed with other categories.

The categories were then put into an Excel chart based on code frequency. Figure 8 provides an example of how Cynthia's first interview categories were created using In Vivo and Emotion Coding.

Cynthia Interview 1 Manual Category Representation

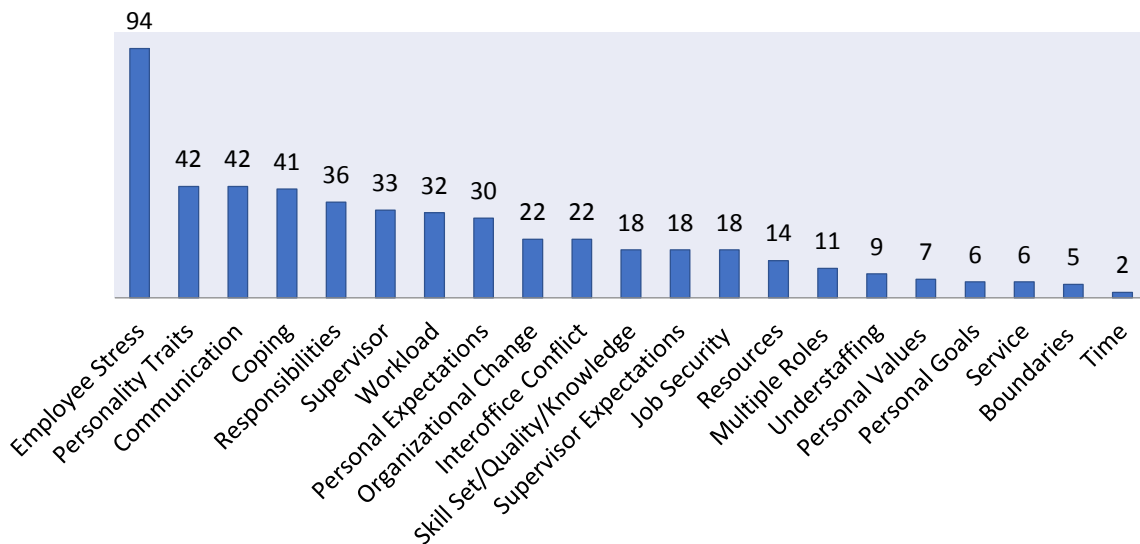


Figure 8. Manual Category Representation Example. First cycle categorizing created in Microsoft Excel from manual data analysis for Cynthia's Interview 1.

After the categories were combined into an Excel spreadsheet, I began to condense the categories. Cynthia's 21 categories from her first interview were then condensed into twelve categories. Using PowerPoint graphic organizers, I began to group the categories based on similarities, as demonstrated in Figure 9.

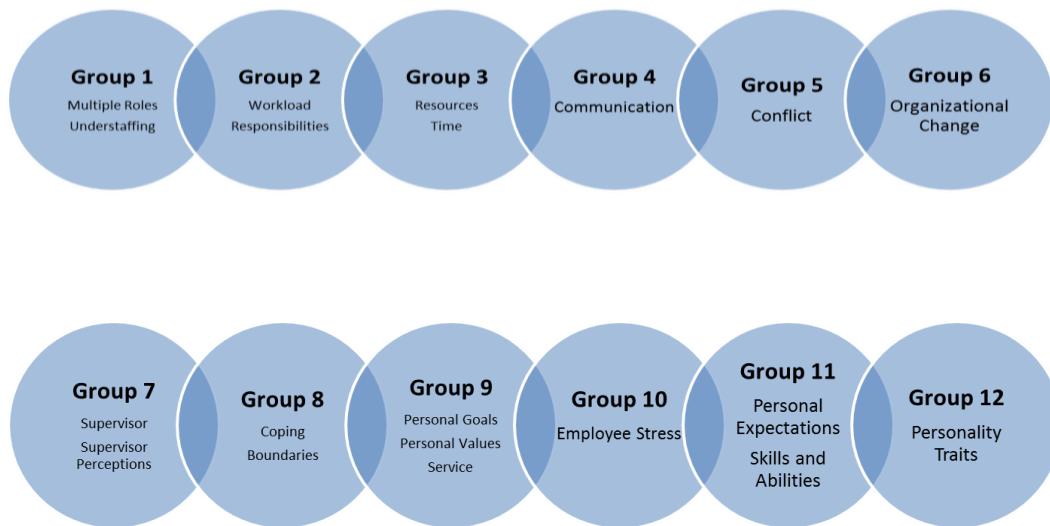


Figure 9. Condensed Category Representation Categorizing process of combining categories based on data collected from Cynthia's Interview 1.

Because the manual process proved to be both a time-intensive and tedious task, I then began incorporating the use of NVivo Software. NVivo helped double check my manual coding, to gain a different perspective, and to streamline the analysis process. Since I already had my preliminary codes, I created them as nodes in NVivo. I then, went through the transcript a third time to reassign the codes and create NVivo nodes (categories). This grouping was done without referring to the first manual categorization. Still using Cynthia's first interview to demonstrate the process, 20 NVivo nodes were created. After the codes were completed in NVivo, I ran a visual chart representation of the nodes, as illustrated in Figure 10.

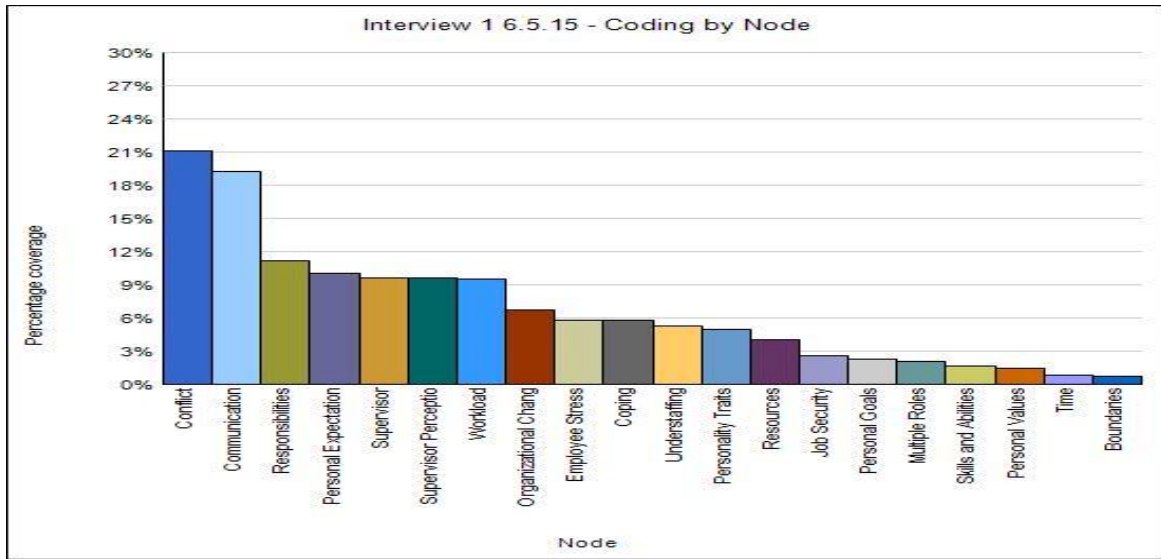


Figure 10. NVivo category/node representation. Created from the nodes formed in Cynthia's Interview 1.

I then compared the manual categories to the NVivo categories to double check my coding process. This helped me to gain confidence as a novice researcher and to confirm perceived accuracy. Looking at Cynthia's top ten categories from both the manual categorization and NVivo coding and categorization, seven of the ten were the same; Table 2 provides an example of this process. The asterisk within the chart represents the category that was present in both the manual and NVivo data analysis process.

Table 2

Manual and NVivo Category Comparison

Manual	Nodes
Employee Stress*	Conflict
Personality Traits	Communication*
Communication*	Responsibilities*
Coping	Personal Expectations*
Responsibilities*	Supervisor*
Supervisor*	Supervisor Expectations
Workload*	Workload*
Personal Expectations*	Organizational Change*
Organizational Change*	Employee Stress*

Note. Sample category comparison for Cynthia Interview 1 based on manual and NVivo coding and categorizing.

Themes

Saldana (2011) asserted that data could also be placed into themes to help explore patterns as well as to regroup and organize the data. Thus, after the data was coded and categorized, themes began to emerge. Using the NVivo analysis, theme nodes were created. Initial themes were labeled and then condensed to short phrases. For Cynthia, nine themes emerged:

- a. Poor communication causes conflict (Poor Communication)
- b. Employee perceptions of job security causes stress and uncertainty (Job Insecurity)
- c. Limited resources cause increased workload (Understaffing)
- d. Organizational change causes confusion, conflict, and uncertainty (Organizational Change)
- e. Increased job demands cause burnout (Workload)

- f. Negative working relationships increase conflict (Negative Inter-Office Relationships)
- g. Employee expectations and values conflict with current working environment (Negative Working Environment)
- h. Coping strategies provide hope and support (Coping Techniques)
- i. Emotional stress drains employee (Employee Perceptions)

Just as with the categorizing process, the themes were condensed and combined into three primary themes to analyze and demonstrate the data. As an added step, NVivo was used to cross-check the themes with the theoretical frameworks. After the NVivo theme nodes were created, I created theory nodes: P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty. Each theme was then placed into the theory nodes to ensure that the data coincided with the substantive frameworks and created a visual theory representation, as illustrated in Figure 11.

Cynthia Interview 1 Theory Representation

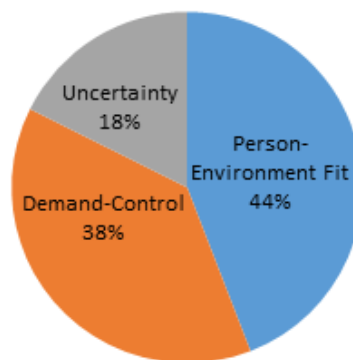


Figure 11. Interview Theory Representation Example. Themes from Cynthia's Interview 1 separated into the three substantive theoretical frameworks: P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty.

This helped me to determine which theories were the most dominantly experienced and least experienced among the participants. In doing, so I was able to determine which occupational stressors had the most impact for higher education faculty and staff.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Creswell and Miller (2000) asserted that there is a general perception that qualitative researchers must do more to demonstrate credibility; therefore, member checking, triangulation, thick description and peer reviews should be conducted regularly. Although Creswell and Miller (2000) only suggested that qualitative researchers employ one or two of these techniques to represent trustworthiness, several were used in this study to demonstrate accuracy, rigor, and trustworthiness. Member checks were conducted to help verify the accuracy of the participants' experiences and of my interpretation and analysis. Member checking involves interacting with participants to allow them to "judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Triangulation is a qualitative process where researchers search through multiple sources of information to compare and develop themes or categories in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Carlson (2010) also confirmed that triangulation can be done, not only by gathering multiple forms of data, but by also using a variety of data analysis to evaluate research findings. Thus, interviews, observations, and analytic memos were utilized to triangulate the data. Saldana (2011) "highly recommended" that researchers take notes throughout the data collection process to make personal notes and thoughts to themselves (p. 39). Analytic memos were done with each participant after each interview. This helped inform the data analysis and enhanced the amount of description to convey the data. Thick description was used throughout the data collection and analysis process. Carlson (2010) described thick

description as a technique to create an emotional connection and sense of realism with the participants and the study.

Academic rigor was employed throughout this study. Creswell (2007) described academic rigor through multiple data sources, time in the field, and detail, all of which were utilized in this study. Interviews, observations, and documents were collected over a four month period. Creswell (2007) stated that rigor is demonstrated when extensive data collection occurs. Thus, the data inventory Table 3 indicates that approximately 224 pages of participant data were collected. The data inventory contains the number of single spaced pages of raw data collected from each participant.

Table 3

Participant Data Collection Inventory

Data Source	Lorraine	LaDoctor	Cynthia	Aguilar	
Interview 1	22 Pages	17 Pages	13 Pages	13 Pages	
Interview 2	17 Pages	16 Pages	19 Pages	18 Pages	
Interview 3	8 Pages	11 Pages	13 Pages	16 Pages	
Observation 1	2 Pages	2 Pages	2 Pages	1 Page	
Observation 2	3 Pages	2 Pages	2 Pages	2 Pages	
Informal Conversations/Observations	5 Pages	2 Pages	0 Pages	2 Pages	
Position Descriptions	4 Pages	4 Pages	4 Pages	4 Pages	
Total Pages	61 Pages	54 Pages	53 Pages	56 Pages	224 Pages

Note: Participant Data Collection Inventory was collected over a period of four months and consisted of a total of twelve interviews, six observations, four informal conversations/observations, and four job descriptions.

In addition to the 224 pages of raw data, the data were coded three times, categorized twice, and themed twice. Also, 26 pages of analytic memos contributed to the data collection process. The

rigor of the extensive data collection process helped insure that this study was ethically grounded, trustworthy, and sound in theory, methodology, and analysis.

Chapter Summary

Chapter III outlined the methods that were used to collect, manage, and interpret data. Multiple case study was conducted with four research participants: two administrators and two faculty members. The data were examined through the lens of interpretivism, which explores the meanings participants assign to objects and experiences within their experienced reality. Data were coded and themed by using In Vivo and Emotion coding to gain a full scope of the occupational stress experience. This qualitative study demonstrates academic rigor and trustworthiness through utilizing multiple data sources and conducting member checks to help triangulate the data.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Chapter IV is divided into three sections: single-case analysis, within-case analysis, and cross-case analysis. During the single-case analysis, each participant was evaluated individually and themes were presented. Then, each pair of faculty and administrators were examined as a within-case analysis. During the within-case analysis, all themes were examined from each group and narrowed down to three consistent themes. Finally, faculty and administrator pairs were analyzed collectively for similarities and/or differences as a cross-case analysis. In doing so, the data was analyzed from three perspectives to gain a well-rounded and rich description of how higher education administrators and faculty experience occupational stress.

The purpose of this study was to explore how two higher education faculty and two higher education administrators described occupational stress at a Texas University. Using the theoretical lens of interpretivism, interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to understand how higher education faculty and administrators assigned meanings to their stressful experiences. Additionally, three occupational stress theories, Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit), Demand-Control (D-C) Theory, and Uncertainty Theory, helped provide a holistic perspective of the similarities and differences between higher education faculty and administrators' perceptions, meanings, and stressful triggers associated with occupational stress. This study explored four research questions:

1. How do higher education faculty and administrators experience occupational stress due to conflicts between personality and work environment?
2. How do higher education faculty and administrators describe stress related to work tasks and control?

3. What do higher education faculty and administrators consider as work-related stressors due to uncertainty?
4. What are the outcomes of stress among higher education faculty and administrators?

Using two full-time faculty members and two full-time administrators, each research question was explored regarding various scenarios and experiences of three occupational stress theories: Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit), Demand-Control, and Uncertainty.

Data Analysis Introduction

As mentioned in the Reciprocity, Ethics, and Risks section in Chapter III, my ultimate goal, as the researcher, was to maintain confidentiality and protect the participants while exploring higher education faculty and administrator stress experiences. Thus, while pseudonyms were used to conceal the identities of the participants, it was also important to remove obvious details that might reveal the identity of the participants. To better understand the data analysis, participant profiles were created to help represent participants' personalities, which helped illuminate participants' perceptions of stressful encounters. To enhance trustworthiness, member checks were conducted, as mentioned in the Trustworthiness and Rigor section of Chapter III. Throughout the member checks, each participant was provided a copy with their data analysis section and asked to address areas of concerns or questions of accuracy.

All participants stated they were pleased to participate in the study. They stated that this study helped them see themselves through the eyes of the researcher. Two participants were pleased with their data analysis, while two expressed a few concerns. The two administrators, Cynthia and Aguilar were both pleased with the write up. Cynthia stated that she was thankful for the experience. She stated, "All I can say is thank you!...only God knows why he brought us to cross paths. Reading this...made me realize that God makes all things work together for

good.” Aguilar said he found data analysis interesting because it helped him see himself through the eyes of a scholar.

The two faculty, Lorraine and LaDoctor expressed concerns; however, neither disagreed with the analysis. Lorraine offered clarity and expressed concern over various examples that seemed to highlight her personality. However, she ultimately gave permission to use the information as deemed necessary. LaDoctor agreed with the analysis and stated that her write-up was “beautifully” done, but expressed concerns over “anonymity” and retaliation regarding her candidness. I then assured her that I would try to maintain confidentiality as much as possible. Thus, as a means to address participant concerns, the data analysis represented in Chapter IV may contain information that is intentionally vague, as a means to protect the research participants.

Single-Case Participant Analyses

Four participants were selected for this study: two faculty and two administrators. Lorraine and LaDoctor were the faculty members. Lorraine was a full-time instructor with four years of experience in her position. LaDoctor was a non-tenured assistant professor with three years of experience within her department. The two administrators selected were Cynthia and Aguilar. Cynthia was program supervisor with three years of experience in her role. Aguilar was an administrator with four and a half years of experience in his role as an administrator. Each participant engaged in three interviews and allowed two observations as a means to better examine their occupational stressors. In order to understand the lens through which each participant examined stressful situations, gaining insight to their personalities was essential. Thus, each single-case analysis will begin with a personality profile followed by individual data analysis.

Lorraine: “Focus, focus, focus”

Walking swiftly with a smile, briefly glancing at her phone, and greeting her peers, Lorraine said, “Oh good. I have two minutes left on my alarm. I have to set my alarm for everything because I get so easily distracted. I stop and put a load of laundry in, and then go back. I get started on one thing without having finished the other thing. Focus, focus, focus.” Always rushing from one place to another and juggling numerous projects with a smile, Lorraine was a busy full-time instructor for general studies courses. Throughout the data collection process, Lorraine was always smiling but always preparing for her next meeting or appointment. This next section contains Lorraine’s personality, followed by her data analysis and themes.

Lorraine’s Personality

Because Lorraine was most often rushing or mentally thinking about her next activity, so I often had to help her focus. When Lorraine was participating during the interviews, she was easily distracted. During the first interview, even after a late start, she inquired about the recording technology I was using for the study. She was interested in the price, functions, and locations to purchase. Thus, after a late start, I had to refocus Lorraine for our initial purpose for meeting. Shortly after the start of the interview, Lorraine began glancing at her phone. She seemed eager to leave. Lorraine explained, “I’m getting stressed out; I’m feeling these tiny little headaches and pressure right here [places hands in middle of brow and mid-forehead, and giggles]. Thinking about, I’m re-living all these memories.” I apologized, and she continued speaking. “It’s ok [smiles and giggles]. It’s okay; I’m going to yoga... Let me check my things here [looks at cell phone]....so as long as I’m out of here within the next 15, 20 minutes.” Thus, the interview seemed rushed.

During another interview, Lorraine was also easily distracted towards the beginning of the session. I began the interview by asking Lorraine to describe the difference between stress and anger. Within the first few minutes of the interview, Lorraine began staring off and gazing out of the blinds. When I did get her attention, she explained that she saw someone out the window who caught her attention. During the interviews, Lorraine regularly asked me to repeat the question or veered off on slight tangents. Most interviews took some time to get Lorraine into the groove of talking and focusing on the research topic.

Prior to our first observation, Lorraine and I discussed possible times to conduct the observations, and she mentioned an upcoming professional development workshop. She expressed feeling nervous about participating in the workshop. She stated:

I'm already stressed out about this...workshop. I feel like [the topic is] something that I need to work on personally, and that I'm going to be in this room full of others who do it so well. It's just that I'm not familiar with the content, and I just don't want to look dumb. So, I'm very uncertain about the content and my own abilities. I thrive off of engagement and participation. The blank stares or "mummy classes" cause more stress for me because there isn't any engagement or interaction. That's when my palms start to sweat and I feel the internal uneasiness and I begin to speed up and speak more quickly. Although the workshop was five days away, Lorraine had worked herself up into a stressful state by worrying about the unknown. She did not want to feel unprepared or be unable to adequately respond if called upon. Because of her anxiety about the workshop, Lorraine encouraged me to conduct the first research observation during the professional development workshop.

During the actual workshop observation, Lorraine demonstrated physical signs of stress. While participants were engaged in group conversations, Lorraine stated she was stressed and

showed me her palms which were visibly damp from perspiration. She stated, “I’m stressed because my hands are sweating.” I asked why she was feeling stressed, and she responded, “Talk about stress. I’m so nervous that he’s [the presenter] going to ask us to say something.” Also during Lorraine’s observation, she demonstrated self-doubt. On one occasions, Lorraine pointed out her flaws, rather than highlighting her positive attributes. For example, participants were asked to discuss the concept of critical thinking. Lorraine responded to her group with a negative assessment of herself. She stated, “I’m horrible at critical thinking. I make bad decisions every day...No, really, I make terrible decisions.” When asked about often highlighting the negative, Lorraine said she downplays her abilities and points out the negative as a coping mechanism.

Lorraine’s Data Analysis

Throughout the interviews and observations, Lorraine described numerous stressors that contributed to her occupational stress: workload, expectations of herself and others, relationships with others, and devalue. Figure 12 highlights Lorraine’s three primary themes: Expectations/Perceptions, Value/Purpose, and Work/Life Balance.

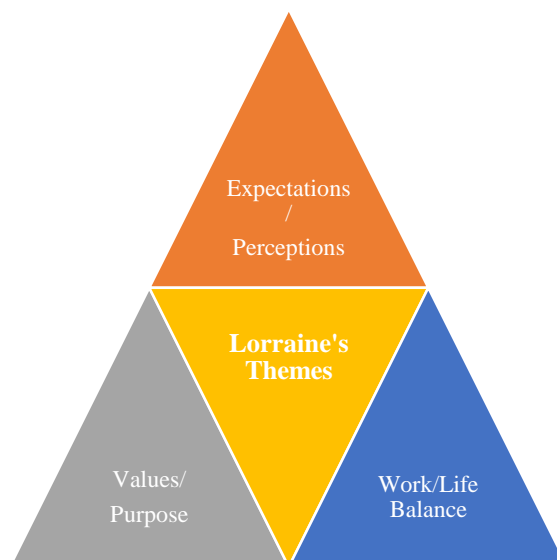


Figure 12. Lorraine’s Theme Analysis. Three primary themes demonstrated from Lorraine’s interviews and observations: Expectations/Perceptions, Value/Purpose, and Work/Life Balance.

The findings revealed how Lorraine interacted with those around her and how she formed meanings based on her beliefs and perceptions.

Expectations/perceptions. The theme of Expectations/Perceptions was prevalent throughout Lorraine’s interviews and observations. Lorraine described herself as having “high expectations,” being “high strung,” and being “intense.” These descriptors were apparent throughout Lorraine’s interviews and observations. Because of Lorraine’s “high expectations,” Lorraine indicated that her peers regarded her as a type of instructional leader. Lorraine stated that her peers considered her as a valuable co-worker and a strong instructor; she stated, “I’ve heard them say, ‘Oh wow! You’re a teacher’s teacher.’” Similarly, Lorraine mentioned that her supervisor also acknowledged that she was one of the “strongest faculty” members within the department. Lorraine indicated she sometimes felt additional pressure to live up to the expectations of others, but her expectations of herself exceeded the expectations others had for

her. She explained, “I’m very, very hard on myself. I have really high, sometimes unrealistic expectations; [I] lack of confidence. I hate that feeling of failure or letting somebody down. So, I put a lot of stress on myself.” During the interviews, Lorraine was slightly bashful when describing how she believed others perceived her. She stated that she did not want to boast and wanted to maintain a sense of “intellectual humility.”

Lorraine also mentioned that she did not want me to believe that all was perfect and well with the quality of her work. However, she often had difficulty finding new examples to demonstrate when she performed less than expected or failed to meet an expectation. Lorraine was only able to provide one example, which was when she made a mistake and sent a private email concerning a student’s grade to the entire class, rather than the intended student. Lorraine was quite flustered by the mistake, and was really hard on herself. She explained how she felt:

And when I saw that, when that thought sunk in, I just had that same sensation again, my heart just dropping to my stomach like a stone and feeling hollow inside and helpless.

And, [I thought] *Oh my God this is terrible. This is terrible for the student.* I felt empathy for the student because I thought she’s gonna be devastating, devastated knowing that the whole class knows. And then, after that was *I violated FERPA, and I’m gonna get fired.* And, that made me really, really nervous and stressed out.... And, I, I was mad at myself. Uh, I I, for being careless, you know, because I, I can’t tell you exactly now how it happened, but obviously it was a careless error. And so, so I was mad at myself. I was probably distracted with something. I get really mad at myself whenever I fall short. I beat myself up pretty good.

Throughout this memory recollection, I noticed a pattern in Lorraine's speech. When recalling stressful situations, Lorraine's speech accelerated and she began to stutter. Thus, this pattern was helpful in pinpointing which situations were more stressful for Lorraine.

Despite the one mistake Lorraine detailed, she described herself as "strong." She elaborated and expanded her definition of strong to extend into her content area, work ethic, and professionalism. She also spoke of herself as a strong teacher because of her nurturing and caring nature, the amount of time and effort she devoted to teaching, and because of her ability to empower students. Lorraine explained, "I believe firmly in that [empowering students], and I believe that what we do helps them become empowered." Lorraine acknowledged that the only way she could truly empower her students was by feeling confident and passionate about the instructional content. She explained, "So, with the teaching, when I feel very passionate about my subject, my topic, and I feel that I know it well. I feel extremely comfortable." Lorraine expressed pleasure in being able to adjust her classroom content within the parameters of the course design to coincide with topics of interest and importance to her as well as beneficial to students.

However, when Lorraine did not feel passionate about instructional content, she stated that it was stressful and difficult to empower students. Lorraine mentioned that part of her job was to facilitate presentations about various units across campus. While she was comfortable with her course content, she did not consider herself an expert in other areas. Lorraine described teaching unfamiliar subjects as "high strained." She stated:

...[I feel uncomfortable] when I have to teach, or show, or cover a PowerPoint on [certain topics]. I don't feel qualified. I don't really know what I'm talking about, so I feel uncomfortable and a little stressed out about that. I don't *like* doing that. So, that's

high strain. I just kinda wanna get it over with. And, I feel like I'm gonna go on stage and perform [laughs] and convince the students that I know a little bit.

Lorraine explained that she found it difficult to inspire her students and encourage them to be active learners when she did not feel excited and comfortable with the content herself. She continued:

If I'm gonna teach something, I feel like I really should know it well. You know, well enough to get my students excited about it. And, some things, I mean, you just kinda have to, and there are actual pieces of information and resources things you need to know and talk about. And so, I don't like just having my students just be passive. I want them to be engaged, to have some conversation, bring in their own personal experiences, so I try to work on that as well....So, it's stressful cause I don't, like I said, they don't get excited.

Thus, Lorraine's discomfort seemed to seep into her classroom environment and impede on the level of student engagement and interaction because she was sometimes unable to inspire her students. Additionally, Lorraine also received opposition from students, parents, faculty, and university administrators, who failed to see the value in her course.

Values/purpose. The theme of value and purpose in the workplace was described by Lorraine as being important to her. Although she had a positive working environment, value and purpose were two of her essential workplace needs. Lorraine expressed received criticism from students, parents, faculty, and executive administrators. Lorraine said she felt stressed when others failed to see the value in the quality and purpose of her courses or the impact the course content had on their academics.

According to Lorraine, faculty, students, and parents devalued Lorraine's courses. This was an ongoing battle for Lorraine, since her personality required that everything have meaning and purpose. For example, Lorraine described a communication exchange between her and a friend discussing the value of Lorraine's course. She recalled:

... one of her [friends] told her that her son is taking *our* [general studies] class. And, that he *loved* it; he loved it. But, then the second semester, he didn't like it so much, and she said. 'Well, I don't know. Why do I have to pay for this class? What is it even for?' And, so my co-worker and friend was sharing this with me, and I said oh my goodness, I hate that feeling.

Lorraine needed to feel the work she did was appreciated and valued by others. When this did not occur, Lorraine became disheartened and stressed.

Lorraine also experienced other examples where she had to further justify and defend her course to parents in public settings. She explained that she was judging an event with other teachers and she had a brief conversation with the mom of one of her students. She recalled:

And, she says, 'He hates your class' [laughs]. And, I was just like, and to top it off, my former [boss]...was in the same room, and I just felt this big [uses fingers to demonstrate size about an inch small] and wanted to be swallowed up by the whole universe. I was just taken aback and sad all at once, and mad too. I think I said something about, 'Oh yes, yes well sometimes students aren't ready attitude wise to receive learning about things that we have to offer them. In this case, diversity, leadership, and [inaudible] which is what the course was about or the cultural diversity....' But, I had to say something; I couldn't stay quiet. I had to defend myself, and maybe I should've just shut up but couldn't.

Lorraine described feeling angry and deflated during that conversation. Additionally, Lorraine provided an example in which students and parents complained to upper administration that her department's courses were a "waste of time." Lorraine was very angered by this complaint, and even more frustrated that higher administrators considered re-evaluating and attempting to intervene to restructure the courses because students and parents failed to see the value in the courses.

Lorraine also indicated that she experienced occupational stress when university leadership failed to see the value in instructional autonomy. Lorraine described a situation where a male administrator "strongly suggested" that a certain reading be covered with the students as a primary text. Lorraine thought the text was extremely vulgar and contained graphic descriptions that could be deemed insensitive to women and female students, as well as inappropriate.

Lorraine recalled that the author was a rapist and chronicled his encounters with his victims.

Lorraine described her feelings as unsettling:

I wondered if maybe if any of our female students had been victims and how uncomfortable it would be for them to have to read a book written by a rapist, and so I was unsettled by that...But, that didn't bother me; I mean that's just his opinion, that's fine. But, the fact that there was so much graphic description in there about that, I thought was a little too much for our freshman. I thought it would may be off putting instead of doing what the author maybe intended to do.

Lorraine was plagued with several issues because of this situation. The first was the lack of sensitivity given to the female students just through the suggestion of making the text a required reading. Lorraine was distressed, not only because of the discomfort of reading the text, but

because she considered the well-being of the students, which seemed to be ignored at the time of the recommendation.

Lorraine was also concerned about the student and parental backlash she and her department would receive because of this text. Lorraine indicated that prior to the text recommendation, a group of students had complained to the president regarding their disregard for the course. The students complained that the course was not necessary and they failed to see the usefulness of the course. Collectively, these past experiences of complaints from students and parents, were intertwined with Lorraine's anger with the text suggestion. She worried that this would increase student and parent frustration, thereby making her work even harder and stress level higher. Lorraine worried that the continued complaints and perceptions of devalue would jeopardize the status of her course:

So, I thought okay, these parents are complaining; these students are complaining about this, you know, well they're gonna read this book and we're gonna get some complaints. I'm sure we are because we have a very conservative population, parents do. I was just angry that there were like just double standards. Or at least that was my perception of it. That we can listen to students and parents so much that so we [administrators] consider taking your course away, but we're also coming in and telling you what book you should read.

The continued interference and perception of devalue posed unwarranted stress upon Lorraine.

Lorraine also expressed concerns of inconsistencies associated with university leadership. She stated that their words expressed appreciation, but their non-verbal actions made her feel unimportant. For example, during a university gathering, the university president presented information regarding how well the institution valued and compensated its employees compared

to other institutions. The presentation listed various titles and salaries, but the instructor title and salary was not listed on the presentation. This made Lorraine question why her title was omitted.

Lorraine explained:

Well, I was wondering, well, where's the instructor column? Mmm hmmm, where's the instructor column? And, why isn't it there? So, that sent—that was an action. So, on the one hand, that same day, later on in the afternoon, we had a meeting where we were told you're appreciated and blah, blah, blah, blah. But, at the same time, the act of not having it there, said, it's like the silent treatment. When somebody gives you the silent treatment, they're saying a lot by saying nothing. So, by not having it there, that said something.

For Lorraine, this confirmed her assumption that external departments and higher administration did not see the value in the work she and her department does. This caused skepticism regarding the genuineness of the compliments.

Lorraine was very deliberate and purposeful in her duties and the tasks she participated in, and she was accustomed to being acknowledged and excelling. Thus, to have a perceived label of mediocrity or devalue placed directly on something she was a part of was stressful for her. This negative perception plagued her enough to cause her self-imposed stress to work harder and more diligently to win over the people who thought negatively of her content area. For example, while planning a partnership with a faculty member from another department, the faculty member was a little rude and disgruntled by the partnership due to a negative past experience with former faculty member within Lorraine's department.

According to Lorraine, the partner faculty mentioned that the previous general studies partnership was "good for nothing." This put added stress on Lorraine to reverse that perception

so that the same assumption was not imposed on her. Lorraine made the decision to become much like an instructional partner to prove her worth and value. She paired the partner faculty readings with her course readings; she brought in course-specific guest speakers; and she coordinated study groups and assignments with the faculty member. Lorraine went above the requirement to try to change the negative perception. Lorraine developed a positive relationship with the faculty member and department because of her expectations of herself. Lorraine would not settle for anything other than positive feedback. In doing so, Lorraine fulfilled her own need to be appreciated and stated that she felt like her work was “good for something.”

Lorraine also described a situation where another university faculty indicated that Lorraine’s students may have cheated on an exam because their pre-test scores were higher than other courses. Lorraine stated that she was upset by this implication and asserted herself by asking for specific information to investigate the issue. Lorraine recalled that the students who scored high were the engineering students and nursing students, students who were enrolled in intense degree programs. Additionally, Lorraine stated that she had encouraged all of her students to review the online textbook and materials prior to taking the exam. Lorraine indicated that she was pleased that it had appeared that the students had listened to her advice. Lorraine recalled that to have an implied accusation of her students’ cheating or her helping her students to cheat was initially upsetting. However, Lorraine consulted with her immediate supervisor and felt reassured that her supervisor did not believe Lorraine to be at fault. Lorraine then resolved the issue by communicating her findings to the faculty member. The scores were discarded and they agreed to facilitate the pre-test earlier during the semester to avoid having the students exposed to the test information. Although this situation angered Lorraine, she asserted herself in

a manner that was calm and professional. Lorraine described herself as being nurturing and patient at work to preserve her professional reputation.

In addition to working as a full-time university instructor, Lorraine also works as an independent teaching consultant. Lorraine stated that she felt honored to be considered for the position to teach or mentor other teachers in the public school systems. She giggled and also stated the extra money was also helpful. While Lorraine considered serving in this role as an honor, she was sometimes met with opposition from the teachers, who did not seem to place the level of importance or value on Lorraine's presentation as she would have expected them to. She explained:

[My friend] and I did a presentation for [school teachers]....And, it was the day right before their Christmas break. And, the morning session went really well. Teachers were cooperative and attentive and participatory, and it was a small group. So, it was a lot of intimacy, and the rapport was really good. And in the afternoon they brought in more teachers, and [my friend] and I just really lost them. Some of them were on their phones, or off topic, and it was really frustrating and stressful at the same time because you wanna perform well, and you wanna be invited back. You know, and the fact that they were just flat out rude, maybe that was more getting angry towards the end [giggles]. But, trying to bring them back in was stressful, and get them focused, and to participate and to see the value in what we were doing. So that was stressful.

Lorraine found this situation stressful because her personal needs were not being met. Lorraine wanted to excel and continue her trend of excellence without impeding on the needs and desires of the participants, but the participants failed to see the value in the presentation. Thus, she experienced anger and frustration due to the conflict of balancing between her needs and the

needs of others. In addition to balancing a full-time job and a consulting position, Lorraine also has to find a balance between work life and family, which can sometimes be a struggle.

Work/life balance. The theme of Work/life balance also emerged throughout Lorraine's data analysis. Lorraine referenced her work-self and home-self as two different personas. She referred to herself as a "little bi-polarish." She recalled:

No, I feel like I speak my mind a little bit more at home than I do at work. I won't be so tactful at home [giggle]. Yeah. I can be pretty rough and tough. You know, I have this kind of approach too. I don't know if you've seen the movie *300*, but it's as though I'm raising Spartans. You know tough, tough, tough. We don't have time for wimps here, you know. And, over here [work] I try really, carefully not to step on anyone's toes or hurt anybody's feelings. You know, I've always been like this. Like as a kid, I never wanted to get in trouble. And, I guess at home, I mean who am I gonna get into trouble with [laughs].

Lorraine also mentioned that she wished she incorporated more of her teaching-self into her parenting. She stated, "I don't know about you, but I wish I would parent the way I teach. I am so impatient as a parent." Lorraine mentioned that at home she would sometimes yell or curse; however, she stated that she would never speak that way in the workplace.

Lorraine continued describing her home life and parenting by recalling a conversation with her sister, where her sister indicated that Lorraine shared similar character traits to the mothers of serial killers. She explained:

And at home, high strung [laughter], hysterical [laugh], short tempered, as opposed to work, very patient. At home I'm very impatient, short tempered, still have the high expectations. You know, if I ask the boys to do something, you know clear off the table;

clean the table. I expect it to be done right. If they're gonna do a chore, I expect them to do it just right. So, that's one of the things that stays in common. I'm also very affectionate with the boys. I still make the lil Noam Chomsky calls it *Mothersque*, I think. I still baby talk, use the *Mothersque* with them. You know, whether it's the 21 year old or the 11 year old. So affectionate. You know it's kinda like a contradiction with two different people you know. Because I'll be loving and kind, and you know 'Oh you're so cute; I missed you' [smile, mimicking squeezing cheeks, light voice] and [then] to 'Did you pick up your room?' [Quick, authoritative tone; laughs]. My sister once told me, she liked to read, and this was some time ago, up on serial killers. And, she goes, 'Did you know that the mothers of serial killers go from one extreme to the other?' And I thought, *Oh my goodness, I'm raising serial killers* [laughing]. I guess they were bi-polar. So, I feel a little bi-polarish sometimes. And so, I have to constantly self-talk, self-talk do self-talk and say recognize, when I'm losing it for no reason. Is this really a reason to lose it, or just back off? And so, I'm still a work in progress.

Lorraine also described herself as high-strung and anxious, both at work and home. So, when it comes to winding down and de-stressing, Lorraine's family also plays a part in helping her find comfort. She explained:

Yes, yoga helps. Yoga and things like looking forward to things; I know may sound silly, like running with my husband... Little things like that. I really look forward to that. Running for me, just kind of thinking things through. Achieving a goal, having said I ran three-something miles. I ran it. I did it. I feel accomplished; I feel satisfied. So, that always feels rewarding. Yoga. When the kids say 'Mmm this is good food.' That feels good too, even though it's all stressful putting it all together, but then you get the

satisfaction afterwards. And then, looking forward to little things, like getting together for happy hour to relax and unwind. I also have a book club. It's fun, so really simple things like having a meal together with my family. Over the weekend, my husband cooked hotdogs for us over at my mom's. We went swimming, and that family fun simple things are like, that's great.

Thus, although Lorraine is somewhat high strung and easily stressed with things such as cooking a family meal, she finds ways to help combat and wind down from that stress, which allows her to balance between work, life, and stress.

Lorraine's Summary

Lorraine was a "high strung" professional with an excellent work ethic. She strived to always do her best and encouraged others to strive for the same. Although she was often mentally pre-occupied and easily distracted, she produced positive end results. Her peers and supervisor held her with high regard. She was modest and protective of her professional reputation. She was always thinking about what she should be doing, could be doing, or had not yet finished. As such, Lorraine often seemed easily overwhelmed by tasks due to the personal pressure she placed on herself to excel and maintain her reputation. Although Lorraine did not yell or curse at work, she stated that she often remained strong in the face of opposition. She said she often did her due diligence, researched the topic/issue, and carefully and thoroughly presented her case. In doing so, she felt assertive and strong that she stuck to her values and allowed her voice to be heard. Lorraine's work ethic aligned well with her parenting analogy, "I'm raising Spartans.... We don't have time for wimps here."

LaDoctor: “I’m the Misfit Toy”

LaDoctor was a non-tenured faculty member with three years of service in her role. LaDoctor’s personal values and work values also centered around her instructional content. LaDoctor described herself as the “misfit toy” because she was unlike many of her faculty peers. She was unafraid to speak up and address perceived wrongs, and she did not conform to societal expectations of how she should react, behave, or present herself. LaDoctor described herself as uneasily stressed, yet emotional in times of inequality, disempowerment, and social injustices.

LaDoctor’s Personality

Anything that may emphasize disempowerment stresses me out. When my students ask to be given a credit not earned; when a colleague is fired without any clear explanation; when I am judge[d] based my gender. These situations can be experience[d] in [sic] a regular basis here...I react emotionally, and this requires some withdrawal, and rethinking before any concerns can be addressed.

This was LaDoctor’s response to the Pre-Assessment Inquiry question that asked participants to describe a work-related situation that caused them stress. LaDoctor’s response provided slight glimpses of her character: honest, empowering, genuine, emotional, and encouraging that she would reveal throughout the interviews.

One word comes to mind when describing LaDoctor, “feisty.” She seemed to reflect honesty and candor, and her words expressed a passion for genuinely wanting to help others transform the lives of those she encountered. Throughout the interviews, LaDoctor discussed a variety of topics: job duties, how she acquired her position, university politics, unfair faculty treatment, and gender inequality. During our discussions, it appeared that she did not hold back; she said she wanted to participate in this study to address the issues faculty experience. For

example, she stated, “In my personal opinion, this university treats faculty bad. I don’t know how they haven’t done anything about it, but.” LaDoctor’s responses were raw and authentic. She vocalized her passions, values, opinions, and frustrations; she spoke with candor and honesty throughout this study. She seemed to present her authentic self as feisty, bold, honest, non-conforming, and forthcoming, and because of such, our level of rapport evolved throughout the study.

LaDoctor also revealed much about her personality during her interviews. Unlike the other female participants, LaDoctor embraced an appearance that did not conform to societal norms or conservative values. She stated that she wore what she felt comfortable in; rather than for the role she played. She explained:

So, it’s, I don’t wear conservative clothing, but I do sometimes because I wake up feeling that way [laughs]. But, to tell you the truth, most of the time I dress up trying to turn my husband on all night [laughs], so in my head, I never wake up [and think] what looks good for me to teach in today [laughs].

LaDoctor considered herself the same in her personal life as in her professional life. Her attitude and demeanor were sometimes helpful or counterproductive in her interactions with others. However, LaDoctor stated during her interviews that she was unwilling to change her appearance or attire. She stated that she would try to stop cursing, but the more she viewed her cursing as a gender inequality, the more she would continue doing it.

LaDoctor and compared herself to a “misfit toy.” She stated:

I would probably play the role of the willing misfit toy [laughter]. I’m not afraid of being naked. I am not afraid of speaking out my mind, and I am not afraid of the judgment that comes with it [laughter]. You know if someone calls me names or just tells me to keep

doing my job, it pisses me off more than it helps me be at peace. So, I think I would be okay being the unsung hero... So, I am probably the misfit toy that encourages others to embrace their own empowerment and *misfitness* in order to shine.

Throughout our interactions, the idea of “encourag[ing] others to embrace their own empowerment and *misfitness* in order to shine” was demonstrated through our informal conversations. After each interview, she encouraged me to speak my truths of my own experiences with workplace power, social engagement, and awkwardness. We discussed the difficulties and challenges of being different, strong, and vocal, as well as the opposition that those who are different experience because they do not fit within a stereotype. Through our informal conversations, LaDoctor demonstrated the genuineness that she speaks of to help others empower themselves. LaDoctor continued to describe her values, personal philosophy of life, and instructional pedagogy. LaDoctor also discussed what she believed was one of her highest values: equality. She explained:

When my students ask me what ideology I fall under, I am a liberal, tree-hugging communist. When I say we are all equal, I truly fucking mean it. It’s like I can talk to the janitor, and I truly think the janitor should be getting paid as much as the surgeon. I think we all contribute to the whole equally. I don’t think one is more valuable than the other. So, I am a true communist. So for me, the highest value is, I guess, equality. And, the acknowledgement of the all of us being in this together and therefore anything we do, and I mean bad or good, contributes to the wholeness of it all.

LaDoctor further elaborated on this idea of wholeness through her interviews while discussing empowerment within the workplace, interactions with her supervisors, and workload.

LaDoctor's Data Analysis

Throughout her interviews, empowerment/disempowerment, rebellion, and ethical conflicts were recurring patterns. Based on a collective analysis of each of LaDoctor's interviews, there were a few common stressors threaded through each interview: personality, workload, disagreements with university practices, empowerment/disempowerment, conflict, and rebellion. These stressors were combined to form three primary themes to represent LaDoctor's occupational stress experiences: Empowerment/Disempowerment, Workload/Service, and Life Balance, as reflected in Figure 13.

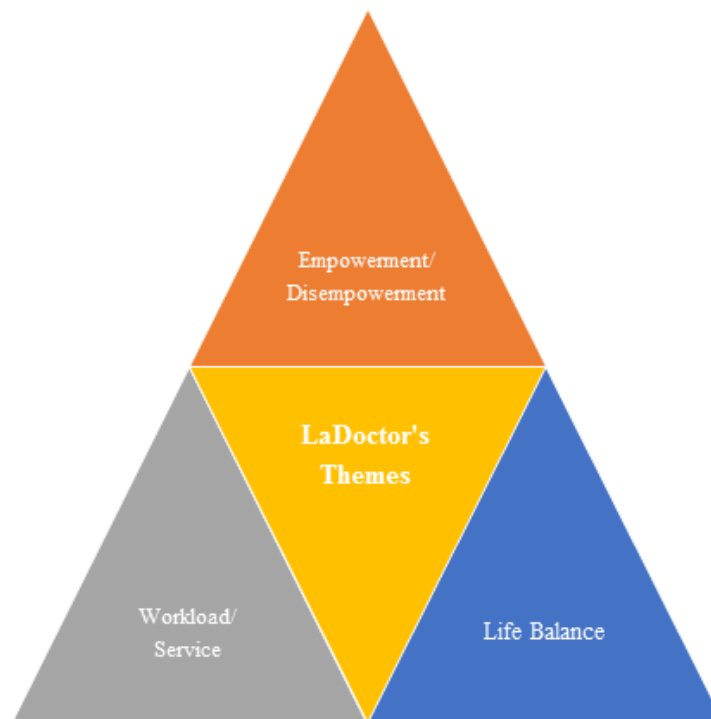


Figure 13. LaDoctor's Theme Analysis from interviews and observations: Empowerment/Disempowerment, Workload/Service, and Life Balance.

Empowerment/disempowerment. The theme of empowerment and disempowerment dominated LaDoctor's interviews and observations. Four categories, Easy come, easy go, Do as

you're told, Inequality, and Rebellion contributed to this theme. The concept of empowering herself and others was described as one of her key values. LaDoctor stated that if she could not be transformative, then she would question her purpose. LaDoctor also mentioned that witnessing and/or experiencing disempowerment was both saddening and angering to her. Thus, throughout the study she provided examples where she was disempowered and witnessed the disempowerment of others. She described how she viewed and interpreted these situations and also described how she interacted within these situations.

LaDoctor entered into the study with prior experiences with occupational stress and job insecurity. Her initial employment contract was temporary with no promise of a permanent contract. Although LaDoctor knew her contract was temporary, she hoped it would become more permanent. She stated, "But, I figure after the one year or maybe even two, things would change." LaDoctor was right in expecting things to change, but they changed for the worse. LaDoctor described how she felt after being terminated towards the end of her contract. She recalled:

My [supervisor] calls me into [the] office and says, 'Uh, we're letting you go.' If [my supervisor] would have said the contract is up, you know that's it, I would have been fine. It's until [my supervisor] started saying things like 'Well, you got really low evaluations.' Okay, and so I start thinking to myself, *How? It's one year*. I don't—So, at the time that they are making these decision[s], they only had one semester of evaluations. They don't have two semester evaluations. And, [my supervisor's] basing it on that. So, I want more information, right.

LaDoctor inferred that her supervisor was not being truthful with her and did not collect a full scope of information prior to her termination. The part about her termination that seemed to

bother LaDoctor the most was the idea of not having a response that she perceived as logical and appropriate to justify her termination. LaDoctor was not only upset for herself, but for the several other new faculty who were terminated along with her for the same reason. She attributed the termination to lack of mentorship from the university to train and show new faculty departmental expectations. LaDoctor perceived this as a continuous cycle of injustice for new faculty. Shortly after being terminated, LaDoctor was rehired.

In addition to the job insecurity associated with her employment, LaDoctor recalled a question from a colleague, “Why do they have you here?” She explained:

And, so he comes into my office, and he says, ‘Why do they have you here? Why like this, why?’ And, I don’t know; I don’t know why they have this position. And, I used to make this joke that I was the Mexican cheap labor. You know, and so I think I started believing that joke. And, so it did affect me, and I’m trying to let it go so.

LaDoctor perceived this conversation as a confirmation of her observation that there was a sense of disposability and a lack of permanency within her department.

The previously mentioned colleague was later terminated. LaDoctor said that she found it disappointing to watch someone, who she viewed as a “transformational” leader, be terminated. When she asked about the justification of the termination, LaDoctor said she was told to, “just concentrate on doing your activities.” The lack of a perceived acceptable response failed to provide LaDoctor with a sense of empowerment for social activism and addressing faculty injustices. Rather than empowering change, LaDoctor was disempowered and told to focus on herself. LaDoctor stated that faculty were mistreated at her university and nothing seemed to be done about it. These injustices ranged from being terminated without justifiable reasons, having no personal voice or opinion, feeling fearful of losing their jobs, and having little

to no support from university leadership and administration, which also contributed to the theme of disempowerment.

LaDoctor was an advocate for others, and supported freedom of expression, free speech, diversity, and equality. These values were strongly embedded in her personality and how she perceived and interacted with others around her. LaDoctor often indicated a sense that faculty were being silenced and encouraged not to speak their minds. LaDoctor stated, “I think there is a certain lack of our freedom to express ourselves, our freedom to actually address our certain concerns.” LaDoctor noted that the department was one in which the faculty were muzzled and disempowered by fear of being fired; she stated, “We are afraid of truly interacting and being ourselves.” She was not allowed to vocalize her opinions because in her work environment, comments that went against administrative decisions were neither valued nor appreciated. This created a distrustful working environment for LaDoctor.

On another occasion, a new faculty member shared a preliminary observation with LaDoctor of the department. He stated, “Apparently you guys push for an environment of do as you’re told.” LaDoctor recalled agreeing with this observation, noting that the departmental culture is one of restrictions and fear. LaDoctor viewed the amount of input faculty members had in terms of vocalizing concerns and opinions as limited. She stated that much of the control rested with the dean, and in many cases, threats of termination were used to help combat rebuttal and maintain control. LaDoctor explained that because faculty were afraid of losing their jobs, they remained silent. She stated:

Because they have the threat of losing their job support, you know, resources, which is immoral, illegal, for them to feel that, but unfortunately they do. However, it’s not messed up if they continue allowing that power to remain. You see, they can threaten me

with not keeping my job, even once it's permanent. They can do that. They can say just like they continue telling me, 'just concentrate on doing your activities.' But I can't. I have to speak up, because if I [don't I] become as dead as some people are around here, I'm gonna be useless, I'm going to, and, I can't allow it.

LaDoctor stated that faculty were afraid to speak their minds, and when they did, it is only to a certain point. They did not push for issues where others may disagree or when adversity arose, even if it called for what LaDoctor believed to be a valid reason such as inequality, respect, or diversity. LaDoctor mentioned that this disempowerment saddened her, and led her to believe that her opinions were not welcomed or appreciated.

Additionally, LaDoctor did not give herself enough credit within the department; after three years within the department, she still considered herself as a new employee. During faculty meetings, LaDoctor seemed to disempower herself due to feelings of inadequacy. She stated that because she did not have as many years of service or expertise as other employees, her voice was not adequate to be heard. LaDoctor described a faculty meeting where one faculty member was attacking another, and no one spoke up against the negative and inappropriate behavior. She recalled noticing all of the veteran professors looking at her. She said she felt like they were expecting her to be their voice and speak out against the negativity, but at the time, she did not. She explained that it was not until a week later that she realized her value. She recalled telling her husband:

They were all looking at me, and I said that has to say something. The fact that I just realized it, so now I keep thinking to myself, *Woah, I gotta do something with this. If they're looking at me, there's a reason why.* Cause they were looking at me like do something, or you know. I probably could have, but I didn't realize it cause I felt like a

kid, like a subordinate to all of them. So, that is a fantastic question because I'm just kind of dealing with it.

Because of her feelings of not fitting in and not valuing her contributions, she allowed her work environment and faculty culture to disempower her ability to speak out. However, after reflecting on the event, LaDoctor realized that she had placed herself in a position of inequality with the other professors. While LaDoctor was viewing herself as the "kid" of the group, others were looking to her as an equal waiting for her to emerge as their voice and advocate for equality. This realization helped empower her to reconsider feelings of inadequacy and occupational stress.

In addition to witnessing and experiencing disempowerment within her department, LaDoctor also addressed her personal experiences with inequality. This transcended beyond just her department into her classroom due to the common stereotypical and social expectations of gender roles and women in academia. For LaDoctor, she experienced and spoke out against restrictions placed on females in the workplace regarding dress code and linguistic expression.

LaDoctor did not conform to the traditional professor dress code of business casual. Instead, she wore whatever she was comfortable wearing. During the first observation, she wore what appeared to be workout clothing: spandex leggings, loose fitting top, slightly draped over her shoulder. On another occasion, she wore cargo pants, wedge sandals, and slightly sheer top, which showed her bra and/or undershirt straps. LaDoctor noted that her attire and mannerisms were embedded in comfort rather than gender-based social norms. While LaDoctor never indicated being reprimanded by her dean or supervisor for her attire, she had an unfortunate exchange with her students who commented on her attire being inappropriate for the classroom. She described the unpleasant exchange:

I went home, and I was pissed off... So the next day, I showed up, and I'm not kidding you. I was wearing exercise clothes: tennis shoes, shorts, t-shirt, ponytail, right. And, and I showed up and I said, 'You know what guys, I appreciate the fact that you go and talk to people. I really do, and from me I will never tell you not to. Any complaints that you may have about the class, and concerns, any hurt feelings, go ahead, go ahead and speak up. I will never tell you not to. But, what I will appreciate is that if anything that I do in my classroom stops the process of intellectual exchange, by all means please address it directly to me. Give me an opportunity to fix this behavior that may be effecting our intellectual exchange. However, if you are asking me to change the way I dress, or to change how I speak because [it] in some way affects your *personal* beliefs, go fuck yourselves, truthfully. If it has nothing to do with *how* we exchange intellectual ideas, then leave your mouths out of it. I'm serious. Go and complain, but I will not address it.'

Because a classroom environment of empowerment and student democracy had been established, the students were apparently comfortable enough addressing their concerns in hopes that their democracy would rule.

Within the classroom, LaDoctor attempted to transform her students by enlightening them to the methods and ways in which they allowed themselves to be disempowered. Thus, she operated her classroom in a manner that allowed students to assert themselves, question authority and policies, and to form their own thoughts and opinions. LaDoctor encouraged students to speak up when they disliked a policy or disapproved of a decision. She stated, "Everything in my classroom, I use as a tool to teach them empowerment. So, them taking the initiative, regardless of how much work it's gonna give me or not give me....that's okay with me..." She did not want to

be placed inside a box full of stereotypes and voiceless souls, thus she encouraged her students to freely speak their thoughts and opinions. However, LaDoctor's reaction contradicted that classroom culture and her instructional pedagogy, by establishing a monarchy in which she had the final say.

LaDoctor stated that she encouraged her students to speak up for themselves when they disagreed with decisions made on their behalf. For example, a presidential candidate wanted to visit and speak during a commencement ceremony, and some students informed LaDoctor of this displeasure with the decision to allow the candidate to speak. Therefore, LaDoctor encouraged the students to speak out and let the executive administrators know that they were against the decision. The students and others were successful, and the candidate did not serve as the commencement speaker. While LaDoctor's intentions were to encourage students to speak up for themselves when they disagreed with decisions being made for themselves, the students took this philosophy to a different extreme when they attempted to speak up for themselves.

The students were perhaps offended by LaDoctor's attire because of the university culture they have been exposed to, and LaDoctor did not conform to their expectations. LaDoctor mentioned that the common ideology of higher education is that faculty should dress conservatively because "The classroom, the university, is this place of respect." However, LaDoctor justified her rebellion to conforming by stating that the university should be about the "exchange of ideas," rather than attire. When asked why she would not consider dressing more conservative, she stated "I don't wear, you know, conservative clothing, but I do sometimes because I wake up feeling that way. I never wake up [and think] what looks good for me to teach in today." LaDoctor stated that she does not dress conservative because "I'm not in a job that demands that... I feel uncomfortable when they pressure me into fitting in." This was

LaDoctor's form of rebelling against the socially constructed norms of how higher education faculty should portray themselves and seemed to be a mechanism to empower herself to live her truth without reservations.

In addition to her attire, LaDoctor also fought against the inequality that female professors should not use profanity in the workplace. LaDoctor used cursing as a way to exercise her freedom of linguistic expression. LaDoctor explained:

I curse. I use curse words. And, it's not a need. I don't need to use the curse words, but I have noticed that if I am a female, and I make sexual innuendos, they're considered inappropriate...So, on the first day of class, I always say, 'I am going to curse, and I am going to make sexual innuendos, right. And, you may feel offended, but I am telling you right now, that I am here to fight for that.'

LaDoctor held true to her personal values to freely express herself, regardless of whether those around her or her working environment deemed it inappropriate.

LaDoctor continued the behavior even after being told to stop because she believed she was being reprimanded unfairly based on her gender. This was her way of taking a stand and allowing her opinions on the matter to be heard. LaDoctor was not concerned with the viewpoints of others, more so in fostering equality and fair treatment between males and females in academia. Even after being told there was a clause against cursing in the faculty handbook, LaDoctor refused to read the handbook. She said that once she read it, she would be accountable for that knowledge. Thus, she was again defiant of workplace procedures to preserve her personal values and rebel against disempowerment and inequality.

LaDoctor's personal values and beliefs seemed to overshadow her work culture expectations. Based on interactions within interviews with LaDoctor, it seemed that she was not

one to conform because of the beliefs and expectations of others. She could not be forced to do something that went against her core values or that disagreed with her philosophies or beliefs. This included even when she was given a directive to stop what was considered inappropriate workplace behavior. She explained her reluctance to stop cursing and dress more appropriate for the workplace:

So, the more they tell me not to curse, especially because I see it as a gender qualifier, I wanna do it more...And, I ask myself, *Why do I do it so much?* So, it has to do with rebellion. I have so many things to rebel against [laughter], but it has to do with the cursing. But, the way I dress no, cause that has always been my [character]. People have always told me to change the way that I dress because I like vulgar dressing. And, so since I was little, my mom would be like close your legs when you sit down, don't wear that short skirt or whatever, right. So, that has always been a constant in my life to where I'm not giving it up. But, the cursing is significant and exemplary of what you're talking about [rebellious]. The more somebody tells me not to do it, the more I end up doing it. And, it may actually cause problems [laughter]. But, I'm trying to find a way to rationalize it in my head to where I make you know.

LaDoctor, was willing to accept the criticism and reprimands due to her conscious and deliberate choices to rebel against her work culture practices that conflicted with her personality.

Workload/Service. The theme of Workload/Service resulted from three categories, 4-4 load, Classroom interference, and Service. Each category affected LaDoctor and contributed to her stress differently. LaDoctor's 4-4 teaching load reduced the amount of time LaDoctor was able to devote to research. Classroom interference seemed to serve not only as a stressful trigger, but also as a source of anger; she said that politicians and administrators used their authority as a

means to insight fear. But, it she said she was unafraid regarding their power and more angered that classroom interference occurred and nothing was done to stop it. Finally, Service served as an emotional category for LaDoctor. She demonstrated emotion while describing how she wanted to help those in need.

The 4-4 load. Research is another requirement for LaDoctor; however, she indicated that she was not being pressured from the department head or chair to publish. She did state, however, that the department head was being supportive and encouraging her to publish her research. LaDoctor's publishing interests were centered around her personal and professional values of transformative leadership and social engagement. LaDoctor stated that the biggest stressors with her research were due to time and participants' fear of retaliation. Some of LaDoctor's research participants were reluctant to divulge certain information to her, which increased the difficulty and prolonged her research. She stated:

I haven't finished with the [second group] because they're different organizations, because they're so secretive, because they don't want to share their opinion, [or] whatever it is, right. I have this hanging over my head, my shoulder [laughs]. I haven't finished with the [second group], I haven't finished the report. I'm the one doing the surveys, which means I have to take my time and go and chase people, right.

LaDoctor also mentioned that the stress of not finishing the project and the massive amount of data needed to transcribe and analyze was intense.

Because of the nature of LaDoctor's course content, she gained the attention from community members, which became a classroom interference. LaDoctor described an instance where a student misinterpreted a classroom discussion and told his parent. The parent then informed an influential community representative, who then addressed the concern to university

administration. During the meeting with the dean, LaDoctor recalled explaining that she did not say anything negative against the city official, but that the students were discussing things they had read or heard. LaDoctor said she allowed the students to continue talking and working through their ideas, but she did not say anything against the official.

LaDoctor said she wanted university administration to stand their ground and speak up for her academic freedom; however, she said the administrators did not. LaDoctor indicated that university leadership did not demonstrate trust in her ability, nor did they give her the benefit of the doubt in issues that questioned her pedagogical abilities as indicated in the community representative's complaint. She recalled that because of her community research, as well as classroom topics, that she had been cautioned by people to tread lightly regarding her job. She stated:

I have been told three times to be careful with my job. Within the last year and a half. Three times; that's pretty scary. And they have all been external people. My boss has never come and told me be careful with your job; the dean has never come and told me, right. But these external people are influential people, so when [university leadership] calls me and tells me these [community representatives] called and said this about you[r] classroom. I don't feel scared to tell you the truth, or I don't feel threatened. I never have. When I do the right thing, it's like whatever consequences happen, happen...So when someone threatens me I [am] like, *Oh okay whatever*. Like it really doesn't matter. But, for me that's the most stressful part, knowing that it can happen because I don't care, but there are a lot people that care. There are a lot of people that it would cause problems to. So, seeing it as a systematic failure pisses me off, if that makes absolutely any

sense...He [the dean] should have actually stopped it, and reminded them of the scholastic freedom, or something like that.

LaDoctor's stated that her disagreement with the university administration's inactivity on this situation caused her anger and frustration, which led to feelings of occupational stress.

When asked if there was a certain mantra that she operated with in terms of work, LaDoctor replied with one word: service. She then elaborated to explain that she saw herself as a resource for students. LaDoctor explained:

Service, that's my mantra, service to the students. And, I start by telling them that, and when I say goodbye their last class day, that's what I say. I am here to serve you. I say I am here to serve you to be of help and a tool to help you in any way possible to help you accomplish your dreams. And, that's truly why I am here...So, that's my [mantra], but I do it everywhere. In my personal life and in my professional life. It's like an innate thing, and if it doesn't get fed, I would be miserable, so yeah, it's like I use teaching to allow myself to express it.

LaDoctor also provided an example of when passion for students, service, and empowerment conflicted with upper administration. This lack of appreciation for the role of faculty members and the voices of the students who bravely express them, also caused LaDoctor anger.

During a campus meeting/forum, a student recalled his experiences of repeated rejections from faculty in his attempt to find a faculty mentor. However, he finally found someone who was willing to work with him and guided him through the thesis process, of which he expressed gratitude. While LaDoctor valued the student's opinion, noting that he was not blaming faculty or trying to present them in a negative light, the administrators were very upset by the student's statements. LaDoctor noted that the student was trying to provide his perspective on how faculty

should be more understanding and helpful in terms of service for the student, when the assignments require faculty assistance. Whereas, university administration perceived the student as being out of line and blaming the faculty for his difficulty in finding a faculty mentor. Because LaDoctor values her students and teaches them the power of speaking up for themselves and articulating their thoughts, she was infuriated by the dean's disregard for the student's voice. She explained:

There was a whole hoopla about that; how the student was misinformed. And so, every time I heard that, I would *be like oh Jesus Christ*. So, a student comes in and give[s] you honest feedback...And, now you're constructing all these fucking excuses behind saying no to this. It was sad....And I was just like, you just took the voice of the student and destroyed it instead of validating what he was saying.

LaDoctor shared the same feelings of discontent when administrators disregard her voice as she did when the student's voice was devalued. Thus, LaDoctor's stress centered on disempowerment, injustices, and disservice of humanity: student and faculty alike.

Life balance. LaDoctor's third theme of life balance contained two categories: civic responsibility and home life. These categories illustrated that in addition to being angered by the mistreatment of faculty and students, LaDoctor also concerned herself with providing service to others beyond education and into social well-being and advocacy. Advocating for the local homeless, students, and community, also became a key point of service for LaDoctor. These examples extended through both the themes of service and life balance because of the time and resources needed to accomplish results.

LaDoctor described her experience in attempting to help homeless students who attended the university:

...I started doing research opening a homeless shelter for [university] students. But even in doing that research, I figured out that it would be a bad thing to do it on the university. So, and you see, now I have these thing, that I have to do. I just have to do it. Find a way to open a homeless shelter for [university] students. But, it's so self-imposed. [I have to do it] Because I perceived it. Because I heard it. Every semester I hear of at least one [university] student that has to give the address of the [Homeless Shelter]...I remember telling a friend about a week ago. I went to bed crying, just crying; I uh, I felt so tired, I felt so. Because I hear of all the stories when you go interview people. [vocal trembles]. Right, and you start connecting with them. You hear these bad practices of these things that are happening, that just simple brochures would start empowering people to create change. And you're asking yourself, *How is this happening?* And I hear about it and nothing else is being done.

In addition to advocating for homeless students, LaDoctor also attempted to advocate for just treatment for the local homeless community outside the campus.

LaDoctor continued to provide an additional example of how she was trying to assist a local homeless person who she perceived as being taken advantage of by a restaurant. She explained:

They're taking advantage now of homeless in an area where we promote cheap labor. So, I'm like this is so horrible, right. And I wanna do something, and the restaurant got to the homeless guy first, made him write a statement. Now, I got a copy of the statement just yesterday because I wanna contact the city attorney and find out. But, I cannot be bold to this. I have to do it all in. So, not having money, not having new friends, not having a [inaudible] weighing on me. And, I start thinking, *I need to hurry up and make*

this job more permanent. And, so it starts all weighing on the freaking idea of helping [eyes tearing up and laughing]. And, so it starts to get very stressful, very stressful. This took an emotional and stressful toll on LaDoctor. Because of her personal values, she was willing to endure stress for the sake of others. Discussing the local homelessness was the only time LaDoctor demonstrated any other emotion other than humor or frustration.

LaDoctor carefully attempted to balance work and home life; she was a married, working mother of three. She balanced teaching four courses per semester, interviewing and conducting research, advocating for homelessness, and juggling extracurricular activities for her children. Although she spoke very little of her children, LaDoctor indicated that sometimes she believed she failed as a parent in terms of transferring her teaching philosophy into her parenting philosophy: questioning authority and control. LaDoctor did not elaborate further, but she later disclosed that she had one child who was experimenting with drugs. She recalled how just a few days prior to our final interview, she had to bail him out of jail. Without trying to pry too much, I asked her how much her child's decisions and behaviors impacted her stress level. Surprisingly, she responded, "As a matter of fact, he got arrested the day before yesterday. So, I spent all night trying to bail him out, and I didn't get home until four in the morning, or something like that. But, no it doesn't. I know it's bad or could be bad [laughter]."

LaDoctor's decision to not become stressed out by her son's behavior speaks to her outlook on life. People must empower themselves to make their own decisions, live their truths, and not be apologetic for their differences. Perhaps, she was living out her values and putting them into practice. Another possible reason LaDoctor did not admit to being stressed out by this situation was because she denied being easily stressed. She explained:

So, when I went to the doctor once, they told me you're feeling stress, I didn't believe them. So, I don't feel it. When my doctor says 'no, this is your body telling you;' it feel[s] like that's bullshit. Not because it makes me weak; it's because I'm not used to feeling that, paying attention to those feelings.

LaDoctor stated that inaction angers her, so the logical reason for her was to resolve the situation. Had she done nothing, she would have become angry and not followed one of her core values.

Although LaDoctor did not consider her son's jail time as stressful, during the final interview, she also disclosed some information regarding how one event in her personal life impacted how she interacted within the classroom. LaDoctor admitted having a personal outburst during a lecture. LaDoctor stated that she was "embarrassed," but rather than harping on the negative she viewed the positive results of her outburst. She also viewed it as a tool to help other students and empower them to tell their stories. She stated:

I'm hoping that's [the outburst] a good thing.... I had several students during that year coming to my office because ...they wanted to confess certain pains that they wouldn't have otherwise confessed, right. In that way, I told myself that it's okay, you at least invited some people to come and seek help, whatever.

Thus, even in a moment of emotional stress, LaDoctor was able to balance her personal embarrassment and the needs of the students and transform it into an empowering situation, rather than negative outburst.

LaDoctor Summary

LaDoctor was a non-traditional faculty with a passion for helping others. LaDoctor was a complex participant with multiple layers to her personality. She seemed to live her life through

her authentic lens without apology to those who disapproved or opposed her views. She both spoke and lived out her truth with no reservations. LaDoctor experienced stress because of her passion for empowerment and equality. She desired to see everyone treated equally without being demoralized for being different. She pushed for empowerment and social justice for those around her. Her philosophy on life not only transcended in her personal life, but also into the classroom. LaDoctor refused to conform at the cost of sacrificing her own values.

She was a rebel on a mission to empower others and advocate against injustices. Her occupational stress was fueled by anger and frustration against fear, mistreatment, belittlement, inequalities, and stereotypes. She wanted to push for action and get others to stand up for change. While she was able to accomplish this agenda in the classroom, she was still trying to find her place within academia and amongst her peers. She even considered herself as the “misfit” “kid” of the department. Thus, some of the stress and frustration perceived by LaDoctor was due to her personal attachment, personality, values, and perceptions with the issues or people involved.

Cynthia: “Cinderella”

Cynthia was a full-time administrator of three years within her department. She coordinated academic instructional support for faculty. Passionate, caring, and faithful would be the best way to describe Cynthia. She was a married mother of two, who incorporated her faith in all of her decisions. Cynthia described herself as being approachable and productive. However, she acknowledged that people sometimes perceived her as being ‘intimidating.’ Cynthia had a strong presence; I was even a little timid during our first meeting. My first impression of Cynthia was that she was very formal, focused, and goal oriented. She arrived at the interview location early, even before I arrived. She sat with her legs crossed at the ankles

and arms slightly folded. From her guarded body language and authoritative tone, I could tell that Cynthia was someone who was quite serious. However, by the second time we met, I began to see a woman who had a passion for helping others, who reveled in having open, honest conversations, who smiled regularly, and encouraged often. At the beginning of this study, we started off as strangers, but developed a friendship towards the end of the study. I appreciated her candor, faithful heart, persistence, and courage. Cynthia was a strong woman of faith, who expressed joy throughout hardships and continued to search for the light within the storm. Cynthia's personality profile coupled with her data analysis represents how she viewed herself, others, and the world around her.

Cynthia's Personality

Cynthia's work personality was formed because of her perceived conflicts within her working environment. Cynthia said she maintained a professional relationship with her supervisors and peers, but did not engage in friendly casual conversations. Cynthia expressed that she had little control and direction from her supervisors, high strain due to workload, heavy work demands, high personal ambition, and negative supervisors. The combination of all these traits, caused Cynthia to experience mid-to-high stress on a daily basis. Cynthia elaborated on her work environment and stress levels throughout the interviews. She stated, "I live under stress, I would say a good 70% of the time I'm at work." Although Cynthia had positive experiences in her position prior to the change, she expressed that the new dean change created a working environment that was full of negativity; thus, the majority of Cynthia's interviews highlighted her dissatisfaction with her working environment. She described her working environment as one that lacked staffing, teamwork, and communication. She stated that the lack of support increased her workload, which also contributed to her stress. Cynthia stated, "A lot of

what happens at my job is I'm having to go against the wind all the time, so it's more stress and just exhaustion. You're trying to physically and mentally do more than what one person can do." Because Cynthia described her job as exhausting, I was curious as to other ways in which Cynthia coped with stress.

Cynthia asserted that she coped with her occupational stress through prayer and worship. She stated, "So every morning when I wake up, I prepare myself spiritually and emotionally because it is a draining job." She continued:

I have my personal devotion; so, I wake up early; I read scripture. I pray; I put on my worship music, and that's usually between 4:30 in the morning to about 7:00 [sniff].

And, in that process, you know, that's when I'm getting ready for work, and then we pray before we leave as a family. And, then on my commute to work, I just soak myself in worship music that's upbeat [tears] so that I can get to work and have a smile on my face and the energy to do the work I have to do.

Cynthia's coping techniques and faith were so important to her that she facilitated a university-wide presentation on healthy living and spiritual wellness, which I attended as our first observation. The presentation began in a small conference room, to comfortably accommodate 15-20 people comfortable. However, because of the turnout, the location had to be relocated to an auditorium-styled room. During the introduction, the presentation coordinator stated that this was the heaviest attended workshop to support their wellness initiative. Thus, this demonstrated that others, faculty and staff, were craving ways to find peace and cope within their departments.

Throughout the observation, Cynthia shared various tidbits of her life philosophy with the audience. She started out by defining spirituality for the audience, "Spirituality is how *you* find your hope, your meaning, your comfort, and your inner peace." She mentioned that spirituality

did not have to be embedded in a religion, such as her belief in Christianity, but more so about how a person finds peace, for example, through nature. As Cynthia continued to speak, her personality was gradually revealed through her presentation. She seemed to be engaging in self-talk with herself as well as engaging the audience and guiding them through the process of being positive through turmoil. While describing spiritual wellness, Cynthia stated, “It is better to be tolerant of the beliefs of others than to close ourselves off and become intolerant.” She mentioned that she often has to look past the actions of others to try and understand them to avoid engaging in selfishness. Cynthia gave the example of workplace “drama.” She stated that as a part of healthy spiritual well-being, people should choose not to engage with or contribute to the drama and instead withdraw from the situation.

Cynthia also noted that employees need to feel meaning, connected, and valued in the workplace. She stated that when all these elements are in place, they feel a greater sense of “authenticity” in the workplace. Cynthia also provided some tips on how employees could maintain spiritual well-being: be mindful, inspire positivity, and meditate through breathing. She joked about meditation through breathing by stating it “doesn’t work for me. I’m not gonna remember. My meditation is that I blast my radio, and I’m screaming loud. It helps me be energized.” She continued to state that “How you show up to work, is all up to you.” Thus, Cynthia encouraged others to take responsibility for how their day went. She inspired others to empower themselves and take control of their working environment by tackling it with positivity and acknowledging their own self-worth. This observation helped reveal why Cynthia remained positive throughout the study, especially since she experienced the highest level of occupational stress of all four participants. Each time we met or talked, she had a smile on her face. She

constantly referred to her faith and genuinely believed that her situation would work out the way God planned it.

Cynthia's Data Analysis

From the data collected in the interviews and observations, several themes emerged, which indicated primary stressors for Cynthia. Common stressors for Cynthia were her working environment, interaction with peers, organizational change, and conflict. These stressors were then transformed into three primary themes: workload, relationships with others, and perceptions of self and others, shown in Figure 14.

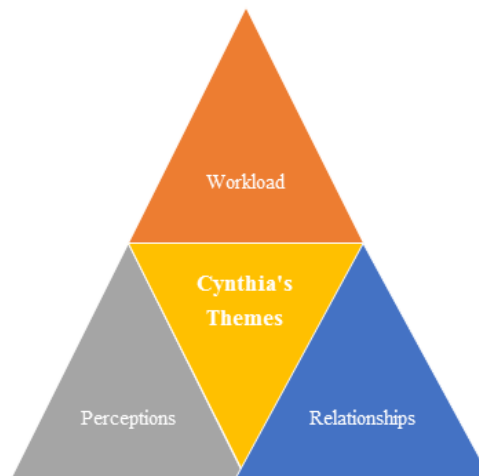


Figure 14. Cynthia's Theme Analysis. Themes compiled from Cynthia's three interviews and two observations.

Workload/work ethic. At the beginning of Cynthia's employment, the program she supervised was in its infancy stages. The program only serviced one course per semester; however, as she began building it with the encouragement and direction of her academic dean, the program matured, and within approximately two years serviced approximately 44 courses per semester. Cynthia stated that this took place without hiring any additional staff. According to

Cynthia, she had a funding line for an assistant; however, as soon as she could train an assistant, s/he would resign or get fired.

Cynthia recalled the day one of her assistants got terminated. According to Cynthia, she had several projects she was responsible for, and she knew she would be expected to complete her assistant's projects. Thus, Cynthia had a total of seven projects to complete on a short turnaround time. Nonetheless, the dean fired the assistant, and Cynthia had to complete the projects. However, rather than continuing to work with the foundation the assistant had established, Cynthia discarded it all and started from scratch. She explained:

[The former assistant] would never have something thoroughly completed...And, I have to go back and fix it because sometimes it's worse. That's why people build brand new homes; a remodeling is worse than a brand new construction. And, every assignment that was given to [him/her] was a remodeling project. And, even when you remodel, things are never like new, so there's always error. And, that day there was three brand new [projects] that had to get done, and the next day, I had four new [projects] that had to be done, which [s/he] had been assigned which I knew were trash. That I had to start from scratch.

Cynthia estimated that approximately 90-95% of the time, she worked alone. She described herself as a "one-man team" with little interaction or assistance from others. She said, "I show up, and it's a one-man team, so I have to do what needs to get done. I do it...Physically, there's a lot of work that has to be done. Intellectually, there's a lot of things that need to be done."

Cynthia stated that if she did not get the work done, then it would not get accomplished.

When asked to describe her average stress level associate with her workload, Cynthia replied, “I mean, I live under stress I would say a good 70% of the time I’m at work.” She also added:

But, I can only do so many roles, and as it is, I already have to do my role and the assistant role because for 90% of time I’ve worked here, I’ve had to fulfill both job duties because there has never been a stable assistant. So, as it is, I’m doing two peoples’ job already. And so, if I venture to try to go do requisitions and process my own paperwork, I mean, I’m doing everything by myself as it is.

Cynthia stated that she had expressed the need for help via email and verbally to her supervisor. Because no other assistant was provided, Cynthia continued to work extra hours to keep the program running. She recalled a conversation with the dean regarding the amount of extra hours she was working. She explained:

... I asked her ‘Look, there’s no physical way that my job could ever get done unless I work overtime. I know I’m a salaried employee, and you don’t pay me for that. But, my question to you is, do you want me to keep doing what I’m doing? Cause my previous boss always told me [to] just keep a log of your hours, and when it’s down time, you take your time. But, I can’t log it in anywhere, so would you like me to continue doing that?’ [The dean replied,] ‘Yeah, do what you got to do to get the job done.’ So, I did. I’m at point to where I had 90 hours of comp time...

Cynthia also stated that in addition to the lack of staff assistants, she also had limited access to the student employees. Cynthia recalled only being able to work with the student workers 5% to 10% of the time. I asked Cynthia how her supervisor responded to the lack of assistance within

the department, and she carefully responded, “I have verbalized my concern; I have put it in writing. And, it’s above my job duties at this point. I do what I can.”

Cynthia stated that she continued to stay at her job because of her commitment to the students and her work ethic, despite her workload and relationship within her department.

Cynthia described her work ethic as always wanting to give 110%. She stated that when she only gave 98-99% effort she was not giving enough to her job. She asserted that she always strived to arrive to work at least 25 to 30 minutes early, and she pushed herself to work “smarter not harder” to enhance efficiency. This allowed her to accommodate all the job demands and tasks placed upon her.

Although pushed herself to give above and beyond, the prolonged duration of her workload became exhausting for her. Cynthia described a time where she was “burned out” and began functioning in “auto pilot mode.” She recalled:

This last semester, it [workload] impacted me significantly to where I was burned out toward the second-third of the semester. So, from the second-third of the semester towards the final end of the semester, I was on auto pilot mode: you show up, you survive, you do what you can. But, I mean, I desire to always give my best for the students’ sake, but there’s a physical demand that you can only do so much. So, yeah, stress is very high...I can’t focus and concentrate on the high things that I’m paid to do and formulate like scheduling and things.

In addition to being burned out due to workload, Cynthia also battled with differences of opinions, professionalism, and personalities within her department, which also contributed to Cynthia’s feelings of exhaustion.

Relationships. The theme of Relationships was comprised of three categories: Secretary, Dean, and Departmental expert. These illustrate the way Cynthia described her current work environment like the carnival ride: the Superman. She said, “you keep going in circles in chaos, and you want to puke your guts when you get off. Every day, when I come to work, that's what it is.” Throughout the interviews, Cynthia described various conflicts with the secretary, dean, and departmental expert.

Cynthia stated that her work relationships were once friendly and cordial; however, during the time of our interview, she only described instances of conflict and mistrust. Cynthia noted that she and the secretary had previously been friends, but when the administrative changes began conflict occurred, and their relationship became strained. Cynthia recalled that during what she considered a friendly conversation, Cynthia vented to the secretary and the advisor, and her statements were relayed almost verbatim to the dean. Cynthia stated that their inability to distinguish between informal, friendly conversations and formal work conversations contributed to problems within the workplace. She explained:

...I take full fault for saying certain things that when you mix friendships with coworkers, you trust the person that they would understand the definition of ‘Ah, she's just venting, she'll get over it,’ versus ‘Oh I'm going to go tell the boss exactly what you said.’ And, you live and you learn, which is why I come back to hey, we're just coworkers. Don't expect me to be at the same level as where we were because I trusted you to be a friend to the degree that I trusted you in. Because, I've always really had the philosophy that really and truly in life you can't really have friends...There's seasons for people in your life, and so their season in my life has ended because if you outgrow your friendship you need to move to the next level.

Cynthia stated that because of that incident she no longer wished to interact with the secretary or advisor on a friend level. She only wished to interact with them as needed on a professional level, as the job required. Cynthia explained that because of sense of betrayal, she no longer trusted the secretary or the advisor. Cynthia elaborated that she no longer wanted to communicate with the secretary for non-work items. She explained that she was not willing to lose her integrity and stay angry, but she would limit her interactions to avoid repeating the cycle.

Cynthia described a situation where she felt she had to establish boundaries with her relationship with the secretary. Cynthia stated that she would often respond to emails and texts from her cell phone since she was the only person to oversee the program. Because Cynthia perceived the secretary's actions as a termination of their friendship, Cynthia asked the secretary to no longer text her with non-work related items. She recalled stating, "Look, from this point on, please do not send me anything to my personal cell phone." Thus, Cynthia purposefully distanced herself from the secretary because she perceived the friendship to be void.

Additionally, because of their relationship, the secretary also avoided communicating things to Cynthia, such as scheduled meetings. Cynthia recalled when she asked the secretary to schedule a meeting with her and the dean. However, the secretary did not notify Cynthia of the scheduled meeting time. Cynthia stated that she had to assume that a meeting was taking place when she was called into the dean's office. She explained, "And, I was like okay, so I read between the lines and like was like I guess we're gonna have the meeting I requested, but the secretary couldn't do her simple job of informing me of the meeting that was set up." Cynthia continued, "And, to me common courtesy would be if you ask the secretary to give you an

appointment, she would call to inform you that there's an appointment." In addition to conflicts with the secretary, Cynthia also had less than favorable experiences with the dean.

During our first interview, Cynthia explained that within a year of her employment, there was a change in administration, which changed the type of stress she experienced. Cynthia stated she was hopeful that the new leadership would bring about a refreshing vision. However, she and the dean did not see eye-to-eye on how to run various programs, how to interact with faculty and students, and how to work together effectively to fulfill each person's needs. Cynthia was bothered at the dean's attempt to implement certain procedures, techniques, attitudes, and ideologies from her former institution at the current institution, without fully understanding their current operations and decisions. Cynthia stated that although the current university serviced a similar student population as the dean's former institution, the dean was not considering that the current institution was, in fact, unique and different from the previous institution.

Cynthia described the dean as a "visionary," but Cynthia did not believe her program could reach the same level as the dean's previous institution within a short timeframe. Thus, while Cynthia was hopeful, she also seemed apprehensive and cautious. Therefore, Cynthia's future interactions seemed to have been impacted by this first interaction of the dean not fully understanding the institutional culture, being unaware of employee needs, and not establishing clear decision-making practices.

When asked about her relationship with the dean, Cynthia described it as "complex" and "complicated." The dean promoted the departmental expert as associate dean and began shifting responsibilities and leadership without informing Cynthia. According to Cynthia, this was all done prior to being made official by Human Resources. Because there was no communication

about the leadership change, this caused confusion and stress for Cynthia. Cynthia stated that she was confused about who she was supposed to report to, the departmental expert or the dean.

She tearfully recalled the situation:

So, I walk in, and, you know, the dean is very confrontational. She's sitting at her desk, and she stares me straight blank, and you know, just with her body language you could tell she was upset. And she sits there, and she's like 'Well, I hadn't called you in because there wasn't a problem before, but now there's a problem. Tell me what the problem is.' And, you know, it was very authoritative...And so, I ended up telling her 'Well, frankly I'm very confused, and I'd like some explanation. Two weeks ago, I sat here, and I asked you—we reviewed my evaluation, we touched based on a few things. I informed you that...it was never informed to me that there was another person in the organizational I had to refer to and to report to. And, you know, pretty much she stated that it was never official.' And, she said, 'And that is not what it is. I am still your boss.'...So, then she says, that I'm angry. She's like 'No you're not confused, you're angry,' and 'I'm like no. I'm telling you I'm confused. I really don't understand where's [this] come[ing] from.' So, long story short, you know, she gets heightened, and she pretty much, you know, raises her voice and stares at me and pretty much mad dogs me. Like, you know, You gotta problem and you gonna fix it...And so, I understand that because of that meeting that we had, that was intense and heated you know, you call your cards, and you call as it is and you call it a day and you know where you stand.

While describing this exchange, Cynthia was tearful. She said the tears were because she realized that she was not yet completely over that interaction. In addition to being “confused”

regarding the departmental shift, Cynthia also described feelings associated with devalue, isolation, and under-appreciation.

Cynthia also indicated that she did not have full support from her supervisor. Cynthia perceived her lack of control by relating it to the dean's distrust for her. She explained that when she needed something, it usually takes a few days because she thought the dean perceived her as asking for too much. She elaborated:

The position itself should have control, but it goes back to they [dean and departmental expert] don't trust me, so they don't give me the control. I would say that the biggest problem is that upon my request, and I've seen it cause it's a trend, upon my request, because of what I'm asking for sounds like I'm asking them for an arm and a leg, they automatically like [think] 'What you want?' And, then, they'll go home probably and think about it, cause it takes them a few days. They come back, and they're like little cats that want to jump on your lap and be pet. And, they're like, 'Oh I know. You can take care of it any way you want.' And, then I'll start working on it the way I want, and then it goes back to 'Ugh, you're only going to do what you want to do.' And, I'm like 'Just freaking tell me.'

Cynthia articulated that the only way she was able to get things was at the convenience and discretion of the dean and departmental expert. Cynthia indicated that she had to request everything she needed and wait for others to decide if it was a necessary need. She used office supplies as an example. Cynthia also stated that because she had no clear direction of her dean's expectations, she was often left to figure things out on her own. Cynthia indicated that because of lack of direction and communication, she was just seen as the villain, but in actuality she just wanted to know what was expected of her. She stated, "...if they took the time to teach and

communicate exactly what the plan is as a tem, then I wouldn't be the villain. I'd be a team player...." Because of their communication, interactions, and perceptions, Cynthia stated that she thought her interactions with the dean were personal, and only got worse when the departmental expert joined their department.

Cynthia described the dean and the departmental expert as "best friends." She asserted that she and the dean got along fine until the departmental expert arrived. When asked if the new leadership was the cause of the current relationships and interactions, Cynthia replied:

No, actually the new leadership that came in on the initial set was very supportive of the changes. But, when the new person came on, there's a lot of questionable actions that, in my perspective, they tell me one thing, and they say 'Yes, you're very knowledgeable.'

But, because I'm not an expert because I don't have a Ph.D., and I'm not their best friend, I'm never gonna be good enough.

Cynthia recalled a conversation with the departmental expert suggesting that she find a way to accommodate a faculty member who had a last minute classroom assistance request. Cynthia told the faculty she was unable to accommodate the request because of her current workload, amount of time to prepare, and short notice. Cynthia stated that she suggested that they reschedule and follow office procedures by requesting assistance at least two weeks in advance. Cynthia copied both the dean and departmental expert on her reply to the faculty and received an unexpected response from the departmental expert. She recalled, "The expert walks in the door, and she tells me you need to figure out what you gotta do. But, you need to accommodate that faculty no matter what." Cynthia perceived that as an unrealistic expectation because it was around the same time her assistant was terminated. She described:

And, it's like I cannot physically do what she's asking me for. And, that day that he got terminated, I came in at 5:30 in the morning to do part of the work that I knew that he couldn't do, cause I knew that those new four scenarios the next day that I still had to work on. And, on an average, it takes me a week to work through a scenario. And, I had 7 brand new scenarios that I had to work on because these faculty had requested since January their dates versus that one.

At the time of the response, the departmental expert was not the official associate dean. Thus, Cynthia was confused as to why she was being told what to do by the expert.

To further add to the situation, the dean did not support Cynthia, but instead supported the departmental expert. Cynthia recalled:

And, so it's like, okay. So, every day since day one that the boss has walked in the door, she's said, 'You follow the rules, and I'm gonna back you up.' The one time that I ask her to back me up, it's like I'm sorry what you do isn't good enough. You need to do what the expert says because she knows what she's talking about.

Cynthia described this as office politics, and stated that it was best to steer clear of such interactions associated with favoritism.

According to Cynthia, the departmental expert continued to assert her power by attempting to cease email communications between Cynthia and the dean, stating that she should receive requests, rather than the dean. This communication exchange occurred just after the "heated" conversation with the dean, where Cynthia was trying to gain understanding of the departmental expert's role. However, during that conversation, according to Cynthia, she had not receive an official response that the departmental expert would be the new associate dean. Cynthia recalled that a week later the departmental expert approached Cynthia and said, "...you

don't need to be emailing the dean anymore, you email everything to me." Cynthia still stated that by university standards the dean was still her supervisor, so she did not seem to fully accept the departmental expert's new role as having authority over her position.

Perceptions. The theme of Perceptions emerged several times throughout Cynthia's data collection phase. Three categories formed the Perceptions theme: Self-Perceptions, Perceived motives, and Coping. Cynthia described her work ethic and values, as well as how she perceived the intentions of her co-workers and supervisors. Because Cynthia's perceptions of others conflicted with her self-perceptions, she also described the various coping mechanisms she incorporated to help deal with her workplace interactions.

Cynthia stated that because she was not considered a true part of the team and a front line employee, she stayed to herself isolated away from others. This was because she perceived herself as disliked, undervalued, and unappreciated. Cynthia's negative interactions with her peers caused her to withdraw. I wondered if Cynthia was just interpreting negative interactions as personal attacks; however, she stated that the problem was avoidance to steer away from unpleasant disagreements:

I'm very open to everybody. The problem is that ... I've heard them say these comments all the time 'Well, it's cause any time that I talk to you, you have reasoning,' and so they'll avoid addressing anything, because they know that if I ask them for anything it's because I know what I'm asking for, but if we turn it around they avoid asking me, because I'm going to ask them to do the right thing, and they don't want to hear it. That's where the avoidance is.

Cynthia asserted that people in her office tend to avoid her because they see her as the person who points out issues, raises concerns, and is not afraid to vocalize her opinions, regardless of whether or not it goes against the majority viewpoint.

Cynthia's perceptions of situations and others played a role in how she interacted within her office. When asked to describe her working environment as a movie, Cynthia responded by comparing her workplace to Cinderella. She explained:

If we were to describe characters, I would say let's look at, I guess, *Cinderella*. The students are Prince Charming. I would be Cinderella. The boss is the stepmom. The girls that are her daughters are the employees that I normally have to associate with because of work. It's a very small department. There's only staff assistant, one admission counselor, who used to be the staff assistant, and the executive secretary.

That's pretty much all there is. I have to talk to them, to get things done. Then you have your faculty. Recently, in the last few months, there was an organizational change where they included one of the faculty being promoted to be now an associate dean [departmental expert]. That person, as I guess, I run out of sisters. I guess it would be the duplicate of the stepmom. It'd be like stepmom, there's two of them now. Pretty much, that's what the characters are.

Cynthia only referenced two components positively: herself and the students. Cynthia perceived herself as Cinderella who was verbally abused and mistreated by her stepmother and step-sisters. During this fictional tale, Cinderella would cry and hope to find a source of happiness, which she found in her animal friends and in Prince Charming.

Cynthia also recalled examples that supported her Cinderella analogy. Cynthia perceived disagreements with others as a personal form of dislike. Thus, she interpreted the situation as

many people in her office wishing she would leave. Cynthia did not address having any allies within her department. She only described the stressful situations, which resulted in displeasing interactions.

Cynthia stated that she was reprimanded for helping a student in the absence of the academic advisor. Cynthia said a student needed advising assistance, and the advisor was out. Cynthia said because she trained the advisor, that she was familiar with the advising role, so she helped the student, but told him to come back and speak with the advisor to officially be advised. According to Cynthia, she was told to call the student back and retract certain statements made regarding advising. Cynthia perceived the situation as the advisor taking away her ability to be a team player and doubting her abilities. She stated:

When the advisor is out, I train[ed] the advisor, but obviously what I know is supposedly now, according to the last conversation that we had, not appropriate for me to advise anybody. More and more they keep taking back anything that I would do. If I wanted to make them happy, my letter of resignation, they would throw a party.

Cynthia tried to justify her interaction her actions of assisting the student by describing herself as an advocate for the students. Cynthia explained that she wanted to look out for the student as well as office efficiency. She stated:

This kid pays cash. You have to look at it at the university perspective. You pay the faculty 10 to 1 ratio, why in the hell would you not let another student in, we have nine students in the class, and the faculty is going to be like ‘Yeah, I don’t have a problem fitting him in,’ but just because I advised the student, they said no. I was like you know what, think beyond your hatred toward me, and think of the student.... I kept telling them, I’m being a student advocate.

From this interaction, Cynthia stated that when she received such rebuttal from the advisor and no support from her dean that she was very clear on where she stood within her department: outsider. While being an outsider was clear, Cynthia experienced uncertainty in knowing if and when the negativity would cease or resolve itself.

Cynthia provided one other analogy that described how she perceived her work environment. The analogy illustrated a sense that because no conversation ever occurred to address the work place issues between them, Cynthia viewed their gestures as being done under false pretenses. She stated:

If they give you a plant and it died, it's for a reason. I tried to bring it back to life as much as I could, but there's a point where you realize, no matter what you do, that plant's dead because they never gave it to you because they wanted to give it to you. They gave it to you because they just wanted you to feel like you were valued, but you never really were valued.

Cynthia did not feel she was genuinely valued as a part of the team and used the plant analogy to demonstrate how she viewed her professional relationships and working environment.

By the end of the third interview and final observation, I began to notice that Cynthia appeared to be giving up. Her words became less combative and eager to help the students and became more isolated and nonchalant towards the office environment. However, she provided examples throughout our meetings that support my assertion that Cynthia appeared to be giving up. Cynthia seemed less willing to go above the call of duty to allow others to see her worth. Cynthia stated that because her peers were not communicating or informing her of decisions, various issues arose. She stated that her peers perceived her lack of involvement as her

retaliating against them; however, Cynthia associated her lack of involvement as a result of her increased workload. She stated:

Now, all the flaws are coming out, and to me really and truly the only way you learn how to get better is by falling and getting back up...But, their view is that I'm angry; I'm retaliating against them; I'm not helping anymore, and it's like *How can I help?* And, everything else they've purposefully changed the process and things, and it's like okay, if you want people to own their position, then part of them owning it is that they're going to make mistakes and that all these things are going to happen, let them learn. That's how they're going to learn.

Cynthia had been disempowered, mistreated, and devalued for the last year, which seemed to cause some bitterness. Thus, she adopted a philosophy of making others accountable for their actions and decisions, rather than solving their problems and not being appreciated or acknowledged for it.

Cynthia continued to find coping strategies through roadblocks established by her supervisors and negative communication within the workplace. She no longer seemed obligated to help the team. Cynthia revealed that the negativity caused by her workplace had taken an emotional toll on her due to the negative workplace relationships and ineffective communication. She stated:

I try to handle it as much as I can, but sometimes, it's inevitable. You just get so low. You're lower than the ground, but you find a way to get yourself back up and press forth and do it...You have to figure it out on your own. You go, and you figure it out on your own. It's not good enough, and they won't tell you what to fix. That's where the stress comes from, from that end. It is what it is.

Cynthia remained outwardly positive about her working environment and seemed to have adopted strong coping strategies that helped her deal with and mask her feelings towards her departmental dynamic.

By the final observation, it was apparent that Cynthia could no longer cope with her department dynamic in its current state. There had been at least three weeks between the third interview and the final observation, so I was a little surprised when Cynthia emailed me to tell me her office had been relocated. However, I did not expect it to be in what appeared to have been a much smaller, reorganized supply closet. During that observation, she received a phone call from Human Resources. She inquired about setting up a meeting to discuss the grievance process to help combat a grievance or mediate between her, her supervisors, and co-workers. According to Cynthia, Human Resources told her they could not help her unless she filed a formal grievance and went through the legal channels. So, Cynthia said she prayed and resigned. She stated that after she submitted her letter, her supervisors and co-workers wanted to talk things out, but she had already made up her mind. She said the dean asked her to give her until the end of the semester to see if things got better. Cynthia told them she would stay two weeks to see if things improved before making her final decision to leave. However, she still planned to leave in two weeks, but she was just “playing the game” because she said things would not improve.

Cynthia Summary

Outside of the professional setting during casual gatherings or informal conversations, Cynthia was warm, humorous, and supportive. She laughed, smiled, and shared her life experiences. Cynthia seemed to have a beautiful personality when she allowed people to see her true self. However, because of the stress associated with her workload, relationships with peers,

and interpretations of situations, Cynthia seemed to create a protective wall that prevented her co-workers from seeing a softer, more relaxed side of her personality. Cynthia portrayed herself as the innocent party in the stressful situations she described, and each time, she was wronged by someone else, rather than there being an objective viewpoint.

Aguilar: “Nice Guy”

Aguilar was a single male with no children, who had worked in his current administrative role for five years. Aguilar was considered the secondary supervisor in a relatively large office, where he supervised over 30 employees. During the interviews, Aguilar described his primary stressors, his personality, and office environment. When asked to describe his stress level, Aguilar described it as motivating and used a *Star Wars* analogy to demonstrate. He explained:

In the 3rd *Star Wars* movie, Emperor Palpatine tells Anakin Sky Walker, Anikan’s getting angry, and then he turns around and says, ‘Oh I can feel your hate rising; it makes you focused.’...I actually get really focused, and I can function in any task.... What sucks though, is that I have to get that stressed out to be that meticulous. So, when I’m stressed out, I’m meticulous, but more so and more focused. And, well also quiet and isolated. I tend to isolate myself too because when you’re working or doing something moves me away from what caused me to get angry. But, I know it’s not healthy, sometimes. I know some stress can probably be healthy, at least that’s what I’ve heard. I’m not sure if it’s true or not, but it does make me focused. But, then when I get home, I’m just like, like I’m tense.

Aguilar’s personality profile and data analysis helped to fully understand Aguilar’s stress triggers and how he perceived and coped with the situations.

Aguilar's Personality

Aguilar acknowledged having two different personas when it came to describing his personality. Aguilar's described his personality as two-fold: his home self and his work self. He had a quiet, yet friendly demeanor, and he prided himself on being a good listener and approachable. Aguilar elaborated:

My home self is private. I don't really go out much...And, so I'm very private; I'm very to myself. I like my privacy; I like my weekends to not do anything. My work self; I think it's like a different look. I think people feel that 'Oh, he's friends with everyone, sociable.' Maybe not an extrovert, no not at all, but friendly. But, I think at work, I have to be cause I have to interact with all these different types of people, so it forces me to kick it up a notch. But, once I'm out the door, I'm back to being reserved. People say I have a sad life, but I like it...Also, my work self, I think I'm friendlier, but I think I'm also a listener in both ways. Like if I'm with an employee, I'm always quiet, but just listening to everyone's stories. And, even my family will talk to me like here's this, here's this, here's this, what's going on for advice. So, that's the only thing that kind of happens in both. People [come to me to] listen, to either rant, to get things off their chests, or for advice. That happens in both spears [sic]. But yeah, usually I'm very private.

While speaking, Aguilar stated that he did not believe that people cared about his studies. This type of selfless thinking resurfaced throughout the interviews and observations. Aguilar was willing to listen to others, but would rather not disclose his own thoughts and ideas because he perceived that others did not share the value. However, he was willing to sacrifice his needs, wants, and desires to help others.

Aguilar also took on the responsibility to caring for his father. While no one asked him to, Aguilar stated that he was the only one who would do the things his father needed. Thus, although Aguilar helped his father, he was also angered by his decision to help and the amount of time helping took away from his needs. Aguilar stated, “I know that a lot of stuff that happens personally affects my work.” Aguilar described how his father’s medical needs take a toll on his work attendance. He explained:

My dad’s always going to the doctor lately. So, I always have to take off time; it’s always last minute. Oh, this hurts. I’m like take care of him, and I hate missing... So, I feel like I’m wasting the time I’m saving up to take care of him. And, that puts me behind with the things I have to do.

Aguilar viewed his father’s medical needs as essential, but also as an inconvenience on his personal and professional desire to preserve his vacation and sick leave. The conflict between trying to balance his personal needs, work requirements, and family obligations caused Aguilar mental stress of remorse and physical stress of tension.

Aguilar also described an example in which helping his father caused him such stress that he began to experience physical signs of stress. He recalled:

It’s [stress tension] like right here (rubs, back of neck and shoulders). I can’t crack my neck; I just feel it there. There, um also sometimes I get like these weird; it’s almost like I’m nauseated. Like I’m looking at a computer screen. I was looking at the computer doing something for my dad. I was typing up an application, and I stood up and I felt like I’m gonna throw up, and I’m like *what the hell?* I’m just typing on the laptop, and I realized that I hadn’t eaten. And, it’s like midnight too, cause my dad texted me like 11, oh can you fix my application, I have an interview tomorrow. So, I saw his application and it

was crappy, so I'm like, *no I don't wanna fix it, but that's my dad*. I don't want them to look at his application, oh he can't write/spell. Cause I'll be like 'screw you,' he got his GED, he wasn't educated. So, I fixed it...I'm like okay, let me try to fix it, and I got sick. It felt like I was drunk, but I wasn't. But, I think cause I was staring at the laptop, last minute in the dark.

Aguilar explained that his stress also came from his sense of obligation to help his father, in which case, he put the needs of his father before his own. He stated:

I feel pressured I helped him because he hasn't been doing this in a long time, and he's the one that makes me the angriest the most. And, I've said a lot of ugly stuff to him, and vice versa. But, this is something positive, so instead of getting frustrated, I'm like okay. I bite my tongue, and 'oh sure I'll do it. Okay you need a ride, I'll do it.' Even if I can, or not possible, cause I feel; I'll feel bad if I don't help him. So, I put his pressure on me as well.

Aguilar's desire to help others and put others' needs before his own in his personal life caused him stress.

Aguilar described himself as "the nice guy." His "nice guy" mentality seemed to cause him self-imposed stress because of his personal values. He explained:

I've always been like 'oh, he's the nice guy. He's the nice guy. He's friendly, he's this and this.' That's always me to the detriment to my own feelings sometimes. I always, at least to me, getting taken advantage of, taken for granted, and it pisses me off. In private, I get angry. I come up with these hypothetical scenarios, *oh, I'm gonna break off all contact with this person*. And, I go through the whole argument, breaking out. But, let's say that person will call. I'm like *hey that's my chance to say I can't help you*. But, I

don't take it. I'm like no, cause my group of friends are so limited, I can't, then I'll be totally alone...But, I want people to be hap--, not happy with me, but to know, like Aguilar is the one they can count on. He'll never get mad; he's understanding. He's this, which is true I am. But, secretly in my head I'm like *Oh god*.

Because Aguilar seemed to perceive himself as “the nice guy,” he often avoided stressful situations and took ownership of others, which caused self-imposed stress.

Aguilar expressed that he also experienced stress when he spent time and invested time into training an employee and then they shortly resign. During an informal observation, Aguilar was told by his supervisor that an employee was contemplating leaving due to scheduling conflicts. Aguilar immediately held his head back and laughed audibly and oddly. It seemed as if he did that to say I can't believe this. When I asked him about the giggle, he stated, “Yeah, I do, do that when I'm stressed.” He stated that the less people he had to train in the fall the better. Aguilar seemed overwhelmed and frustrated at the thought of having to train more people due to employee turnover. To combat the negativity he felt, he outwardly smiled to avoid having a negative reaction. Thus, Aguilar seemed to attempt to display positive non-verbally even when he was internally frustrated, holding true to his personal reputation of being “the nice guy” and not displaying anger to avoid offending others.

Aguilar's Data Analysis

Throughout the data analysis, three major themes emerged: Avoidance, Autonomy, and Conflict Resolution, as illustrated in Figure 15. Although Aguilar was a full-time administrator, he demonstrated certain traits that indicated self-imposed stress. For example, Aguilar stated that dealing with people's “junk” bothered him. He only wanted to address work-related issues

that directly related to his and to their job description. When he had to deal with such situations, Aguilar demonstrated avoidance and found it frustrating to effectively resolve conflict.

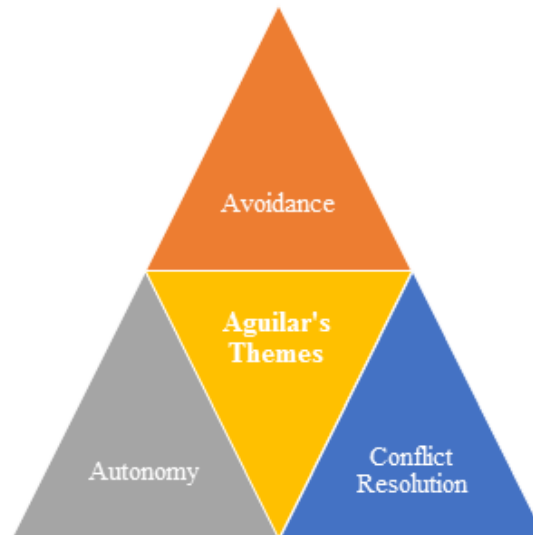


Figure 15. Aguilar's Theme Analysis from combined interviews and observations.

Avoidance. The theme of Avoidance was one of Aguilar's highest stressors. He indicated that the constant communication and interaction with the various personalities he supervised was stressful for him. Aguilar said that he sometimes feared interacting with some of his staff because he was afraid to speak his true thoughts to avoid hurting the feelings of others. Aguilar described all his staff as being intelligent and bright, and he acknowledged potential in each of them. However, he also referred to some of his staff as negative, distrustful, lost, needy, or manipulative. Thus, the Avoidance theme was made up of four categories, using phrases from Aguilar's data analysis: Dealing with people annoys me; Fear and distrust; I can handle it better; and I can't save them.

While Aguilar had a caring and gentle personality, that sometimes conflicted with the manner in which he interacted with his staff and how he coped with stress. Aguilar often stated that the majority of his stress involved interacting with his staff. He stated that dealing with their

constant questioning, personal problems, and attitudes was stressful. Aguilar stated that he would rather not have to deal with the personal aspect of the work environment. He stated that he would rather everyone just report to work and do their jobs without bringing their personal “junk” to work.

Aguilar indicated that his most stressful interactions were with his employees. Aguilar described his staff’s life needs and past experiences as “junk” and stated that he preferred not to deal with it.

I don’t like dealing with it [giggle]. I don’t; I will though cause of my position. It can’t just always be [my supervisor] dealing with it. I need to help out as well. But, also because we have different perspectives, maybe my perspective from my background could be what this person needs. From different approaches, right. But I don’t like dealing with it.

Aguilar appeared to be easily stressed by the emotions of others. He described himself as “caring to a fault” by being overly empathetic. He said that he was not comfortable dealing with other people’s emotions or feelings because he felt inadequate to help them. Aguilar stated that his personal experiences and ways of coping with challenges were quite different, in that he just conquered them internally by not addressing them. He said, “And when the [employees] are venting, I’m like oh you have a lot of junk. How can I help you deal with your junk? Cause the way I deal with my junk is just; I just kind of keep it in, and that doesn’t work for a lot of people.”

Aguilar indicated that while his employees needed to find some sort of resolution, he preferred to just serve in the capacity of a “sounding board” and listen. He stated that in some cases he would provide feedback, and at other times, he would approach the situation cautiously.

He explained, “And then, I also half my day, not half my day, but a good portion is dealing with their junk with their lives. Um, and depending on the person, I’ll listen and give them genuine feedback. Or, depending on the people, I’ll be weary.” While Aguilar noted that his working environment was positive and that he enjoyed the intellectual exchange of ideas, that he was often times hesitant to interact with others due to previous negative experiences, negative attitudes, conflict, or mistrust.

Aguilar noted that he was afraid that some employees would misinterpret his words and use them against him, jeopardizing his status within the university. Thus, he approached conversing with them cautiously because he did not trust their motives. Aguilar stated:

I’m extremely careful what I say to them. Deliberately then. Cause I don’t want my own words to be misused against me. Because I get the vibe I could say something just anything and it could be twisted to be used against me, in some way, to jeopardize myself; my livelihood. So, I’m very deliberate when I speak to them.

Sometimes I don’t tell them my full thoughts cause I just don’t want to deal with it.

Aguilar also acknowledged that avoiding certain topics and not being straightforward with certain employees who are negative caused him additional stress because of potential chaos their negativity could bring to the workplace. He stated, “Because...I’m not more forceful with them, maybe not forceful, but more forthcoming with them it could lead to their negative energy being transferred over to other people.” Thus, even in attempting to protect everyone else, Aguilar sacrificed his own comfort for the sake of others. And while this is an admirable trait to protect others, internally Aguilar stated that he became frustrated and stressed and took on the emotional burdens of others.

In addition to listening to people and being what Aguilar described as a “sounding board” to assist others, Aguilar also had to address a lack in confidence in helping people resolve issues. Aguilar stated that he resolved conflict, but he thought about short-term solutions, rather than long-term solutions. Because of his discomfort, Aguilar described himself as being unable to save his students and employees. Aguilar indicated that he also felt uncertainty when interacting with life-related struggles of his employees. He stated:

I don't like dealing with it. [Giggle.] I don't; I will though cause of my position. It can't just always be [my supervisor] dealing with it. I need to help out as well. But also because we have different perspectives, maybe my perspective from my background could be what this person needs. From different approaches, right. But I don't like dealing with it. I feel like my life experiences can't help these people. I think. So, when a student, for example, if a student keeps complaining: I don't get it; I don't get it; I don't wanna tell the student cause your skills are not there, and that you probably shouldn't be a teacher. Cause that's harsh to hear that. So I don't wanna tell you that your goal in life is not gonna happen. So, I just kind of listen...

When asked how he felt when he could not adequately assist an employee, Aguilar stated:

That, I let them down, but also that...I need more for myself. Like maybe I could do something else. Like maybe I need more training myself to figure out how to help. So maybe it's like a deficiency in me. Cause just like when I was talking about oh, I just want them to know how to do things cause I'm giving them my knowledge. And, to me that's a big thing; I'm sharing what I know. So, I'm giving them you something from me, part of me. So, part of me is within you, so when you can't do it, I'm like oh, I'm flawed because they have a part of me. I know I'm probably overthinking myself; I'm

like yeah it's my knowledge. If they can't use it, is it because they can't use it or just because it's not the right way. I don't know.

Aguilar seemed to take ownership of the uncertainties of others; he took it personally, which served as a stressor for him. However, throughout the interviews, Aguilar described himself as someone who dwells on situations and internalizes them until he can come to terms with them or better rationalize them. This is how he coped with the stress associated with uncertainty.

In addition to creating stress for himself through his staff, Aguilar also took on the stress of the students he assisted due to his helping nature and passion for education. Aguilar noted that when he helped a student and the student did not succeed that he also became sad and felt a sense of failure. While Aguilar did not acknowledge self-imposed stress with his employees, he did consider his passion and interaction with students as a form of self-imposed stress. He stated:

And I take on that energy, that, negativity. I'm like oh, how come they couldn't pass? We were helping them; they were so close. To me, that's self-imposed cause I'm taking on their sadness, and I'm putting it on me. I do feel sad, and I do feel bad about it. So, I guess, to me, self-imposed stress is when I take on other people's stress and burdens, when it's not my problem.

Aguilar failed to see the connection between both his employees and his students. Although he attempted to avoid conflict with his employees, he took on the burdens of protecting their emotions. This is similar to him taking on the emotional burden of his students' lack of success.

Aguilar stated that because he would rather not tell an employee when they failed to meet his expectations, he would simply accept the product and re-do the project himself to meet his standards. Aguilar indicated that he had three primary reasons for not addressing the problem. He wanted to be liked and not hurt their feelings. He was uncomfortable dealing with the

potential question and answer session that would be needed to guide the employee. And, he did not like the idea of communicating expectations or telling someone exactly how to accomplish a task. All of these items led to self-imposed stress for Aguilar. While he was trying to protect his employees from upset, Aguilar increased his workload and frustration. Although he was frustrated, he did not indicate what was wrong or how to correct the problem, thereby causing self-imposed stress. Aguilar acknowledged this as a problem, but also stated that he did not yet know how to correct the issue.

Aguilar described himself as a perfectionist and preferred to have projects that were the most important to him done exactly the way he envisioned them; however, the key flaw with this perspective was that he continued to add stress and work upon himself by not delegating tasks. He explained:

I don't wanna say self-imposed, but I'll say it just adds stress like oh, it didn't get done right. I'm gonna just have to do it myself, but if I do it myself, they're [employees] gonna feel bad, and I don't wanna have to worry about them getting their feelings hurt. And, then I have to deal with that crap, so to me, I think sometimes if it's a task where I don't trust someone, I'll just figure it out. Cause I can disappoint myself, but I don't want them to feel disappointed, cause I don't wanna deal with their feelings. And that may seem wrong or bad, but I have a hard time dealing with that like oh I feel slighted. But why? It's work.

Ironically, Aguilar did not consider his unrealistic expectation and failure to communicate expectations with the staff as a form of self-imposed stress. In choosing to spare his employees and put himself in the uncomfortable situation of describing when something was done incorrectly, Aguilar regularly imposed stress upon himself by not trusting the work of his employees and failing to adequately delegate tasks.

On the final observation, Aguilar displayed what could be perceived as a negative interaction. While interacting with an employee, Aguilar inquired as to where the typed documentation was for a file. The employee replied that if it was not in the folder, then the task was not completed. Aguilar then looked surprised and raised his eyebrows. He asserted that the task was completed because he personally typed the notes and filed them. While saying this, Aguilar smiled and pounded his hand with a closed fist. Aguilar then turned and quickly walked away and returned to file the handwritten notes in front of the employee. Again, Aguilar attempted to smile through the frustration, but his non-verbal actions demonstrated his frustration. When I followed up with Aguilar regarding his reaction, he described some of his negative traits. He stated:

...there's a lot of qualities [I] have that are probably the worst damn [qualities]: being unforgiving, dwelling. That perfectionism, like it has to get done my way. And if it's not my way eh, it's not good. So, I think a lot of my negative traits influence how I work. It has to look; this is what I want. And if it doesn't get that way, I failed.

Aguilar also stated that he could be a little selfish; he stated, "I'm used to being..., like get people to kiss my ass." This example demonstrates Aguilar's frustration his co-worker did not seem overly accommodating to Aguilar's concern to find the missing documentation. Thus, she did not conform to his needs or expectations. Also, he did not want to submit hand written documentation into a file, which went against his perfectionist personality, thus adding to his stress and frustration.

Autonomy. Throughout the interviews and observations, Aguilar demonstrated the need to have workplace autonomy and control without being micromanaged or having to micromanage the work of others. Thus, his ultimate themes consisted of freedom to create and

lead without interference. He indicated that when he felt that his autonomy or control was being challenged or undermined, he became angry. Similarly, he led in the same way he preferred to be led by others, through a hands-off approach.

Aguilar stated that he enjoyed the autonomy provided by his current position. He valued the ability to plan, develop, and implement strategies without being micromanaged. Aguilar stated that he needed his supervisor to continue allowing him freedom to create and plan with minimal input. Aguilar wanted to feel trusted with tasks and know that his supervisor acknowledged his skill set and abilities. He provided an example:

Or, for example, [my supervisor] gave me the dates for the workshops, and I'm like 'okay and I start planning them.' So, I like that: the freedom to create and plan. And, to also, not experiment, but let's just see how things go. Like the [program] binder, let's see how, and so far it's working out well—at least one on one...I may not have all the pitfalls figured and all the quirks, but to me trying something out is how I discover the pitfalls. I'm not at the point where I can see problems or pitfalls beforehand. I deal with it, let me try, figure what's going on, and okay let's go from there. Not everyone's like me, because I have experience, oh okay this isn't working let's try this.

The ability to take control of his own success and further develop his ideas and contribute to the department was a key component of Aguilar's job satisfaction.

Aguilar described ways in which he did not receive the respect he desired and the autonomy he felt he deserved, and he became very upset. He noted that respect was one of his highest work needs. He placed respect and control above his personal need to be liked or to have positive relationships with others. This was demonstrated with his relationship with one of his co-workers. As a part of his job duties, Aguilar was assigned a certain component of office

operations, in which he was responsible for assigning and delegating in this area. His co-worker, however, would often intervene, which caused Aguilar a great deal of frustration and anger. He stated, “She interferes with my [duties], and I want her to not touch them.” Aguilar noted that his frustration came from his co-worker interjecting herself into his realm of authority. Additionally, he stated that he did not prefer her reasoning or method of delegating the tasks. He recalled:

It was when I assigned something... and she’s like ‘Oh [this employee’s] not doing anything this and this.’ And, I’m like ‘Oh, okay yeah sure.’ It seems like a small thing, but in my emails, I have everything organized. I’m like damn it, I gotta put a flag on it, and be like let me double check, let me double check. Cause I have my system too, and I don’t want her touching it.

Aguilar admitted that he did not realize how much this situation bothered him. He stated that he does not address the issue often to avoid confrontations. He described that when he did notice the issue occurring, he tried to call her to establish control and let her know that he would assign and delegate the task. He stated:

I never realized that bothered me that much, but it does. Cause when I say my system, It’s not a system, it’s like I forward it [the assignment], I put my flaggie [on the email], when I get the response [from the employee], cause I’m always double checking the sign-ins. That doesn’t take me that long now, it’s become quick. But, I like, I just like assigning my [projects]. Or, me and [my supervisor] assign them. I’m like, oh okay, here’s my thing. Cause she forgets... Then I was like wait, this is my thing, so that’s why I called her, [and said] ‘You know what I’m gonna assign them.’ Cause there have been a few times when I don’t wanna step on her toes, and I’m like wait, what toes. This is my part.

While Aguilar verbally stated that it does not matter how the task gets accomplished as long as it gets done, his feelings contradicted his philosophy. He stated:

My supervisor, just let me continue to create and still have trust in me. That I may do something different than [her], like I was talking about the ultimate objective, and if that happens and it was effective, then the [department] was successful. That's the way I look at it, so it could be different ways, but both will be effective and still good and students will still learn and appreciate our [department].

Although his co-worker got the tasks delegated and accomplished, Aguilar took ownership of the projects, and wanted things to be done his way. So, theoretically he acknowledged that he wanted and needed the freedom to try things his own way from his supervisor, he would rather not extend that courtesy to his co-worker due to his personal need for control.

Conflict resolution. Aguilar often seemed uncertain about how to effectively handle conflict resolution. Aguilar described one situation in which he disengaged from two employees because the communication exchange was frustrating for him. In doing so, he wondered if he had caused a conflict for his supervisor because he neglected to resolve the issue. He explained:

Uh, they were working on their [projects], and I was going back and forth with them cause it was getting—...And, it became this long kind of thing. And, I kept going back and forth, well how 'bout this and this...And, they would make changes, it wasn't what I wanted. And, it eventually got to the point where I was like, you know what I'm not gonna use it. That's what I thought in my head. You know what, I'll just let them do what they want to do and let them waste their time; I just won't use it. But, then I think a day later and they um approached [my supervisor] with it, and I think [she was] kind of giving the same kind of feedback, as far as like cut this and cut this, or something like

that, and it blew up. And, remember thinking damn it, if I would have told them this has to get changed or we're not gonna use it, maybe that wouldn't happened. Or maybe it wouldn't caused that frustration for [her]. So, I felt bad about that. Not for them, but for [my supervisor]. Cause I felt like oh, I could have maybe prevented it. But, at the same time I think, what did I do wrong? I'm not quite sure, but I did go back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, and then I eventually got to the point like eeeh okay, it's fine. And that's me disengaging.

In his attempt to cope and combat the negativity, he avoided the situation, which may have led to additional stress. Aguilar attributed much of his stress to remorse for not engaging. He stated, "And I think my stress came from guilt."

Aguilar also asserted that in addition to him not stepping in to completely resolve conflict, his staff also blamed him when conflicts arose. Aguilar described two situations in which the staff disregarded him as their supervisor, and made him the scapegoat for their mistakes. He expressed anger and stress in dealing with these examples because the employees neglected to take responsibility for their own actions. He recalled a situation where an employee blamed him for her losing her job. He recalled:

...she unloaded on me like it was my fault that she lost her job...And, I was like 'It's not my fault; that's not my fault.' And I got angry. I started obsessing. *Am I supposed to know single everything, even if someone doesn't tell me?* But, that start[ed] feeling[s], *Well how many of them [employees] do that?* And it comes back, and it's always gonna look bad on me. So, I started obsessing and being irrational about it. But yeah, she unloaded on my, like ugly. I'm like 'Screw you; you're a bad worker and we took you back in. And remember we hired you that first day you worked, you quit, you called me

were like it's too stressful.' And, I'm like what the hell. And, then you decided to come in and work, and you made me look like a fool. That was one time, I got angry after, cause I was out that day. And, she sent me a text, well I quit.

This conflict made him question himself; however, he coped by rationalizing that he could not be responsible for information another employee did not share with him because the appropriate protocol was not followed.

Aguilar also described a situation in which he lost his temper with an employee and did not address it. The employee complained to his supervisor, and Aguilar's supervisor asked him to converse with the employee to try to rectify the situation. He stated:

The most recent time was with [a female employee], when she complained about me about I was rude to her and told her off in front of people. [when she did not adhere to the procedures,] That got me hot, like really, really upset.... and there were like three [employees] there. And afterwards, I felt bad. I'm like I probably shouldn't have done it. I felt bad in how I did it, but not what I said.

This one situation encompassed all three of Aguilar's major stressors and themes: employee interactions, workplace autonomy, and conflict. Aguilar was frustrated and stressed during this exchange because his employee neglected his instructions and seemed uncertain about how to handle the situation when guidance had already been provided. The situation seemed to elevate afterwards when he disengaged and did not address situations with the employee, in which case he perceived her as "throwing [him] under the bus." Thus, Aguilar's frustration in this situation came in the form of interacting with others and their uncertainties and their lack of confidence in themselves.

Aguilar's Summary

Aguilar's findings revealed a kind and caring personality. He seemed to consider the feeling and opinions of others over his own, sometimes to a fault. And, in compromising his own feelings and values, he added stress to himself. However, Aguilar internalized stress, avoided discussing conflict, and steered away from emotions. These things made him uncomfortable. Aguilar prided himself on being "the nice guy" and had high expectations of himself and those around him. However, he also had difficulty delegating and articulating clear expectations, which enhanced stress. Much of Aguilar's stress was due to the daily interactions he was required to have with his staff, his inability to delegate, and his empathy for others.

Within-Case Analysis

Within-Case analysis was conducted as a means to explore how both groups, faculty and administrators, experienced occupational stress. Lorraine and LaDoctor's individual categories and themes were analyzed collectively to form the faculty group. Within this group, similarities were discovered such as Administrative Interference, Devalue/Disempowerment, and Self-Imposed stress. Cynthia and Aguilar's data analysis were collectively examined to help form the administrator group. Within the administrator group, three common themes were also established: Communication, Avoidance, and Control.

Faculty

From individual participant data analysis from Lorraine and LaDoctor, three common themes emerged to represent faculty occupational stress: Administrative Interference, Devalue/Disempowerment, and Self-Imposed Stress, as reflected in Figure 16.



Figure 16. Dominant themes collected from faculty interviews and observations.

First, both faculty members attributed their occupational stress experiences to administrative decision making. Secondly, the faculty in this study expressed feeling additional stress when they perceived themselves unappreciated, unsupported, or devalued by administrators, community members, or staff and students. And, finally, Lorraine and LaDoctor also indicated experiencing self-imposed stress due to their compassion for their students and the community. These three themes framed the faculty occupational stress experience within higher education.

Instructional interference. While instructional interference examples were not frequent among the faculty participants, the instances seemed to leave a lasting impression on both Lorraine and LaDoctor. Each participant reiterated the same experience in at least two of their three interviews, which indicated that these situations disturbed the participants and framed the way each participant viewed instructional interference. For example, as previously mentioned, Lorraine described a situation in which a male executive administrator “strongly suggested” a vulgar and graphic book as the primary text to be read by all freshman students. Lorraine thought the descriptions could be deemed insensitive and inappropriate to women and female students. The perceived classroom interference and perception of devalue seemed to cause stress

upon Lorraine, which indicated her distrust in upper administration's intentions and focus regarding her courses.

Similarly, LaDoctor also experienced classroom interference from influential community representatives. Being that LaDoctor had a military background, she needed or wanted her supervisors to stand up for her, lead her, and be stronger for her academic freedom. She explained, "When you are in charge of soldiers, stress them with what is necessary...and you protect them because they're your followers. So, it could also be that, but that in itself is my main stressor." Thus, both Lorraine and LaDoctor stated that although they had instructional autonomy, their voices and instructional leadership could quickly be undermined by higher administration.

The faculty participants were both similar with the amount of instructional freedom they had. Both were able to maneuver within the boundaries of the established class structure to incorporate their pedagogical practices and philosophical approaches to learning. Additionally, expressed experiencing some administrative interferences within their teaching; however, this was more prevalent for LaDoctor, who did not have a positive working relationship with her supervisor. Lorraine, on the other hand, had a positive working relationship with her supervisor, so she was able to adequately speak against what she thought to be an administrative interference. Thus, the amount of supervisor support and the nature of the professional relationship between faculty and supervisors seemed to be essential to a productive working environment and how one perceives interactions and intentions.

Devalue/disempowerment. Lorraine and LaDoctor both needed to be valued and empowered. They each wanted their voices to be heard and appreciated. Lorraine had a more personal need to be valued, while LaDoctor's sense of value extended beyond herself and into

the lives of those around her, whether it be students or faculty. Lorraine's primary sense of devalue appeared to center around her course and content area. The negative perceptions surrounding general studies extended beyond the students to negative criticism from parents and university faculty. Lorraine stated that the executive administration listened to the complaints from students and parents more than they actually examined the value of the courses, so much so that executive administration considered removing, modifying, and/or replacing general studies courses. Executive administration's disregard for the value of her course and content area seemed to cause Lorraine continued stress.

LaDoctor expressed that when others failed to see the importance in the opinions of others, she became stressed. She said she valued each person, regardless of their position or status. She gave the example of janitors, and stated that they should be getting paid much more for the amount of work they do. LaDoctor also valued the voice of the students. For example, when a student was encouraged to speak his truth regarding his experiences working with faculty, because it went against what faculty wanted to hear, his opinion was disregarded. This served as a stress trigger for LaDoctor. LaDoctor also appeared to become stressed when she perceived that higher administrators used fear as a means to control how faculty spoke, voted, and interacted within the department, which seemed to cause her to rebel. The rebellion coincided with the next faculty group theme of self-imposed stress.

Self-imposed stress. Each participants' personality appeared to contribute to how they perceived their own stress experiences. Lorraine expressed feelings of self-imposed stress associated with her personal drive to succeed and maintaining her professional reputation. Lorraine said that her peers viewed her highly and deemed her a great instructor. Lorraine also stated that she had developed positive working relationships with those outside of her

department. Thus, she strived hard to not only do her best to fulfill her own expectations of herself, but to also maintain her image of providing excellence. When Lorraine perceived herself as inadequate or unprepared she lacked confidence, which indicated additional worry and stress. Thus, Lorraine internally dwelled upon various situations to help her cope with her stress, but it seemed self-imposed because she expected more of herself than what others expected of her.

LaDoctor's self-imposed stress appeared in the form of rebellion. She refused to allow herself to ignore a perceived injustice. LaDoctor stated that "inaction" upset her. Thus, although she often disagreed, and did not always speak against it, she internally rebelled by disregarding authority. For example, LaDoctor stated there was a gender inequality in terms of faculty treatment and reprimands concerning profanity. Because of the perception, LaDoctor stated her opinion and continued to curse. Although she had been informed that the faculty handbook had a "No Profanity" clause, she continued to do so, and failed to read the handbook to avoid being accountable for that knowledge. LaDoctor noted that her rebellion to continue cursing could cause problems for her in the future, yet she was willing to take that risk, thereby opening herself up to self-imposed stress through further calls to her supervisor's office to discuss her work place vernacular.

Administrators

Cynthia and Aguilar both discussed stressors, which were associated with ineffective communication with others, negative interactions with staff and co-workers, and conflicts between their own personal needs and values and those of others and their working environment. Through their analysis three themes within-case themes emerged: Communication, Co-worker Interactions, and Personality/Personal Values, as illustrated in Figure 17.



Figure 17. Dominant themes demonstrated in administrator interviews and observations.

Communication. Cynthia’s lack of communication and communication exchanges with her supervisors and peers seemed to be key occupational stressors for her. There were two primary causes for the perceived lack of communication. The first was connected to the negative relationships that existed within the department, and the second was associated with Cynthia’s perception that she worked in the background and was never at the center of office operations. She stated, “They [co-workers] will interact with me little to none. And, in the nature of my job, I’m in the background. I’m the stage setter, so they never really see me. Unless I make myself visible and known, I interact with them.” Cynthia’s past experiences and personal perceptions appeared to alienate her from interacting with others within the department. Her perception of remaining in the background seemed to conflict with her need to feel included in work-related decisions and conversations.

Aguilar also expressed this issue as well. While he stated that he needed to improve his communication exchanges with his staff, it appeared that he failed articulate his expectations and, without this clarification, the staff could not effectively carryout his directives or fulfill his work needs. Both Aguilar and Cynthia, in some instances, were the source of their own occupational. Neither administrator seemed to articulate to others that they wanted to be included or understood. Also, neither mentioned taking a proactive approach to attempt to

rectify their situations. While this was not the case each time, it exemplified the ways these administrators perceived themselves to be misunderstood and unfulfilled in terms of communication.

Avoidance. An additional shared theme within the administrator case analysis was avoidance as a coping mechanism to avoid negativity. Both Cynthia and Aguilar seemed to avoid certain communication exchanges to escape unpleasant or uncomfortable situations. In doing so, they appeared to internalize more stress than they resolved and released. And, in doing so, their occupational stress seemed to continue piling up until they could find a way to cope with their stress. Additionally, their avoidance of situations seemed to cause them negatively react and communicate with others because of the accumulated stress.

Because Cynthia expressed so many negative interactions with her supervisor, she seemed to avoid communication. When asked how often she communicated with her supervisor, she stated, “As needed, and as limited as possible.” Cynthia added, “So whatever is specifically having to be interacted with them, I will. But, aside from that, you know, I try to figure out what it is that I have to do based on their very, very broad answer.” Cynthia again referred to the negative communication exchange with her supervisor, which she described as “heated.” This negative communication exchange appeared to become the catapult for limited interoffice communication and avoidance for Cynthia. It was also the perceived source of her occupational stress. Although Cynthia tried to cope with the situation, she ultimately avoided the situation so much so that she conceded and resigned her position as a result of unresolved negative interactions.

While Aguilar did not resign from his position, he avoided interacting with various staff members and co-workers because of the perceived negativity he felt they brought into the

workplace. Although Aguilar's conflict was not with his supervisor, he did experience negative interoffice communication exchanges with his one of his co-workers. These interactions caused him to avoid interacting with her and concede his authority and needs to fulfill her own, which seemed to inwardly serve as a major stressor. Aguilar described situations in which he made a decision and his co-worker questioned his decision and attempted to change them. Aguilar described a situation when he was bothered by something done by another one of his co-workers, but he compromised to avoid an argument. Thus, in order to steer clear of negativity, Aguilar seemed to internalize his frustrations and stress. Avoidance appeared to serve as his coping mechanism to keep the workplace pleasant for others.

Control. Control and autonomy were prominent themes for administrators, Cynthia and Aguilar. Cynthia demonstrated the need for control within her ability to make decisions. Cynthia stated that her position required control, but her supervisors admonished her when she made decisions. Cynthia also perceived supervisor displeasure when she took the initiative to enhance departmental efficiency in the absence of others, such as the advisor. Cynthia said that in order to get things done in the office, she had to make her supervisors believe that her ideas were actually theirs. When there were no resolutions to regaining a sense of control, as in Cynthia's case, she seemed to acquire control through her resignation.

Aguilar stated his need for control and respect overshadowed his need to be liked. Aguilar stated that he needed his co-workers and employees to respect his decisions, and he did not like being undermined. When this occurred, especially with one co-worker in particular, Aguilar became territorial and demonstrated non-verbal reactions that contradicted his verbal message. For example, when Aguilar perceived he was being undermined or disrespected, he carefully clasped his hands together. Although he did not outwardly state his displeasure, his

non-verbal reactions demonstrated other feelings. When Aguilar did not feel he was in control or respected, he stated that he avoided interaction, sometimes for weeks. He said that in cases where he felt disrespected, he would not give in or make the first move to apologize. He attributed this to his stubbornness of disengaging and “obsessing” over situations where his “feelings were hurt.”

Thus, although Aguilar and Cynthia’s working environments were vastly different, feeling powerless or disrespected were high stressors for them. Both suggested being willing to end or avoid relationships to maintain control or remove themselves from unpleasing situations that did not fulfill their needs.

Cross-Case Analysis

While each of the two individual cases had unique features, and each employment demographic group had similar stressors, the interesting component of this research was understanding how each group experienced occupational stress similarly or differently (see Table 2). Based on all of the data collected six themes emerged: Likability, Control, Work/Life Balance, Mentorship, Compassion/Caring, and Work Environment. Table 4 outlines each of the six cross-case analysis themes and the reflection of participants’ contribution.

Table 4

Cross-Case Comparison

Participant	Caring	Mentorship	Likeability	Control	Work/Life Balance
Lorraine (Faculty)	Mothering Nurturing	Positive relationship with supervisor Clear expectations	Wants to be liked Reputation is important	Maintains control in the classroom Some administrative interference	Spouse Three children External consulting Extracurricular activities
LaDoctor (Faculty)	Social injustices Disempowerment	Wants mentorship and guidance within department	Does not need to be like Students find her intimidating; she uses that to her advantage	Maintains control in the classroom Administrative and political interference	Spouse Three children Publishing/ Research 4-4 teaching load
Cynthia (Admin)	Student centered	Wants mentorship, communication, and guidance	Likability not needed, but communication is essential	Wants control; however, none given and/or revoked	Spouse Two children Faith
Aguilar (Admin)	Student centered Empathetic	Positive working relationship with supervisor	Wants to be liked “The nice guy”	Maintains control in the workplace Respect and autonomy are a must	Ph.D. program Adjunct instructor Sick father

Note: Adapted from codes created for each research participant to demonstrate faculty and administrator similarities and differences.

Caring

All administrators and faculty expressed feeling stress associated with helping nature of their profession. Each participant seemed to genuinely care about the academic well-being for each of their students. Lorraine, faculty, described a situation in which she was proud to know that education majors were observing how she taught the class. The students informed her that they planned to use some of her teaching activities and techniques in their classes and future classrooms. This was the only concrete, positive experience Lorraine shared regarding how she was satisfied knowing that she was helping others. The remainder of her shared experiences were geared toward finding ways to encourage others that she did want to help them and could add value to their lives. So, while Lorraine's experiences differed a little from Aguilar's, both are the same in terms of serving as a stressor. While Aguilar said his personal experiences were inadequate to help his employees and students with life issues, he was fully qualified to help them with the academic challenges they faced. He described two situations; one where a student could not pass an exam, and the second when he could not help his staff. Aguilar acknowledged that he overthought his abilities to help others, and in doing so, he took on the burden of others. Thus, his attempt to help others and provide them with meaningful experiences coincides with Lorraine's experiences to help her students. Both administrators and faculty contributed stress to their personal needs to help others succeed.

LaDoctor also experienced a strong connection to emotional stress in her attempts to help university students with life situations that impeded on their academic success. LaDoctor's source of stress came in the form of helping students and even community members for their total well-being. This seemed to take an emotional and stressful toll on LaDoctor. Because of her personal values, she was willing to endure stress for the sake of others. Ultimately, both

university faculty and administrators experienced occupational stress due to their personal desires to provide assistance beyond that of themselves.

Cynthia, an administrator, recalled having a conflict with a department member regarding her attempt to help a student when no one else was available. Cynthia stated that she advised a student, researched her suggestions, and put everything in writing. She also told the student that he needed to come back and speak with the actual advisor. Upon communicating this to the advisor, Cynthia was met with another unpleasant encounter. In Cynthia's attempt to be an "advocate" for the student, she sacrificed her own needs and desires within her department. She put herself in a delicate situation for the sake of helping a student. Cross-case analysis provided examples of how both higher education administrators and faculty sacrifice and endure stress due to their personal desires to help students.

Mentorship

Cross-case analysis also found that one administrator, Cynthia, and one faculty member, LaDoctor, shared the unfortunate situation of a negative working environment and/or relationship with supervisors. Because of their perceived unpleasant working environment, both suggested increased mentorship and opportunities for professional growth. Both Cynthia and LaDoctor wanted to have more productive feedback that would allow them to grow and improve professionally, rather than repeated negative interactions with co-workers and supervisors.

Cynthia often noted that she believed her peers viewed her as the bad guy. She used the metaphor of Cinderella to describe the office dynamic. Although she was perceived as the bad guy, Cynthia said she played the role of Cinderella, and the dean and departmental expert both played the role of the evil stepmother, and the rest of the staff played the roles of the wicked step sisters. Cynthia indicated that she had no office support and was disliked by many in her office,

which often impacted office communication and interaction. Cynthia stated that she felt like her supervisors and co-workers wanted her to leave. However, Cynthia stated that she stayed in the environment because she had a passion for education. However, just a Cinderella asserted herself and found a way to be saved, Cynthia asserted herself and freed herself from her perceived stepmothers and wicked step sisters by resigning. During member checks Cynthia stated, “I am not living that turmoil anymore! Praise God!” Thus, Cynthia indicated thankfulness of being free.

Based on an interview with LaDoctor, similar issues also arose. LaDoctor was viewed as having an intimidating personality because she was not afraid to speak her mind. LaDoctor noted that her personality could be a little off putting for others because they disempowered themselves by remaining silent, whereas she did not. Both LaDoctor and Cynthia were vocal advocates for students. Additionally, they both expressed a desire for guidance or mentorship. Cynthia said she would be willing to change and try to fulfill some of her supervisor’s expectations if she had clear guidance on what she was doing wrong or not to their standards, rather than feeling inadequate and personally attacked. Similarly, LaDoctor stated that the university lacked a clear mentorship program to support new faculty and help them meet university or departmental expectations. Although LaDoctor was commenting from a faculty perspective, this observation can also be applied to Cynthia’s position from an administrative perspective. Cynthia echoed LaDoctor’s sentiments and stated that she wanted her supervisors to clearly indicate what they wanted and expected from tasks they assigned to her.

Likability

Lorraine, faculty, and Aguilar, administrator, both shared similar experiences of wanting and needing to being liked by students, peers, and staff. Both agreed that they were not willing

to make spectacles or lose their dignities or reputations for the sake of being like, but it was important to them. A common trend between Lorraine and Aguilar was that both worked in a positive working environment, in which they enjoyed. Also, neither Lorraine nor Aguilar had negative relationships with their supervisors, so having positive relationships with others became their stressor. Both Aguilar and Lorraine seemed willing to impose stress on themselves to make life easier or more pleasant for others. Lorraine worked overtime and went above and beyond to win the trust of other faculty. Aguilar withheld negative feedback to avoid overwhelming his staff. Rather than allowing people to feel and believe the way they did, Aguilar and Lorraine, put themselves in the stressful situations of being held accountable for the feelings and perceptions of others, thereby indicating more occupational stress, although it seemed self-imposed.

Control

The theme of control contributed to stress experiences for both faculty and administrators. Control existed in the form of instructional autonomy or fighting to gain or keep autonomy. Both groups, faculty and administrators, experienced some form of administrative interference, although Aguilar's interference came from a co-worker, rather than his direct supervisor. Also, the thought of losing autonomy brought about some major decisions for each group. Lorraine mentioned that she would evaluate all the requests, and if they were abundant or conflicted too greatly with her needs, she would consider leaving. LaDoctor stated that if she lost her ability to teach and inspire her students, she would rather teach for free on the streets. Aguilar wanted his supervisor and co-worker to allow him to do things his own way. And Cynthia, wanted to be able to make decisions without being admonished for her choices or

forced to revoke her decisions. Thus, control seemed to be an essential need for both faculty and administrators.

Work/Life Balance

Cross-case analysis showed similarities between the two groups in work/life balance. Each of the research participants shared the difficulty maintaining a healthy work/life balance as a distinct challenge that seemed to cause occupational stress. The life balance varied and could be attributed to family needs, household chores, civic duty, personal time, or social advocacy. Lorraine constantly recalled wondering how she could cope with balancing course preparation and household chores. Lorraine stated that she combatted the worry and doubting by spending time with her family and friends via book clubs, jogging, or social outings.

LaDoctor's work/life balance was tied in with her personal desire for social equality and advocacy. She recalled her attempts to help a local homeless person, all the while attempting to make her work position permanent so that she could have more influence to help others. LaDoctor became stressed at the thought of not being able to assist others and improve their situations. This not only included performing what she considered her civic duty, but also completing her research so that she could publish and secure her position within the university. Thus, finding time to balance being a mother, nurturing her marriage, conducting research, teaching and grading, and advocating and empowering others appeared to impede on her ability to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

Cynthia stated that she attempted to manage a work/life balance by establishing boundaries. She said she was preparing herself to go back to school, so she would give her all during her 8-5 shift; however, after that, she would focus on things that mattered most to her, family and education. Cynthia mentioned that she established this goal because she would

respond to work emails even when she was not working, and she did not feel appreciated or valued for doing so. Thus, establishing this boundary helped Cynthia maintain a division between work and life.

Unlike the other participants, Aguilar internalized his occupational stress. Because of his personality, he would rather not acknowledge that he was feeling pressure. He did, however, mentioned that his absences were due to his family's medical needs and his academic schedule caused him to feel additional stress at work. Aguilar stated that while he is able to manage work, he felt guilty taking time off for his personal needs such as family. Aguilar stated, "I know that a lot of stuff that happens personally affects my work." Aguilar described how his father's medical needs take a toll on his work attendance. Aguilar viewed his father's medical needs as essential, but also as an inconvenience on his personal and professional desire to preserve his vacation and sick leave. The conflict between trying to balance his personal needs, work requirements, and family obligations appeared to cause Aguilar mental stress of remorse and physical stress of tension. Thus, cross-case analysis showed the stress of maintaining a work/life balance was a constant stressor for both faculty and administrators.

Chapter Summary

Although each of the four research participants encountered various types and levels of stress, the findings revealed that each participant experienced stress on a psychological level. They dwelled on issues and contemplated their motives and the motives of others. They tried to understand and rationalize how and why they were dealing with their stressful situations. Each participant mentally assessed the role they and others had in causing the encounter to be perceived as stressful.

Additionally, each participant seemed to genuinely be bothered by their stressful experiences and wanted to find ways to resolve or cope with the stress. Coping took place through denial, internalizing, prayer, and/or physical fitness. Each participant wanted to find solutions to the situations so that they would not continue to experience such negativity. Aguilar remained silent and hoped the stress would rectify itself. LaDoctor rebelled against the stressor and hoped to inspire others to rebel as well. Lorraine asserted herself, researched her arguments, and presented her viewpoints. And, Cynthia attempted to communicate, but when those efforts failed, she found solace in prayer to help resolve the conflict.

The findings demonstrated that no matter the job title, employees who have a negative working environment and/or negative relationship with their supervisors experience higher levels of stress. Employees who are pleased with their working environments find stress in pushing themselves to excel more and be recognized for their efforts. Thus, the working environment was found to be a major factor for the participants within this study.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how two higher education faculty and two higher education administrators described occupational stress one Texas University. Three theoretical frameworks were used to explore occupational stress: Person- Environment Fit (P-E Fit), Demand-Control (D-C) Theory, and Uncertainty Theory. Within this chapter, connections between the findings and the theoretical frameworks will be made as a means to answer four research questions:

1. How do higher education faculty and administrators experience occupational stress due to conflicts between personality and work environment?
2. How do higher education faculty and administrators describe stress related to work tasks and control?
3. What do higher education faculty and administrators consider as work-related stressors due to uncertainty?
4. What are the outcomes of stress among higher education faculty and administrators?

Additionally, this chapter will explore the connections between the findings and the existing literature of general occupational stress and higher educational occupational stress. Furthermore, this study chapter will explore questions raised from the findings as a means to provide potential solutions to help combat and reduce occupational stress for higher education faculty and administrators.

Summary of Results

The results of this study demonstrated that stress can be caused by one's occupation. While the debate of the helpfulness or harmfulness of stress has been debated, the participants in this study primarily associated with the negative aspects of stress. When stress was viewed

positively, it was used as a motivational tool to combat the stress of perceived doubt from others. Nixon et al. (2011) examined eight common work-related stressors: interpersonal conflict, control, organizational constraints, role ambiguity, role conflict, work hours, and workload. The findings in this research addressed the majority of these work-related stressors through four research questions. The following section highlights the research findings in reference to the research questions, and the remainder of the chapter addresses occupational stress dynamics and complexities more in-depth.

The first research question was *how do higher education faculty and administrators experience occupational stress due to conflicts between personality and work environment?* This was the most dominantly represented research question among all participants. All four participants experienced occupational stress due their personalities, personal values, and expectations of others. Participants' personalities determined how they perceived and reacted conflict. When participants perceived interactions as negative or condescending they avoided further interactions, reduced communication, or rebelled.

The findings also indicated that P-E Fit was not necessarily associated with a particular group, faculty or administrators, rather it had more to do with the working environment. If the working environment was viewed as positive, the participants were more satisfied with their jobs and more willing to deal with the occupational stress they experienced. Whereas, if the working environment was viewed as negative, participants were more likely to rebel or concede. This allowed them to feel as though they were winning their personal battle to satisfy their values and needs, while not allowing the negative working environment to change them as people against their will. P-E Fit was about having control over their circumstances. When the participants' values could not be met or fulfilled, there was a sense of displeasure and feelings of helplessness

or lack of control. And, when these participants experienced lack of control, they entered into the realm of stress associated with Demand-Control.

The second research question was *how do higher education faculty and administrators describe stress related to work tasks and control?* The administrators in this study expressed the most need to have a sense of control within the workplace. Both Cynthia and Aguilar addressed autonomy and respect as high priority needs in the workplace. When autonomy and respect were not perceived, higher levels of occupational stress were experienced. Each administrator demonstrated avoidance or withdrawal from the stressful situation. The faculty, seemed to acknowledge their place within the institutional structure of having control within the classroom, but not much elsewhere. Thus, when administrative interference occurred which impeded on their instructional autonomy, they each felt compelled to address the issue. However, their personalities determined how they approached the situation.

The third research question of this study was *what do higher education faculty and administrators consider as work-related stressors due to uncertainty?* Although the Uncertainty Theory was the least prominent theory, the stressors were still prevalent. Three of the four participants, Lorraine, LaDoctor, and Cynthia, experienced stress due to uncertainty because of perceived job insecurity. Participants expressed uncertainty due to not knowing what was expected of them, not knowing how to express an opinion, and not knowing what would occur after they expressed their opinions. Participants found it difficult to overcome the looming stressor of job instability that was contingent upon the perceptions of others: administrators acknowledging value in what their work; students appreciating instructional lessons; or perceived misfit within the department. Only one participant, Aguilar, experienced uncertainty because of his lack of confidence in communicating and articulating clear expectations.

The fourth research question was *what are the outcomes of stress among higher education faculty and administrators?* Occupational stress takes a toll on the human body: mentally, physically, and emotionally (Babatunde, 2013). Each research participant experienced occupational stress in various ways which ranged from anxiety, sleeplessness, or frustration. Lorraine reported having the various physical effects of stress, excessive sweating and increased heart rate. LaDoctor dismissed stress, and failed to acknowledge when she was actually experiencing stress. However, she did see a physician regarding recurring migraines and arthritis and she was told it was stress-related. LaDoctor stated that she disregarded these feelings because she has always tried “to control [her] reactions” to various situations and potential stressors. As a result of her working environment and relationships with co-workers and supervisors within her office, Cynthia self-reported feelings of “anxiety, sleeplessness, fatigue, emotional unbalance, headaches, tension, and decreased moral[e].” Aguilar did not report any physical work-related stress illnesses; however, he stated that he internalized conflict, dwelled on situations, and obsessed over the issues. Thus, Aguilar experienced more psychological strain than the other participants.

The findings in this study addressed the complexities of occupational stress in higher education faculty and administrators. Three primary theoretical frameworks demonstrated some of the dynamics of occupational stress: Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit), Demand-Control (D-C), and Uncertainty Theory. Through these three theories, participants addressed their perceived personalities, flaws, and values. They also addressed their perceptions of their jobs, working environments, and interactions with others. And, finally, participants explored how their perceptions caused them to interact within stressful situations.

Connections to Theoretical Frameworks

Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit)

Person-Environment Fit assesses how well an employee blends within the organizational culture (Caplan, 1987). This was the predominant framework demonstrated among all participants. As mentioned in the Analytical Methodology section of Chapter III, each participants' interview and observation themes were also organized by the substantive theoretical frameworks: P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty to help further explore the findings. Several themes formed the participants' P-E Fit Theory distribution, these included, but were not limited to personality, personal values, work needs, and relationships. Occupational stress due to P-E Fit was 48% for Lorraine, 51% for Cynthia, and 71% respectively for Aguilar and LaDoctor.

P-E Fit requires three conditions: (a) a clear separation between the individual and the environment; (b) an objective and subjective component (reality vs perception) between the individual and the environment; and (c) an association between individual and environmental needs, demands, and supplies (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998; Caplan, 1987). Additionally, P-E Fit examines employees and their work environment through three primary approaches: atomistic, molecular, and molar (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006), as seen in Figure 18. The atomistic approach measures perceptions of individuals and environments separately; the molecular approach assesses the discrepancies between individuals and environments; and the molar examines the perceived match or similarities between individuals and environments (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006).

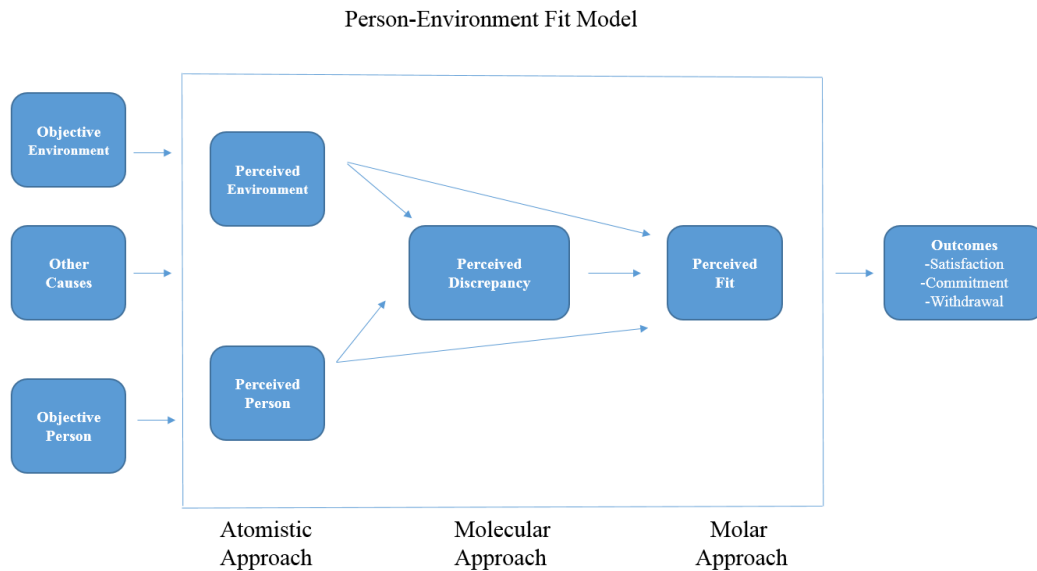


Figure 18. P-E Fit Theory Approaches. Adapted from “The phenomenology of fit: Linking the person and environment to the subjective experience of Person-Environment Fit,” by J.R. Edwards, Daniel M. Cable, Ian O. Williamson, Lisa Schurer Lambert, and Abby Shipp, p. 803. Copyright 2006 by the American Psychological Association.

Each participant presented information that related to an atomistic approach, molecular approach, and molar approach. Participants were asked to describe not only their perceptions of themselves, but also of their working environment (atomistic approach). Participants were then asked to describe an issue that was stressful and examine why they became stressed and where the conflict occurred (molecular approach). Finally, each participant was asked how stressful encounters coincided with or conflicted with their needs, values, and/or personality (molar approach). The findings showed that three outcomes were associated with the P-E Fit Model: satisfaction, commitment, or withdrawal for each participant.

Participants mentioned positive moments about the nature of his or her work and his or her ability to carry out their job duties. Both Lorraine and LaDoctor (faculty) enjoyed working with students and serving as their advocates. Additionally, both administrators expressed

positive aspects of their jobs. Cynthia enjoyed working behind the scenes to provide instructional support for the faculty and students, and Aguilar enjoyed assisting the students and helping his staff academically and professionally. Thus, according to the P-E Fit Theory, each participants' preliminary values of assisting students aligned with the university's overall goals. However, the misalignment between the various departments and personnel within the overall structure caused issues and situations that conflicted with the participants' goals. When conflicts between the employee and organization occurred, a misfit took place between the two (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998)

According to Caplan's (1987) P-E Fit model, three outcomes exist between an individual and their working environment: Supplementary Fit, Complementary Fit, or P-E Misfit. Figure 19 visually demonstrates the P-E Fit outcomes. Supplementary Fit is when both the employee and organization share similar characteristics, and Complementary Fit is when either the employee or the organization fulfills the needs of the other (Cabel & Edwards, 2004; Sun, Peng, & Pandey, 2014). P-E Misfit is when the employee's personality, needs, and values conflict with the organization's needs and values (Sun, Peng, & Pandey, 2014)

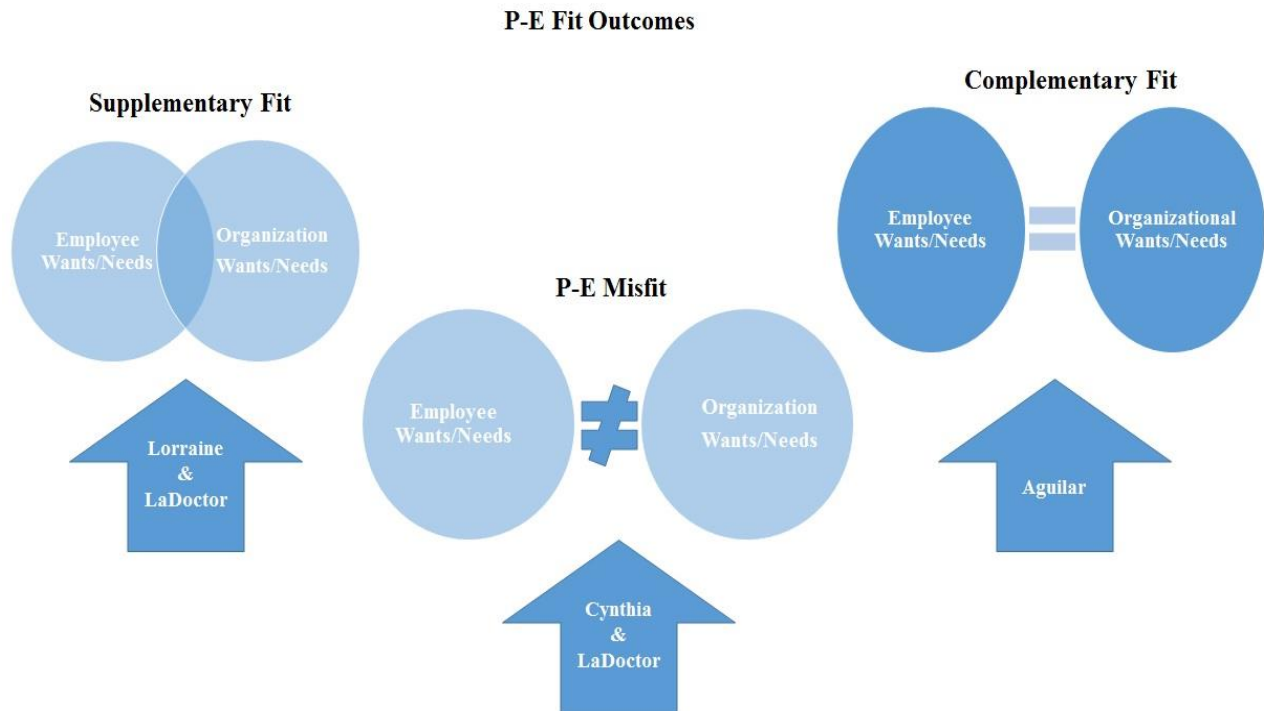


Figure 19. P-E Fit Outcomes Model created from the three P-E Fit outcomes as outlined in “Testing the effect of person-environment fit on employee perceptions of organizational goal ambiguity” by Rusi Sun, Shuyang Peng, and Sanjay K. Pandey, *Public Performance Management Review*, 37(3), 465-495. Copyright 2014 by M.E. Sharpe Inc.

Based on the findings, Lorraine demonstrated a Supplementary Fit. Although Lorraine was satisfied with her working environment, she did not feel comfortable with the lack of respect her course received from students, parents, or campus faculty and administrators. Thus, her personal need for respect was not always met through her working environment, but she did share similar values with her environment, although not always equal. This, however, was not significant enough to cause Lorraine overall job dissatisfaction or encourage her to look for other career opportunities.

LaDoctor seemed to waver between Supplementary Fit and P-E Misfit. She agreed with the overall vision and purpose of academia, which was to advocate for and educate students. Thus, during times of teaching, advising, and mentoring, LaDoctor demonstrated a

Supplementary Fit. However, LaDoctor conflicted with the internal entities within the university on various philosophical approaches to leadership and empowerment. When she perceived conflict as disempowering, gender biased, or stereotypical, LaDoctor demonstrated a P-E Misfit. Just as with Lorraine, LaDoctor did not indicate that her perceived conflict was dominant enough to cause her to depart from her position. However, she mentioned that if she was no longer able to empower students, inspire change, and lead reflective, open, and critical discussions in the classroom, that she would consider leaving her position. Additionally, she stated that if she could no longer maintain a balance between her instructional pedagogies and personal philosophies into her classroom, she would consider leaving her position, thereby causing more P-E Misfit.

Cynthia craved structure, guidance, and effective communication, and she indicated that these needs were not being fulfilled by her supervisors or co-workers. As such, Cynthia was often unhappy with the work environment, but satisfied with her work duties and her work quality. Ultimately, the imbalance and misfit of her personality with the working environment caused her to resign from her position. Cynthia often noted that she believed her peers viewed her as the “bad guy.” The perceived conflict within the Molecular Approach of the P-E Fit model was so great that it caused chronic P-E Misfit. Cynthia acknowledged this misfit and consciously decided to withdraw and part ways with the university.

Aguilar did not like conflict; he was an easy-going guy who went with the overall flow. Thus, for the most part, Aguilar demonstrated a Complementary Fit. He did not describe many work related issues that would cause him to seek other employment opportunities. While his personality did sometimes conflict with his employees or co-workers, he felt comfortable and confident in his duties. While Aguilar presented himself as conforming to the Complementary

Fit outcome, the non-verbal actions and internal thoughts that he reported could be interpreted as misfit due to his avoidance and dislike for constant feedback and questioning. However, while Aguilar would have preferred to not engage in a habitual question and answer session with his employees, he allowed it if it were with an employee he trusted and respected with tasks. Therefore, his actions presented a Complementary Fit, while his nonverbal and internal thoughts indicated a misfit between what he wanted to do and what his employees needed and expected him to do.

P-E Fit summary. Cynthia and LaDoctor exhibited the most signs of P-E Misfit, where their personalities, values, and needs clashed the most with their working environments. This indicated that the P-E Misfit Theory was not closely associated with job duties or job title since Cynthia was an administrator and LaDoctor was a faculty member. However, P-E Misfit was associated with overall working environment. If the working environment was viewed as positive, the participants were more satisfied with their jobs and more willing to deal with the occupational stress they experienced. Whereas, if the working environment was viewed as negative, participants were more likely to rebel or concede. This allowed them to feel as though they were winning their personal battle to satisfy their values and needs, while not allowing the negative working environment to change them as people against their will. Because LaDoctor and Cynthia had negative experiences within their working environments, they were less satisfied with their positions. Lorraine and Aguilar, on the other hand, both demonstrated P-E Fit within their working environments due to their overall positive experiences and pleasant interactions with supervisors.

Demand-Control Theory

Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control (D-C) Theory seeks to understand how people experience stress due to the individual's skill level, amount of work demands, amount of resources and time available to carry out the task and one's ability to make decisions about the delivery of the task (Mcclenahan, Giles, & Mallett, 2007; Westerlund, Nyberg, Bernin, Hyde, Oxenstierna, Jappinen, Vaananen, & Theorell, 2010). Thus, D-C Theory examines how one's perceptions and views of the job tasks coincide with or conflict with the actual resources, support, and amount of confidence and control one has to successfully carry out the task. The findings from the participants seemed to combine the two versions of the D-C Theory: Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control Theory (Figure 20) and Karasek and Theorelle's (1990) Demand-Control Support Model (Figure 21).

Karasek's (1979) D-C Theory explored four types of jobs: active, passive, high strain, and low strain. Each participant within this study coincided with the active or high strain job categories. Active jobs are those that provide engaging learning opportunities for employees, which increases feelings of work competency and reduces strain (Karasek, 1979; Parker & Sprigg, 1999). High-strain jobs are those that have negative health impact; this occurs when occupational demands are high and employee control is low (deJonge, Bosma, Peter, & Siegrist, 2000; Lovelace, Manz, & Alves, 2007) and is illustrated below in Figure 20.

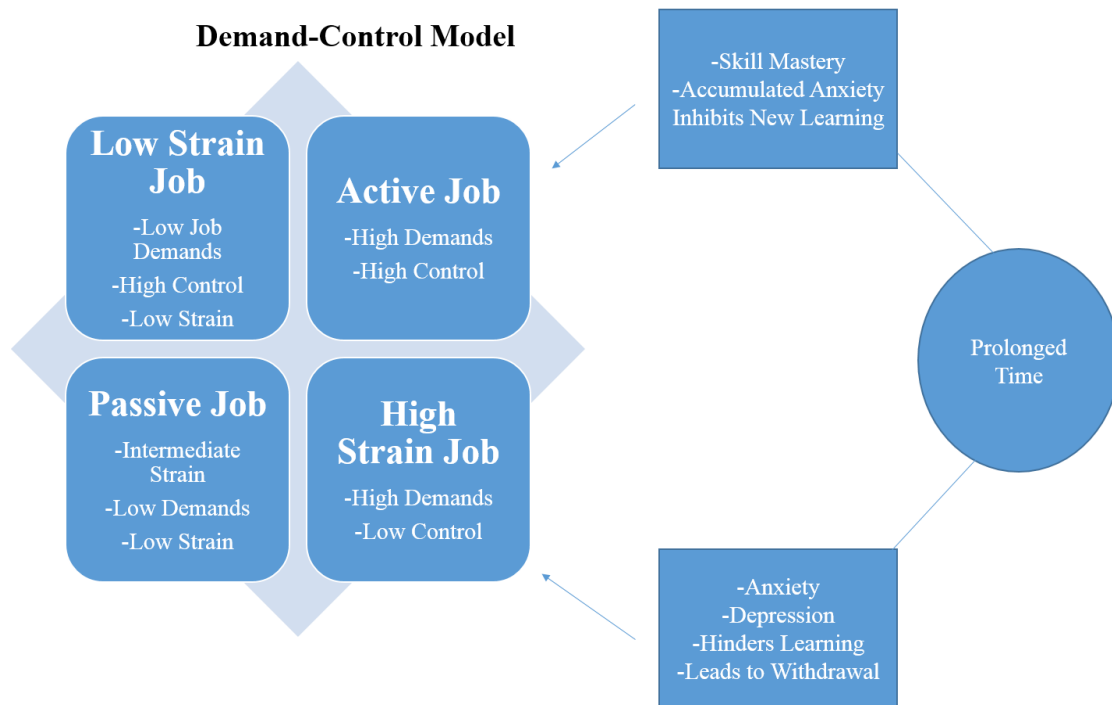


Figure 20. The Demand-Control decision model. Adapted from *Healthy Work: Stress, Productivity, and the Reconstruction of Working Life*, by R. Karasek and T. Theorell, 1990, p. 99. Copyright 1990 by Basic Books.

From the data collected for each participant, themes associated with the D-C Theory emerged. Themes such as autonomy, control, work needs, work culture, workload, time, and work values, which related to the D-C Theory were present across participants. Lorraine seemed to fall under the D-C Theory's category of an active job. Lorraine did not describe many problems associated with D-C Theory. She was comfortable in her working environment and with her job duties. The bulk of Lorraine's work duties surrounded her teaching duties and planning, of which she felt she had considerable control. According to Karasek's (1979) model, an active job is one with high demands and high control. Lorraine asserted that she had a responsibility to teach students, make partnerships, plan course content, and serve on departmental committees. Lorraine also mentioned that she had control within her classroom,

and did not feel there were many times where she did not have a voice. When she did indicate a sense of helplessness, Lorraine stated that she felt comfortable enough verbalizing her concerns to her supervisor. Lorraine did, however, demonstrate some of the negative traits associated with active jobs. According to Karasek (1979), employees with active jobs for a prolonged period of time demonstrate signs of anxiety and skill mastery. Lorraine had a naturally anxious personality; however, perhaps due to the prolonged working environment, she suffered from anxiety as a means to uphold her professional identity she had established.

LaDoctor also fit in with the active job category. She, like Lorraine, also perceived herself as having control within the classroom. Unlike Lorraine, who had received evaluations and classroom visits from her peers and supervisors, LaDoctor had not. LaDoctor wished for mentorship and instructional feedback. While LaDoctor believed she had control, she indicated that she could not confirm that she completed the work tasks according to the expectations of the dean. LaDoctor stated that she disregarded the students' evaluations because the administrators did not use them for a meaningful purpose. Thus, although the D-C model examines the demands of the job, it also examines the skill level of the employee. LaDoctor did, however, express a lack of control in the decision making within her department, which was both frustrating and discouraging. LaDoctor did not exude any of the pitfalls associated with prolonged active job environments. Although LaDoctor did not demonstrate pitfalls of the D-C model, she did show symptoms represented in the Demand-Control Support model (see Figure 21 below). Because of her limited relationship with the dean and feelings of being voiceless in departmental meetings, LaDoctor demonstrated signs of cynicism, which sometimes caused her to reflect on her overall job satisfaction.

Aguilar also fit in with the active job category. For Aguilar, the D-C Theory's attribute of control related to the active job category may have been one of his highest needs. He desired respect and control above being perceived as "the nice guy." He valued his worth and expected the respect that he gave to others. Like Lorraine, Aguilar demonstrated two pitfalls of being in a prolonged active environment: skill mastery and inhabited new learning. Because Aguilar had been in his position for five years, he had mastered the basic understanding and skill requirements for his current position. However, because of prolonged environment, he became comfortable and did not seem to actively seek out opportunities to continue proving himself to others. Instead, Aguilar withdrew and would rather do the task himself rather than teach someone else a new skill, which would have in turn, allowed him more time to continue learning new skills to enhance his current position.

Cynthia was the only participant who fully demonstrated the D-C Theory's category of high strain job: high demands and low control. Cynthia's stress experiences reflected more of the Karasek and Theorelle' (1990) Demand-Control Support model, where the level of resources, supervisor support, and co-worker support must exist to enhance job satisfaction and reduce burnout, as illustrated in Figure 21.

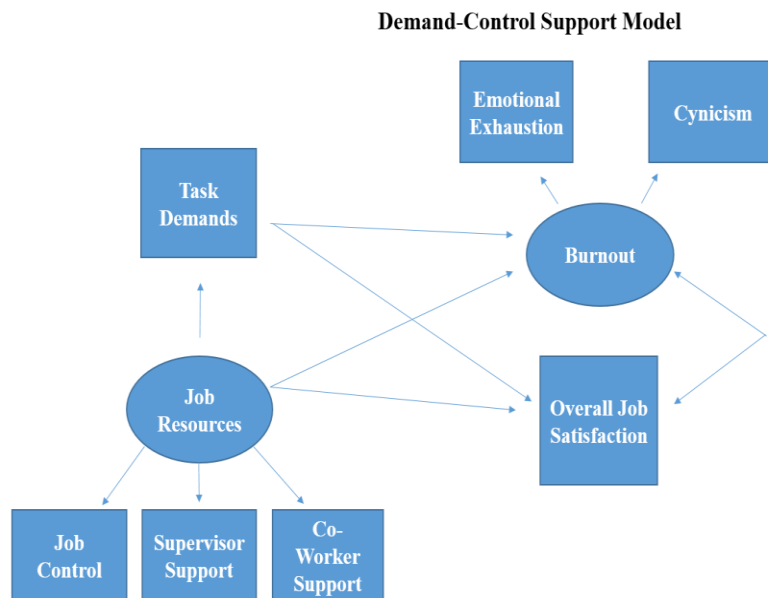


Figure 21. Demand-Control Support Model. Adapted from “Demands, control, and support: A meta-analytic review of work characteristics interrelationships,” by Joseph N. Luncheon and M. Gloria Gonzalez-Morales, 2013, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, p. 44. Copyright 2013 by the American Psychological Association.

Cynthia lacked all of the essential job resources needed to produce a positive outcome. She had little to no control, disagreed with her supervisors, and withdrew from her co-workers. With such, Cynthia described feeling low job satisfaction, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and cynicism. Thus, Cynthia represented an extreme representation of the Demand-Control Support model.

Demand-Control summary. Demand-Control (D-C) was not the most prevalent theory, but it contained major stress experiences for both faculty and administrators. D-C Theory existed in the form of instructional autonomy or fighting to gain or keep autonomy. Both groups, faculty and administrators, experienced some form of administrative interference. Although Aguilar’s interference came from a co-worker, rather than his direct supervisor. Also, the

thought of losing autonomy brought about some major decisions for each group. Lorraine mentioned that she would evaluate all the requests, and if they were abundant or conflicted too greatly with her needs, she would consider leaving. LaDoctor stated that if she lost her ability to teach and inspire her students, she would rather teach for free on the streets. Aguilar wanted his supervisor and co-workers to allow him to do things his own way. And, Cynthia wanted to be able to make decisions without being admonished for her choices or forced to revoke her decisions. Thus, control was an essential need for both faculty and administrators.

Uncertainty Theory

Uncertainty Theory has seven components that contribute: unclear or questionable expectations, information available, role ambiguity, problem-solving abilities, planning, outcomes, and decision-making abilities (Jackson, Schuler, & Vrendenburgh, 1987). Each participant experienced at least one of the components of uncertainty. The faculty in this study did not share similar themes or experiences when it came to uncertainty. Their uncertainty experiences were dependent upon their individual personalities and confidence levels. Lorraine only expressed uncertainty when she was asked to do a task she was unfamiliar with, could not thrive in, or could not get passionate about. LaDoctor was confident within herself and her abilities; she stated that she never questioned her professional decisions. However, the uncertainty of her employment status served as a chronic reminder of her disposability, until her employment contract was updated from a temporary one-year contract to a temporary three-year contract.

The administrators within this study shared one theme of uncertainty when it came to understanding exactly what their supervisors expected of them. Cynthia experienced this more often and on an intense level, while Aguilar experienced this on a few isolated occasions.

Aguilar mentioned one situation with his supervisor where there was a disagreement via e-mail, where some communication was overlooked. Aguilar stated that he was bothered by the interaction because he was unsure where the root of the disagreement stemmed from. However, he and his supervisor were able to allow the situation to rectify itself and move on. Cynthia, on the other hand, expressed numerous negative interactions with her supervisor that were not resolved to Cynthia's liking or expectations. Thus, hurt feelings and unfulfilled expectations lingered. The administrative conflict for both administrators seemed to stem from prior negative experiences that were not fully resolved. That carryover caused both to feel uncertain about where they stood or what they should do to repair those relationships. Unlike Cynthia, Aguilar and his supervisor were able to move past their conflict and work together. Aguilar stated that the last three years working together were with few complications between the two of them. Cynthia was unable to move past her uncertainty, and removed herself from what she perceived as a hostile work environment.

Connections to Literature

As mentioned in the Chapter II Literature Review, stress was studied as early as 1936 by Selye (Levi, 1998). Selye utilized rats to test how stress impacts the body; Selye (1936) coined his observations as the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). The participants in this study demonstrated Selye's (1936) GAS theory by indicating and/or expressing how they processed stress, both mentally and physically through the alarm, resistance, and exhaustion stages (Murphy & Hurrell, 1987). Additionally, the research supported other stress theories such as Gmelch, Wilke, and Lovrich's (1986) common higher education stressors. These included faculty, staff, and administrators—reward recognition, time constraints, departmental influence, professional identity, and student interaction (Gmelch, Wilke, & Lovrich, 1986). The

participants in this study each in some capacity identified these five categories as sources of stress, which are discussed in the succeeding sections.

Reward Recognition

Lorraine stated that she enjoyed positive feedback and complements. She stated that a positive word goes a long way. When she did not feel valued or acknowledged for her hard work, she experienced acute stress associated with the reward-recognition stressor. LaDoctor stated that she did not necessarily need someone to tell her that she did a good job because she was confident in her abilities and did not question herself. What she did want, however, was the benefit of the doubt. She wanted her supervisor to know the true quality of her work, so that she would not be questioned when complaints arose. Aguilar did not state that he needed reward recognition; however, he needed to feel trusted. When he felt that others believed in his abilities and trusted the quality of his work, that need was fulfilled. Cynthia wanted reward-recognition, whether it was in the form of complementing or monetary compensation. However, she stated that she could not remember the last time she was rewarded with positive feedback from her supervisors. Thus, the lack of positive reinforcement coincided with literature that reward-recognition serves as a stressor for both faculty and administrators.

Time Constraints and Student Interaction

Each participant either mentioned or demonstrated that time and interaction with others were sources of stress. This reiterates that theme of work/life balance that each group experienced as noted in the cross-case analysis section in Chapter IV. Lorraine was always rushing from one location to the other. She relied on her calendar and alerts to help keep her on track, and she often lost focus due to the numerous thoughts she tried to mentally balance. Publishing faculty often have the issue of time as a stressor (Dennison, 2012). Because of their

full teaching load of three to five courses, time needed for preparation, instructional time, grading time, and student interaction, research is usually placed at the end of priorities (Dennison, 2012). This held true for LaDoctor. LaDoctor lacked the time to devote to her research. Her workload, family obligations, and personal commitment to her civic duty consumed her time. The lack of time to complete her research caused LaDoctor to question her productivity towards scholarly publishing.

Windefiled et al. (2003) asserted that academic staff often experience work-related stress associated with job demands. This held true for Cynthia who indicated that time was a key stressor for her due to her intense workload because of the lack of staffing. Cynthia provided several examples where she felt overworked because of the amount of work she had to complete and the amount of time she had to fulfill the task. Finally, Aguilar noted time as a stressor because of work/life balance and employee/student interactions. Aguilar saw family needs as an impediment of his time. He also indicated that his absences due to his own personal goals also caused him to feel as if time was an issue. Additionally, Aguilar indicated that the constant interruptions and needs from his staff also served as a hindrance to accomplish his work tasks. Thus, regardless of role, faculty or administrator, time is also a consistent source of stress in higher education.

Departmental Influence and Professional Identity

Departmental influence and professional identify were items that each participant wanted, but only two had. Lorraine and Aguilar indicated having departmental influence; they were both seen as leaders and valuable members of their team. This seems to coincide with Karasek and Theorell's (1990) Demand-Control Support that encourages supportive relationships with supervisors. Aguilar and Lorraine seemed to have supervisors who valued their contributions to

the institution, whereas it seemed that LaDoctor and Cynthia did not. As mentioned in Chapter I, globalization and the massification of higher education caused the academic sector to transition to more of a business model. In doing so, university administrators and/or supervisors became more like managers and overseers of change, rather than supportive leaders (Schulz, 2013). Both Lorraine and Aguilar worked in departments that were strongly connected to academic assistance and student success, whereas LaDoctor and Cynthia were in departments that drove enrollment and political interaction. Thus, it could have been their supervisors were more vested in the higher education globalization perspective than Aguilar's and Lorraine's supervisors. These findings indicated that the lack of supportive leadership created a cynical and dissatisfied working environment for employees.

Because of their positive relationships with their supervisors, Lorraine and Aguilar had voices and input into departmental decisions. Again, this was because of their relationships with their supervisors and not their roles. Aguilar was an administrator and Lorraine was a faculty member. Lorraine perceived herself as highly valued and respected within her department. She stated that she felt comfortable making suggestions and had a voice through the committees she lead and served on. Aguilar stated that he had departmental influence because his supervisor allowed him the control, freedom, and flexibility to carryout tasks according to his strengths and his vision. LaDoctor, on the other hand, was often silenced by feelings of inadequacy. She put herself in the place of a child. Additionally, LaDoctor and her peers had been conditioned to an atmosphere of fear, in which they did as they were told, thereby leaving no room for departmental influence. Furthermore, Cynthia had no departmental influence because she was isolated by others and personally withdrawn from her supervisor and peers. Cynthia only pushed for things that seem to benefit the students. And, even then, she stated that sometimes she had to

make suggestions in a way that made others feel like the idea was their own to get the change needed. These findings indicate that more emphasis and research is needed regarding practical ways to garner a successful supervisor/employee relationship within higher education to enhance internal relationships and reduce internal conflict.

Occupational stress within higher education was examined from two perspectives, a managerial/administrative perspective and a faculty perspective. Common perceptions are that managers and supervisors of others are usually the cause of stress. While, this remained true for 50% of the participants, it was not isolated to one particular group of either faculty or administrators; it was an even mix. Similar with the research regarding managerial and faculty occupational stress, the participants demonstrated characteristics that supported current stress theories.

Administrator Stress

Winefield et al. (2003) discovered that academic staff experienced higher levels of work-related stress due to increased job demands, added accountability standards, and decreased funding. Lovelace, Manz, and Alves (2007) asserted that supervisors have higher stress levels due to an increased level of demands and responsibilities that employees do not experience. This also includes interacting with and fulfilling the needs of their employees, which Bush (2006) described as time consuming and “cumbersome” (p.9). Both administrators, Cynthia and Aguilar experienced occupational stress due to their roles. Aguilar avoided extensive conversations with his staff because he perceived his life experiences were unhelpful to the staff. Also, Aguilar was very empathetic towards his staff, and he would often take on the energy associated with their pain or struggles.

Cynthia was classified as an administrator; however, she often experienced revocation of authority. Thus, she would take the initiative she perceived she had to carry out tasks; however, later she would be admonished or reprimanded for taking the initiative to get things done. Therefore, she was sometimes uncertain of her role and where she stood within her department, thereby by causing emotional exhaustion, bitterness, and withdrawal, which are negative outcomes associated with P-E Misfit, Demand-Control Support, and Uncertainty.

Furthermore, because of Cynthia's managerial stress, she also experienced administrative derailment. Manager derailment occurs when one or more of five conflicts occur:

- problems with interpersonal relationships (organizational isolation, being seen as aloof, cold, or arrogant by others);
- difficulty leading a team (unable to handle conflict);
- difficulty changing or adapting (inability to adjust to a supervisor with different managerial or interpersonal style);
- failure to meet business objectives (poor performance); and
- too narrow functionality (not prepared, unable to advance). (Gentry, Katz, & McFeeters, 2009, p. 336)

Cynthia experienced three of the five characteristics for managerial derailment. She isolated herself from others, or either her peers avoided engaging with her on a regular basis. Although Cynthia did not perceive herself as unable to handle conflict, she mentioned that she did not believe she was able to correct the relationships within her office, which caused her to seek outside guidance. And, Cynthia was unable to adjust with her supervisor because there were conflicts between Cynthia's personal values and work needs and her supervisors' values. Thus, this conflict caused Cynthia to derail from her managerial career path and resign from her

position, which again is associated with P-E Misfit. Williams, Campbell, and McCartney (2005) also support that manager derailment is connected to P-E Misfit.

Faculty Stress

Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dau, Hapuarachchi, and Boyd (2003) asserted that faculty were not necessarily dissatisfied with their jobs, but more so displeased with the way the organization was managed, the promotion system, pay, and relationships between supervisors and staff. The commonality between the two faculty members, Lorraine and LaDoctor, was the perception of classroom inference from administrators. In particular, they both described experiences of classroom interferences beyond their immediate supervisors. Because no one stood up for them, protected their rights or their voices, both Lorraine and LaDoctor wanted more support and efficiency from organizational management. Very rarely did the faculty participants complain about their pay or their positions as faculty. However, LaDoctor, similar to Cynthia experienced philosophical differences with her dean and co-workers. LaDoctor perceived this as disempowerment, which made her dissatisfied with circumstantial situations. Thus, the faculty and administrator stress experiences implied the need for stronger communication between university leadership and stronger relationships between supervisors and staff to enhance and support overall job satisfaction and reduce occupational stress experiences.

Implications & Further Research

The research in this study revealed various implications for higher education institutions regarding supervisor/employee and gender relationships. In developing a better understanding of internal conflict, institutions can maintain and/or improve employee relationships, which then have a positive impact on institutional operations. Within the framework of P-E Fit, is the sub-

theory of Person-Supervisor Fit (P-S). The P-S Fit Theory asserts that when supervisors and employees share similar values, a consensus forms on how to perceive situations (Sun, Peng, & Pandey, 2014). Thus, clear understandings between gender perceptions and employee relationships are essential in higher education.

Relationships

Several occupational stress theories address the importance of an effective supervisor/employee relationship: Job-Demands, P-E Fit, and D-C Theory. Throughout this study, two of the four participants described experiences with unfair treatment, lack of clarity with supervisors, and unclear direction or expectations of how to improve. None, however, addressed how they resolved perceived conflict, other than through avoidance or failed attempts to assert themselves. This implies the need for a university employee mentorship program to provide practical ways to improve workplace relationships and enhance job satisfaction.

Of the four participants, only Lorraine mentioned having a positive connection with no conflict at all. This was because she and her supervisor had known each other for years and developed a relationship on a personal level. Thus, Lorraine stated feeling comfortable enough to present concerns because there was a high degree of familiarity and mutual respect. Aguilar mentioned that in the first year of his current position, he and his supervisor experienced a few conflicts and/or disagreements. Aguilar attributed this to him and the supervisor trying to figure out their new professional relationship, merging goals, and establishing expectations. Aguilar did, however, state that the remainder of his time with his current supervisor has been a smooth professional relationship.

Cynthia and LaDoctor both desired a type of mentorship program to help them meet the expectations of their supervisors. LaPan, Hodge, Peroff, and Henderson (2013) conducted a

study that stated that female scholars/faculty articulated a need for workplace mentorship more than men. This was consistent with the findings of this study. Although Lorraine did not state she wanted to be mentored, it was perhaps because she served as a mentor for others in her department and within the community. Thus, she understood and acknowledged the importance of mentorship, even if she did not express the need for herself. Therefore, the female participants acknowledged a need for workplace mentorship, while the male participant disengaged whenever possible, hoping his employees would develop their own understanding of how to accomplish tasks. These findings imply the need for further exploration on how gender roles influences occupational stress in terms of perceived conflict and gender roles.

Gender Roles

The findings implied that male employees and female employees experience and cope with stress differently, as well as demonstrate stress differently. Therefore, educational institutions should consider more reflection on how these differences impact conflict perceptions (P-E Fit, Molecular Approach) and how employees interact with and respond to stressful situations. Of the four participants, three were women and one was male. The female participants were more emotionally expressive during their interviews and observations. Eagan and Garvey (2015) asserted that female faculty, and also in this case administrators, were twice as likely to speak out against and report workplace stress as men. Lorraine, Cynthia, and LaDoctor were all vocal against the academic injustices they perceived, and they felt comfortable speaking up for themselves when they felt they had been wronged. Lorraine was more tactful and calculated in expressing her concerns. She stated that before she spoke up, she researched her point of view to establish validity in her claim. LaDoctor noted that she reacted emotionally; thus, she was the least diplomatic and calculated of the three female participants. Cynthia

verbalized her concerns, unafraid, and she even reported them to Human Resources. However, when she realized that her claims could not be resolved without legal intervention, she resigned. Aguilar, on the other hand, was less vocal when he was stressed, wronged, or offended. Aguilar internalized the stress and sacrificed his own needs to protect the feelings of others. Aguilar did not provide any examples of verbally expressing how he felt when he was stressed. On one occasion, he replied to a stressful situation via email, and even then, he stated that he restrained himself from demonstrating emotional offense. Perhaps, more studies should be done to examine how higher education male and females confront conflict within the workplace.

Additionally, three of the four participants had female supervisors. All of the participants seemed to appreciate and need a positive relationship with their supervisors. Two of the participants, Lorraine and LaDoctor, both faculty, seemed to view their supervisors as the ones who were charged with the task of protecting their values and interests. Thus, from this study, the faculty needed supervisors to protect them, advocate for them, understand their values and teaching philosophies and pedagogies, and provide clear direction for the department.

Both LaDoctor and Lorraine desired a relationship with their supervisor that extended beyond the work relationship. Lorraine appreciated the long-standing relationship she had with her supervisor, both within the university and in external settings. LaDoctor craved a relationship in which her supervisor would protect her from external classroom interference and be engaged enough to know her teaching style in terms of what she would and would not do, so that he could stand up for her. Instead, LaDoctor viewed her supervisor as a parental figure who reprimanded her without collecting all the facts or being equal in those reprimands.

Aguilar did not indicate having any problems or difficulty interacting with a female supervisor. Lorraine did not have difficulty with her primary supervisor; however, she did have

differences of opinions with the male executive administrators, who she believed, made suggestions without considering all the possible perspectives of those involved. Further studies should examine if and how gender roles of authority figures contributed to perceived conflict and higher education occupational stress.

Stress Outcomes

Winefield et al. (2003) concluded that employees are not dissatisfied with their jobs, but they are dissatisfied with the way the organization is managed and relationships between supervisors and staff. Because of these conflicts, the participants in this study experienced anxiety, sleeplessness, and emotional exhaustion. The participants in this study reflected the origins of stress patterns and reactions demonstrated in Selye's (1936) General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). Lorraine was the prime example of how uncertainty could cause acute stress. She demonstrated Selye's (1936) first stage of General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), the alarm stage, which causes change in body temperature. Lorraine's sweating, increased heart rate, and nervousness were all immediate reactions to work-place stress. Aguilar also represented the alarm stage because he would internally get upset, have a change in breathing, but he would then adapt, accept, and move on. Thus, the stress was only acute, so that he could adapt for the moment. When the stress did linger on, it was not to the extent to which it caused him to negatively react or withdraw, like LaDoctor and Cynthia. LaDoctor demonstrated Selye (1936) second stage of the GAS, which was the resistance stage. During the resistance stage, the body, and in this case, the employee attempts to find a way to adapt to the stressful stimulus. LaDoctor adapted to the stressful workplace stimuli by incorporating her own forms of personal rebellion against what she perceived as workplace stressors. She rebelled just enough so that she could still keep her job, but also so that she could adapt with her perceived workplace injustices.

Cynthia demonstrate Seyle's (1936) GAS stage three, exhaustion. Cynthia's stress became chronic; it went beyond immediate physical reactions and rebellion into exhaustion. During the exhaustion stage, the body is "distressed" and can no longer meet the demands of the stressors, which include emotional exhaustion and burnout (van Onicul, 1996), each of which Cynthia experienced. Thus, the participants in this study demonstrated the various levels of stress and how it impacts them within the higher education work setting.

Additionally, the employees of the site location also demonstrated a desire to have more initiatives in regards to spirituality, well-being, and stress relief techniques. Being that Cynthia's presentation on spiritual health was introduced as one of the highest attended presentations, it seems that university employees are intrigued by the topic. This could be because they are personally also dealing with occupational stress and are curious as to how others might cope with it. Cynthia coped through prayer and worship. Aguilar coped through avoidance and internal personal dialogue. Lorraine coped through yoga, exercise, and social engagement. LaDoctor coped through rebellion. Through these various ways, the participants attempted to deal with stress within the university setting. Although this study does not thoroughly explore adequate coping mechanisms, it does demonstrate a need for further exploration.

The purpose of this study was to explore how higher education administrators and faculty experienced occupational stress similarly or differently. The results yielded that occupational stress is not based on job title, but more so with the fit between employees and their working environments, as well as relationships between employees and their supervisors. How one perceives the situations and interacts with those situations is based on their personality and prior experiences with the people involved. Thus, the stress experiences explored in this study P-E

Fit, Demand-Control Theory, and Uncertainty Theory were all interconnected with three common threads: personal, environment, and roles.

Implications

This research provides several additions to the field of higher education occupational stress. While much research examines occupational stress from an elementary, secondary, or faculty perspective, the higher education administrative perspective is often overlooked (Antoniou, Ploumpi, & Ntalla, 2013; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Wells, 2013). Thus, this research provides specific examples of how stress is experienced from faculty and administrative perspectives. This research shows how administrators experienced occupational stress due to role ambiguity, problem-solving, or interoffice interaction. Faculty experienced occupational stress primarily due to lack of involvement, disempowerment, or classroom interference. Not only does this study support current occupational stress research, but it adds depth to the conversation by examining specific examples of how stressful situations transpire, how they were perceived, and the role each actor played within the situation. This helps to develop a concrete examination of interoffice relationships within the university structure and could help executive leadership better understand where and how conflict arises and how it might be impacting institutional productivity.

Additionally, this study offered information necessary to examine how hiring practices are conducted to ensure that the best person is selected for the work-environment. In doing so, P-E Misfit would be reduced and reduce overall institutional turn-over. This research also helps to determine the type of professional development initiatives that might enhance and/or support hiring practices, while fostering positive work-place relationships, thereby enhancing job satisfaction.

Chapter Summary

Chapter V has provided connections with the theoretical frameworks of P-E Fit, Demand-Control, and Uncertainty Theory within higher educational faculty and administrator occupational stress experiences. Additionally, this chapter has provided qualitative stories of how participants demonstrate symptoms that coincide with previous stress studies, such as Seyle's (1936) stress theory, managerial derailment, and faculty stress experiences. Thus, through the rich and detailed narrations of each participant, a deeper understand of occupational stress was provided. Personality played a key part in how employees perceived stressful situations. Additionally, perception was also determined by the quality of the relationships the participants had with their peers and co-workers. Thus, both faculty and administrator occupational stress within this study experienced much of their stress due to their personalities and relationships with others.

Appendix A

Higher Education Research Participant Invitation Letter

Study Title: “A Cross-Case Analysis of Faculty and Administrator Stress in Higher Education:
Do I Stay, or Do I Go?”

Among Faculty and Administrators at a Texas University

Dear Higher Education Faculty/Administrator,

My name is Kimberly Thomas, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi. I am conducting a qualitative, multiple-case study as a part of the requirements to attain my doctoral degree with a cognate of higher education administration, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying how higher education faculty and administrators experience occupational stress. This study will help higher education institutions better understand how employees experience stress. Participants will gain a deeper cognitive understanding of how they experience stress, what triggers stress, and better ways to cope with occupational stress.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in three interviews where we would discuss your work-related stress. When face-to-face interviews are not feasible, interviews will be facilitated through Adobe Connect virtual, interactive technology. If you decide to participate in the interviews via Adobe Connect, you agree to allow these sessions to be recorded, to allow the researcher to observe both verbal and non-verbal communication. Additionally, you would agree to two observations, where I would observe how you handle occupational stress as well as maintain a weekly stress journal. Each session will be no longer than an hour, and audio will be recorded so that I can accurately document your experiences. The audio and video recordings will only be heard by the primary researcher, the faculty advisor, Dr. Randall Bowden, and the methodologist, Dr. Nancy Smith. These recordings will be destroyed after a period of three years.

To ensure confidentiality, you and the institution will be given a pseudonym. Any direct names you use during the recording will be replaced with pseudonyms if used in print. All data will be kept in a securely locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office, which will also be locked when unoccupied by the primary researcher. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and there will be no monetary compensation for participating in this research.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding this study. You may contact me at kthomas3@islander.tamucc.edu. If you are interested in this study, please complete the attached pre-assessment worksheet and return it to me via email.

Best Regards,

Kimberly Thomas
kthomas3@islander.tamucc.edu

Appendix B

Pre-Assessment Inquiry

Demographic Information

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Pseudonym (to be used if selected for the study) _____

E-mail Address: _____

1. Current Age: _____ 2. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

3. Marital Status: _____ Married _____ Separated _____ Widowed
_____ Divorced _____ Single

4. Are you a parent? If yes, how many children do you have, and what are their ages? _____

5. Ethnicity: _____ Hispanic _____ African-American _____ White _____ Asian
_____ Native American _____ Other (Please Specify)

Occupational Information

6. List your current job title. _____

7. Classification: Faculty _____ Administrator _____

8. How long have you worked at this institution? _____

9. How long have you been in your current position? _____

10. What are your primary job duties, and how much time do you allot to each per week?

Work Activity	Amount of Time Spent Per Week

11. What additional roles and duties do you fulfill that are not outlined in your primary job description (e.g. committees, administrative duties, teaching, service, etc.)?

Stress Related Questions

Answer the following questions on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest; 10 being the highest).

12. Rate the amount of control you have to make work-related decisions._____

13. Rate the amount of work-related stress you experience daily._____

14. Rate the amount of clarity and direction you receive to help you carry out your tasks._____

15. Rate the amount of stress you experience as a result of the time allotment, project turnaround, or task deadlines._____

16. Rate the amount of strain you experience as a result of work-demands._____

17. Rate the amount of stress you experience as a result of personal desires and ambition. _____

18. Rate the amount of stress you experience as a result of decision-making authority._____

19. Rate the amount of stress you experience as a result of interpersonal relationships.

Students_____ Co-Workers_____ Supervisors _____

20. Rate the amount of time you are absent from work due to work-related stress. _____

Answer the following open-ended questions.

21. How often do you experience stressful situations at work?_____

22. Overall, how would you rate and describe your stress level within your current position?_____

23. What type of work-related health problems have you encountered as a result of stressful work experiences (e.g. anxiety, sleeplessness, depression, high blood pressure, etc.)_____

24. Fully describe at least one stressful work-related experience you encountered. What happened? Who was involved? Why did it cause you stress? How did it cause you stress? How did you react? _____

Thank you!

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study entitled “A Cross-Case Analysis of Faculty and Administrator Stress in Higher Education: Do I Stay, or Do I Go?” The principal investigator, Kimberly Thomas, may be contacted at kthomas3@islander.tamucc.edu.

Additionally, participants may also contact Erin Sherman, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi Compliance Officer at Erin.Sherman@tamucc.edu or (361) 825-2497, for further inquiries regarding participant rights. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty.

Description: I recognize that the purpose of this study is to understand how two higher education faculty members and two administrators experience and cope with occupational stress at a Texas University.

Confidentiality: No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others (apart from the Principal Investigator, Dr. Randall Bowden, Dissertation Chair, Randall.Bowden@tamucc.edu or (361) 825-6034, and Dr. Nancy Smith, Dissertation Methodologist, Nancy.Smith@tamucc.edu or (361) 825-2308). I will be assigned a pseudonym which will be used in the interview transcripts and all other data documents, such as job descriptions, observations, and journal entries. I understand that for protecting confidentiality, I should refrain from discussing my participation in this study.

Compensation: I understand that there will be no personal expense or compensation for participating in this study.

Risks and Benefits: I understand there are minimal risks associated with my participation in this study. There may be a possibility that I may experience increased stress through the act of

recalling stressful events. In the event this occurs, I may choose to receive assistance through the campus career services or local counseling organizations. Potential benefits for this study involve gaining a more in-depth perception of occupational stress triggers and coping techniques.

Right to Withdraw: I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this study and stop participation at any point without penalty or loss.

Voluntary Consent: I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project. I understand that by signing this form, I also acknowledge and understand the following components of this research study:

- The researcher will record audio of conversations and interviews that occur between the researcher and me.
- In the event that face-to-face interviews are not feasible, virtual meetings will be conducted and recorded using Adobe Connect.
- The data will be kept by the researcher and will be shared while maintaining confidentiality with Dr. Randall Bowden and Dr. Nancy Smith.
- The data may be used for future presentation and publication purposes but all identifying information about my conversation with the interviewer will be removed.
- Data, audio, and video recordings will be discarded after a period of three years.
- The researcher will analyze the data and keep it for three years for educational and research purposes.
- There is no direct benefit for me for participating in the project.

Participant's Printed Name

Participant's Signature

Date

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Researcher's Printed Name

Researcher's Signature

Date

Please sign two copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix D

Participant Grid Selection

Title	Name	Gender	Marital Status	Kids	Hrs. Wrkd	Ethnicity	Amount of Control	Amount of Stress	Amount of Clarity	Stress: Time	Stress: Demands	Stress: Ambition	Stress: Decisions	Stress Averages	Selection
Admin	Bud	Male	Married	2	58	White	7	6	7	7	7	2	2	5.428571	
Admin	Cynthia	Female	Married	2	Inc.	Hispanic	3	5	3	7	9	10	7	6.285714	X
Admin	Aguilar	Male	Single	0	55-64	Hispanic	7	7	7	5	8	8	6	6.857143	X
Admin	SJP	Female	Single	0	41-44	Hispanic	7	4	9	5	4	4	2	5	
Admin	Angel	Female	Married	2	40-48	Hispanic	8	4	9	4	3	5	3	5.142857	
Faculty	Eastwood	Male	Married	2	16	White	10	4	1	6	3	3	7	4.857143	
Faculty	Lorraine	Female	Married	3	41.75	Hispanic	7	6	9	7	7	9	7	7.428571	X
Faculty	Precious 1	Female	Married	0	60	African American	7	4	5	3	3	2	2	3.714286	
Faculty	Socrates	Male	Married	2	50-55	Hispanic	7	5	8	5	2	5	5	5.285714	
Faculty	LaDoctor	Female	Married	3	40	Hispanic	9	5	1	7	4	9	10	6.428571	X

Appendix E

Sample Interview Protocol Form

Interviewee Name:

Interviewer Name:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Description: Control and Demands

1. Describe a moment where you experienced feelings of ambiguity between expectations and your ability to meet those expectations.
2. Provide an example of when you received limited or unclear direction regarding a job task.
3. Provide an example of when you were assigned conflicting tasks.
4. Describe an experience in which you questioned your skill set and personal ability to accomplish a task.
5. Explain a situation in which you had to fulfill multiple roles consecutively.

Appendix F

Interview 1 Protocol Form

Interviewer: KRT

Description: Job Duties & Stress Overview

1. Describe your current job title and duties.
2. What are your expectations of yourself in fulfilling your duties? From supervisor?
3. Walk me through a typical workday during the regular semester.
4. How have you experienced stress in your current position?
5. Describe a situation where you were just completely overwhelmed.

Appendix G

Interview 2 Protocol Form

Interviewer: KRT

Description: Theories: Person-Environment Fit, Control Demand, & Uncertainty

Begin with Interview 1 Follow-up questions about stress.

- Define anger and stress.
 - How does your body react to stress?
 - What are the top 5 stressors of your job?
 - Pre-assessment follow-up questions.
-

1. Describe your personality.
2. Describe yourself and working environment as a story, character, scene, movie, play, etc.,
what would that look like?
3. Describe your ideal working environment.
4. What are some examples of when you felt uncertain?
5. Walk me through a few examples of when you felt overwhelmed at work.

Appendix H

Interview 3 Protocol Form

Interviewer: KRT
Description: Recap & Helping

Begin with Interview 2 Follow-up questions about work-related stress.

- If you could change anything about your position, what would it be?
- How would you describe your stress level now that a new semester has started?

-
6. Describe a time when your work environment transferred over into your personal life and vice versa.
 7. Describe a situation where you felt like you did not have control and how you handled it.
 8. Provide examples of when you were unable to meet your own personal expectations?
 9. Provide successful and unsuccessful examples of when you tried to help others.
 10. How has participating in this process been for you?

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