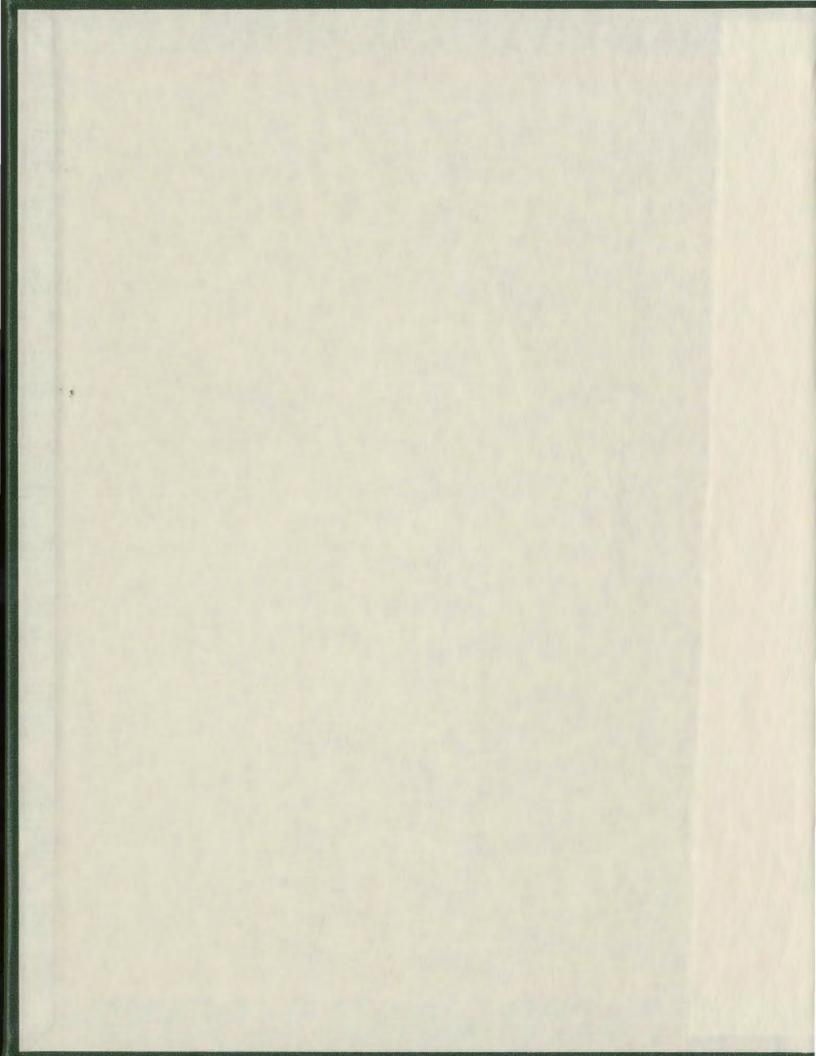# COPING WITH STRESS:
THE COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP

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Coping With Stress:

The Counseling Psychology Internship

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ABSTACT

This is a qualitative research study that investigates the manner in which five Masters of Education, Counseling Psychology students, Faculty of Education Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), experienced and coped with stress during their internship. The study asks the following questions: what are the causes of stress, how does stress manifest itself, and what do interns do to cope with stress?

The interns listed a variety of stressors. The lists can be generally placed under stressors from outside the internship and stressors inside the internship. It was surprising to discover the extent of the stress experienced by the participants during their internships as all interns experienced high levels of stress for a prolonged period of time. Manifestations of stress included many physical and emotional symptoms. Coping strategies ranged from de-stressing by engaging in communication with a significant other to taking a day off when the stress level was at its highest.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The objective of this research is to explore how students in the Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Program, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, experience and cope with stress during the internship component of their program.

Stress is a natural result of living out our daily pursuits. Our fast paced society brings with it stresses in many forms. Some low levels of stress can enhance performance. However, higher levels of stress can cause discomfort and decrease task performance. Selye (1975, 1979), an early pioneer in stress research, together with Richard Earle founded the Canadian Institute of Stress in 1979. Gabriel (2006) noted that Selye developed the General Adaptation Syndrome theory in which he describes the three-stage coping process that our bodies go through when dealing with stress. The first stage is an "alarm reaction," or what is commonly referred to as the instinct to "fight or flight." The second stage is where the body builds a resistance to the stress. In this stage, the body adapts to the long-term stress placed on it. The third and final stage is when, after prolonged stress, the body enters a stage of exhaustion (Gabriel, 2006). Selye used the word *distress* to refer to negative stress. Distress can cause hundreds of physical and emotional illnesses and diseases (Kennedy, 1982; Al-Faraidy, 2000). Selye also discussed the nature of stress in terms of how the body's hypothalamus responds to stressors. In fifty years of working in the area of stress management, Selye wrote 30 books and more

than 1,500 articles on stress and associated problems, including the *Implications of the Stress Concept* (1975).

There is a paucity of literature on how counsellors deal with stress. However, there is literature on the stress of workers in caregiver fields. The literature that is most interesting, due to the nature of the context, is the body of work written on nurses' stress. As nurses are on the front line of care giving, their experience of high levels of stress is a professional concern. Many investigations and resulting articles fill nursing journals with causes, factors, and relief of stress and burnout among those in the nursing profession. Shamian, O'Brien- Pallas, Thomson, Atkins (2003) described their investigation of the contributing factors of nurses' absenteeism, stress and workplace injury. Their research showed that nurses' absenteeism was 80% higher than the national average of other workers. That means that on any given day approximately 13,000 nurses are absent from Canadian hospitals. The study relates that much of the absenteeism is due to the relationship between musculoskeletal injury, job strain and stress. The cost for such a high rate of absenteeism is tremendous (Shamian et al, 2003). Gellis (2002) compared 168 social workers with 155 nurses. This study found that social workers have more autonomy in their jobs and as a result feel less stress overall. In addition, social workers use solution-focused problem solving strategies. In contrast, nurses use emotionally-based problem solving strategies and at the same time feel a great deal less autonomy and more stress, heightened yet again by their primary care-giver roles. These studies point out the stressors and job strain of nurses and social workers in their care giving work. However, in their role as caregivers there has been little published about counsellor stress (Truell, 2001). As stated above, this present study explored how Interns in the Masters of

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Education Counselling Psychology Program from Memorial University of Newfoundland experienced and coped with stress.

Context and Background

This study investigated experiencing and coping with stress. Specifically, this study investigated how Masters of Education Counselling Psychology Interns experienced and coped with stress during the internship component of their program.

Selye (1975) observed that there are many factors that make up a person's perception of what causes stress in their life. Perhaps an individual's personality type is the base of an event being identified as stressful. In terms of this study factors such as internship setting, professional relationships, and workload may be features in internship stress. The individual's personal life may also affect their stress levels. Healthy and supportive personal relationships may be a factor in an individual's levels of stress. Debriefing, exercise and support systems may enable interns to effectively cope with stress. If personal or professional supports are not in place a situation could develop where stress levels affect the Intern.

My personal experience prompted me to study this subject. As a member of the Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Program at Memorial University of Newfoundland, I have been present when students discussed and/or reacted to stress. Some students stated that they experienced stress during the course work, and exam preparation, while others felt more stress while they were involved in a process group. Some students said the Internship brought with it specific, and at times, intense stresses. While observing my classmates, I became interested in discovering more about how they

cope with stress. As counsellors, we have to be healthy in order to adequately perform the care-giving role as prescribed by the Canadian Counselling Association's Code of Ethics. The transition time from student-to-practitioner which occurs during the internship may bring with it specific stressors and stressful situations.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated how Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology students experience and cope with stress during the internship component of their program. Stress is a reality of modern society and stress is experienced in all our lives on a daily basis. As indicated by the literature, some level of stress enhances performance of tasks, higher levels of intense stress may be cause for disruption in or an inability to perform tasks (Cartwright and Cooper (1997). Intense stress may also lead to physical and emotional symptoms in an individual person. If an individual's work is as a care-giver, then the levels of experienced stress may be more intense. If the care-giver is a counsellor intern, the stress level may have a direct impact on Counselling performance (Truell, 2001).

During the internship period, individuals are in a life transition. They are moving from the role of graduate student to that of practitioner. They begin working with clients in a Counselling relationship. As interns, they are exposed to individual Counselling situations that may bring specific stress. By studying Counselling Psychology students during their internship, I have had an opportunity to come to a deeper understanding of these individuals and how they experience and cope with stress. The data collected gave me, as researcher, greater insights into the many factors involved in the interns' stressful situations. Internship settings, supervisor relationships, family relationships, and other

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support systems could be studied in terms of what enhances or hinders the individual's ability to cope with stress.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study was a qualitative case study that involved interns who have completed their internships as part of their Counselling Psychology Program at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The three research questions guiding this study are: What are the causes of stress? How does stress manifest itself? What do interns do to cope with stress?

Methodological Approach and Scholarly Significance

As stated this is a qualitative case study that builds on concepts and theories of researchers like Patton (2001) who stated that qualitative research aims to better understand individuals for the inherent value of knowing them in their world as they view and comprehend their experiences. It entails a holistic approach to the understanding of people and their context. Creswell (1998) states that in qualitative research the researcher, "builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views by means of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (p.15)." Denzin (1998), states, "qualitative researchers ... seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (p.8). Participants in this study were asked to describe how they experienced and coped with stress during their internship.

This study collected raw data through semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and a survey. The data was taped and transcribed. It was analyzed for themes and conclusions were constructed from the themes. The significance of the study is that the

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results may be used by future interns, and may be incorporated in graduate student courses in the Counseling Psychology Program at Memorial University. The scholarly significance is that this study will add to the literature on stress, especially to that literature on nursing and social worker stress. Specifically it adds to the literature on Counsellor Stress.

Identification of the types of stressors, level of stress, manifestation of stress and coping techniques may serve future interns of the Masters of Education Counseling Psychology Memorial University Program to better understand their stress and to adapt effective coping skills.

Limitations of the Study

This study was confined to the fourteen-week internship of Masters of Education Counseling Psychology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Internship placements were at varied venues such as schools, career Counseling centres, community access centres, and mental health hospitals. The study was limited by the design of internship requirements; time, space and types of stressors likely to have been experienced. Stressors and coping techniques employed throughout the rest of the participants' program, not to mention their lives before and after the program, were not covered in this study.

Definition of Terms

Stress: For the purposes of this study, stress is defined as an individual's physical and mental reaction to environmental demands or pressures.

Counseling: Counseling psychology is defined as a psychological specialty. It facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span. It is focused on emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns.

Internship: An Internship is a practical experience for a minimum of 600 hours with at least 240 hours of direct client contact.

Organization of the Study

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter; Chapter 2 describes selected literature related to the topic of stress in the context of education as a discipline, as well as Counseling psychology, and internship. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and methods selected to frame this study. Chapter 4 presents the data for the study. Chapter 5 gives an analysis of the findings, draws conclusions, and offers suggestions for future studies in coping with stress during the Counselling Psychology internship.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

To assist in understanding stress and coping mechanisms, and to lay a foundation for the study, a review of the literature was completed. Relevant subjects were identified and categorized as follows: Education as a Discipline; Counselling Psychology; Internship and Stress.

Education as a Discipline

Education as a discipline may be dated back to the discourses of Socrates. For the purposes of this study however, the work of John Dewey is cited as a foundation for the professional status of Education. John Dewey lived between 1859 and 1952, and during that time he "made one of the most significant contributions to the development of educational thinking in the twentieth century" (Auger and Rich, 2007, p. 10). "Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, concern with interaction, reflection and experience, and interest in community and democracy, were brought together to form a highly suggestive educative form" (http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-dewey.htm). Dewey's influence on ideas about informal education, critical thinking and reflection has been enormous. His philosophy is reflected in many of today's educational writers as his influence in educational development is still felt. John Dewey's significance for informal educators lay in a number of areas. He believed that education must connect and enlarge the student's informal learning experience. Dewey's exploration and definition of the role of educators continues to inspire educational practice. He provided a framework for practice

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by investigating the effects of interactions and environments for learning. Dewey's passion for democracy provides the foundation from which informal educators work (Smith, 2001). These influences need to be remembered in dealing with the contexts of counseling psychology. Elliot W. Eisner, past President of the John Dewey Society stated that the education system should provide "individuation" for students. By that he means schools ought to "cultivate what is personally and productively idiosyncratic about each student" (Eisner, 2003, p. 6) He feels that schools should promote each student's aptitudes and talents, and assist students in identifying their strengths (Eisner, 2006).

Education is a critical part of an individual's development. This is important to the work that Counseling Psychologists do and thus it is important for them to understand today's holistic perspective of intended educational outcome. Educators are increasingly aware of the need to be able to support student development across physical, social-emotional, moral, linguistic, as well as cognitive domains. Developing educational research acknowledges that, "over the past decade, radically new theories of learning and cognition have emerged, theories that work from a very different set of assumptions from previous models" (Davis, 2000 p. 63). Darling-Hammond & Bransford, Eds, (2005) claim that educators can best understand and facilitate understanding, meaning-making and learning by taking a developmental perspective. People develop in different ways, including physical, social, emotional, linguistic, moral and aesthetical. To help support this development educators, including counselors, need to know how to create environments that meets children, students, and adults where they are, taking advantage "of what they want and need to learn, and moves them along the developmental pathways" (p. 94). There is a secondary impact to consider within this study related to the

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nature of education today and its intended impacts in that this is also relevant to the education and development of the Counseling Psychologist him/herself. Ultimately, the impact of stress and learning to cope with stress are critical developmental aspects in the overall education of interns.

Counselling Psychology

Counselling psychologists are distinguished from other specialty areas such as clinical psychology by focusing on those things that promote the optimal development for individuals, groups and systems (Hage, 2003). As a psychological specialty, Counselling psychology's role is to assist people in their personal and interpersonal functioning. It covers aspects of the individual as emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns (Gore, 2004). Counselling psychology covers the life span of a person. Lichtenberg (1999) states that it is centered on typical and atypical issues of development in individuals, family, groups, and organizational systems. He adds that counsellors help people with physical, emotional, and mental disorders improve well-being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, and resolve crises. By alleviating distressing situations and by resolving crisis situations, people are enabled to live their lives more fully.

Another focus of Counselling psychology is career development theory. Career and occupational Counselling according to Carter (2003) is at the core of Counselling psychology. Any one client issue cannot be considered in isolation for career decision-making that must take into account the client's personal situation. Decisions should be made in such as way as to improve the client's life situation. Gore (2004) states that

counselling psychology helps people improve their well-being that is achieved by the integration of theory, research and practice. Counselling psychology is unique in that it focuses attention both on normal developmental issues and on issues pertaining to physical, emotional, and mental disorders (Gore, 2004).

Truell (2001) presents research that looks at causes of stress in the lives of the practicing counsellor. This study is similar in ways to this particular research. For example he used a similar size sample, his findings suggest that counsellors in training experienced significant disruptions in their relationships with family and friends, and the majority of subjects reported feelings of depression and stress. Truell (2001) cites several studies that support these findings, notably, Corey et al (1993), Deutch (1984), Guy and Liaboe (1986). Corey et al (1993) commenting on the life of the counsellor suggests that Counselling can be a hazardous profession. Dryden and Thorne (1991), cited in Truell (2001) suggest that counsellors in training experience similar problems to those counsellors in practice. They state that almost all trainees at some stage in their training are likely to experience periods of distress and may even at times become subject to incapacitating anxiety or depression (p. 4). Owen (1993), cited in Truell (2001), points to the difficulties counsellors in training have in terms of their relationships with family and friends. Similarly, Guy and Liaboe (1986), cited in Truell (2001), reported that many counsellors experience difficulties with their ability to relate meaningfully with family and friends. Faber (1983), in Truell (2001), suggests that half the counsellors in his study reported decreased emotional investment in their own families and in other relationships. Faber (1983) also suggests that counsellors tend to reduce their circle of friends and indeed socialize less during their careers. Although these studies apply to practicing

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counsellors, it is important to inquire if counsellor interns could and do experience similar problems. The following studies appear to agree with the studies cited in this review: Cartwright et al. (1997); Gilles (2002); Schnall et al (1994); Lazarus and Folkman (1984); and Duxbury and Higging (2003).

As stated above, and as suggested by Truell (2001), the published material relating to the negative effects of "learning counselling" is limited. This fact puts limitations on this literature review. However, it gives greater significance and value to this particular study in so far as it will add to the literature and update the present limited research in this specific area.

Internship

Neimeyer, Bowman and Stewart (2001) state that emphasis on the effectiveness of training and placement is important in counselling psychology. It follows that the internship is a major component of that professional training. The Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Internship for Memorial University of Newfoundland is described as a practical experience consisting of a minimum 600 hours. 240 of those hours are to be in direct contact with clients. The Internship is the final practical experience at the master's level, the purpose of which is to provide graduate students invaluable hands-on exposure to their profession. The first of three primary purposes of the internship is development of personal and professional competencies. The ability to identify and cope effectively with stress can be a huge area of personal development that would benefit the professional experience of a counsellor. The second purpose of the internship is to come to a deeper understanding of theoretical, pedagogical, and

ethical/legal aspects of counselling. From an ethical perspective counsellors have an ethical obligation to provide the best client care they can. In order to do that, counsellors must be healthy. One of the determinants of being healthy includes having an ability to effectively cope with stress so that symptoms of excessive stress do not compromise ethical professional practice. The third stated purpose of the internship includes developing counselling competence. In order to retain high competency levels the intern must be in a position where stress is not a deterrent to that competency (M.U.N., Degree Programs; Internship in Counselling Psychology).

Stress

For the purpose of this study, stress has been described as an individual's physical and mental reaction to environmental demands or pressures (Thoits 1995). Everyone experiences stress. It is an inescapable part of life. However, not all stress is negative. Positive stress is often seen to be necessary to function at optimum levels. Low levels of stress can enhance performance. Stress is a natural result of living out our daily pursuits (Hoffmen & Parsons, 1991). Much of the literature defines the difference between normal levels of stress and levels that cause problems for the individual. A normal amount of stress allows us to strive for and attain our goals. Dr. Hans Selye, who was a pioneer in investigating effects of stress on performance, reminded us that normal levels of stress are fundamental to our existence. He stated that the absence of stress means death and it is a "part of life. It is a natural by-product of our activities" (Selye, 1956, p.vii). Klas and co-writers claim, "Stress can be a motivator, a growth producer, a healthy change agent..." (Klas, Kendell- Woodward, Kennedy, 1985, p. 33). For example, a

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deadline can present enough positive stress to motivate someone to complete a project. As indicated above stress is a psychological and physiological response to events that upset our personal balance in some way (http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm). We could say it is the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, strength, stamina, and heightened alertness (http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html). Given the amount of material on the world-wide-web, it would seem that stress and stress management is a serious modern day issue.

Life brings with it stresses in many forms. People can experience stress levels that range from low to manageable, high and unmanageably high. Klas et al (1985) suggested that levels that are too low can cause the individual to feel apathy, fatigue and illness, and extremely high levels of stress can have many negative repercussions for the individual. Klas et al (1985) add that "it can also be a discouragement, destructive personally and professionally, as well as physically and emotionally" (p. 33). Higher levels of stress can cause discomfort and decrease task performance. Excessive stress levels can inhibit optimum performance and decrease productivity. Prolonged or intense stress has implications for the individual, the workplace and society (Selye, 1965). Many assessments and treatments of negative stress are offered to consumers seeking relief from excessive stress levels. For example, Linda Fatkin of Essi Systems' Stress Map has sold over one million copies of her stress assessment tool. She maintains that an individual's healthy stress management begins with finding and maintaining "a personal equilibrium, a balance that works for you at each stage of your life" (http://www.essisystems.com/stress/stresstypes.php3). There have been a million copies sold of

just that one assessment tool! Clearly, individual and corporate stress management is big business. This is because the cost of debilitating stress for the individual, the workplace and society can be measured monetarily as well as physically and emotionally.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), 'coping' is how people usually react to stress. Individual reactions are related to personal factors, situational demands and available resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Hans Selye developed the General Adaptation Syndrome theory that describes a three stage coping process that our bodies go through when dealing with extreme stress. The first stage is an "alarm reaction," or what is commonly referred to today as the instinct to "fight or flight." The second stage is where the body builds a resistance to the stress. In this stage, the body adapts to the long-term stress placed on it. The third and final stage is when, after prolonged stress, the body enters a stage of exhaustion (Gabriel, 2006). It appears that this third stage is where the high cost of stress occurs.

Extreme stress can be debilitating in its physical and emotional manifestations. Selye wrote of the literally hundreds of physical, emotional, and psychological repercussions of stress in our lives (Selye, 1975). Even a cursory examination of diseases and distresses caused by stress would easily involve a list of hundreds. Kennedy (1982) lists "high blood pressure, heart disease, diseases of the kidney, infections, allergy, and mental nervous diseases" as named by Selye as having direct relationship to stress as a causal factor (p. 31). Everything from an increase of nervous energy to panic attacks, phobias, fatigue, hypertension, insomnia and heart failure can be added to that list. There is no doubt of the serious negative impact extreme stress can have on the body. Kennedy (1982) reports the finding of one U.S. study reflecting that 230 million prescriptions are

written annually for stress-related symptoms. Such numbers have repercussions in terms of personal, emotional, physical and psychological costs. There are also correlated costs to family and extended family groups of the stress sufferer. Added to this is the financial cost in the individual's workplace in terms of lost wages for the stress sufferer and also the cost of absenteeism and unproductivity for the workplace/ employer. Another layer is the expense to society in terms of safety net costs such as health care. Human resources statistics in the UK indicate a doubling of reported cases of clinical stress cases from 1990 to 1999. Lost work days rose from 6.5 million (pounds) a year to 13 million per year from 1995 to 2001. The cost to employers grew from 350 million to 700 million in that time. The cost to society in lost productivity and in health care costs grew from 3.7 billion to 7 billion in that same time period (Chapman, 2006). It can be little wonder why stress identification and reduction to optimum levels is such big business. In an article titled *A Brief Introduction to Job Strain*, the authors present Robert Karasek's "Job Strain" model. The model proposes "the greatest risk to physical and mental health from stress occurs to workers facing high psychological workload demands or pressures combined with low control or decision latitude in meeting those demands" (Schnall, Landsbergis & Baker, 1994, P. 382.)

Health Canada Status Report states that the cost to employers of absenteeism is astronomical. The October 2003 report on The Work Life Conflict in Canada in the New Millennium (Health Canada Status Report 2003) estimated that direct (work) and indirect (family) factors of absenteeism, work–life conflict costs Canadians approximately $4.5 to $10 billion per year. It is little wonder that governments, employers and individuals are eager to find ways to manage and maintain optimum stress levels both in the work place

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and in the personal sphere. It is with ease that we can relate how the serious issue of stress affects our daily lives, both professionally and privately. It can lead to strain on relationships that are both professional and personal in nature (Schnall, Landsbergis & Baker, 1994). There is an abundance of literature on meditation, group therapy, exercise and other forms of stress relief. A general search conducted by placing 'stress' into any Internet search engine would net hundreds of thousands of sites, articles, research and journals devoted to the relief of high levels of stress. The literature is overflowing with articles and research reports on stress and burnout in the workplace. Many journals are devoted entirely to stress coping techniques and advocacy avenues. For example, the *International Journal of Stress Management* is an American Psychological Association (APA) publication. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping* is an international journal published by the Taylor and Francis Group. These articles on stress management suggest that over 13 million working days are lost every year because of stress in the UK alone. 70% of all doctor's visits are due to unmanageable stress. The article also states that 85% of all serious illnesses are rooted in stress.

A significant body of literature deals with the stresses of people who work in caregiver fields. The literature that is most helpful to this study, due to the nature of the context, is the material on nurses' stress. As nurses are on the front line as primary care givers, their stress is a professional concern. Many investigations and resulting articles fill nursing journals with causes, factors and relief of stress and burnout among those in the nursing profession. Shamian and co-authors published a paper in 2003 describing their investigation of the contributing factors of nurses' absenteeism, stress and workplace injury. Their research showed that nurses' absenteeism was 80% higher than the national

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average of all workers. As indicated above that means that on any given day 13,000 nurses are absent from Canadian hospitals. The study's numbers indicate that much of the absenteeism is due to the relationship between musculoskeletal injury, and job strain and stress. The cost for such a high rate of absenteeism is tremendous (Shamian, J.; O'Brien-Pallas, L.; Thomson, D.; Alksnis, C., 2003).

Zvi Gellis (2001, 2002) has conducted extensive studies into job strain and stress of social workers. In a recent study conducted by way of a survey, she compared 168 social workers with 155 nurses. Gellis (2002) noted the extensive research into nurses' stress and the relatively little investigation into stress of social workers who work in hospitals. The results of her investigation showed differences between the groups in perceived job stress, job satisfaction and methods used to cope with stress. Some of the differences between the groups showed that social workers tended to solve problems utilizing a problem focused method while nurses tended to employ an emotion focused coping method. Another interesting finding is that nurses cited their biggest stressor as perceived occupation-related stress due to things like workload, autonomy and the criticality of some of their responses. Gellis attributes the difference to the better defined occupational role of social workers in a hospital setting. Social workers were also perceived as having more autonomy than other hospital workers. Control is a factor in job satisfaction. Lack of control is a factor in job stress. The study showed that avoidance of stressful situations actually increases job dissatisfaction for both groups.

Investigation of the factors associated with the reported high stress levels, job strain and burnout experiences of caregivers such as nurses and social workers provides a basis to begin a study into the stress of Counselling Psychology Interns. Role definition,

perceived stress, lack of autonomy and coping style are factors that affect stress in Counselling psychology interns as well. Cartwright et al (1997) list three major sources of stress in the workplace: role ambiguity, role conflict and responsibility for the lives of others. These three sources of stress appear to fit the literature regarding sources of stress for counselors as well as other caregiver professionals. Studies by Truell (2001) and Thoits (1995) give further insight into the significance of stress in professional lives. These studies pose many questions for investigation into the possible stressors, job strain, and job satisfaction of others in the care giving field such as counsellors.

As stated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, my personal experience prompted my interest to study stress. As a member of the Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Program at Memorial University of Newfoundland, I have been present when students discussed and/or reacted to stress in different areas of their academic and/or personal life. While observing my classmates, I became interested in discovering more about how they cope with stress. As counsellors, we have to be healthy in order to adequately perform the care-giving role as prescribed by the Code of Ethics.

There could be many factors that make up a person's perception of what causes stress in their life. One individual's personality type may be the base of an event being identified as stressful, while another would identify it as not being stressful or being less stressful. Gellis' (2002) investigations indicate that problem solving verses emotional focused coping methods have different results in managing stress. Factors such as Internship setting and supervisor/ intern relationship may impact interns. Workload and feelings of isolation or lack of professional or personal supports may also be factors in stress.

Duxbury and Higgins (2003) in a report on work-life conflict for a Health Canada publication agree with the U.S. National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health, that the individual's personal life situation may be factored into the stress level of an experienced event. If personal relationships are healthy and supportive, then typically comparatively higher levels of stress may be dealt with more effectively. Perhaps debriefing, exercise and support systems enable interns to effectively cope with stress. If personal or professional supports are not in place a situation could develop where stress becomes debilitating to the Intern.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of the literature which was conducted in order to lay a foundation for the study of how graduate students of the Counselling Psychology Program, Faculty of Education Memorial University of Newfoundland cope with stress during their Internship. It also assisted in the understanding of the relevant subjects of Education as a Discipline; Counselling Psychology; Internship and Stress. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

"Educational research is a systematic investigation, involving the analysis of information (data), to answer a question or contribute to our knowledge about an educational theory or practice" (McMillan and Wergin, 2002, p.119). The way in which we understand and explain the social world, and this study, is more complex and subtle than the distinctions we make between research traditions (Pring, 2000). We have to acknowledge that with "the diversity of the intellectual resources that are brought to the field of educational research that there are some significantly different rule governed systems in play" (Bridges, 2006, p. 266). In other words, educational research, in the various ways it is practiced, leaves us with the need to make sense of some of these "rule governed" activities (Creswell, 2008). This is a qualitative research study. Qualitative research is both a philosophy of knowing and a number of approaches to collecting and analyzing information. As a philosophy of knowing, "qualitative research focuses on understanding from the perspective of whoever and whatever is being studied ... [and is] based on the assumption that reality is subjective and dependent on context" (McMillan and Wergin, 2002, p.119). This claim is particularly significant in a study that examines how interns experience and cope with stress during the internship component of their Counselling Psychology Program. In selecting to do a qualitative study, I was reminded that the naturalistic paradigm as characterized today, draws upon these broad insights, and their echoes in the related traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology. This

paradigm is described by a number of characteristics. These include a commitment to constructivist epistemologies, an emphasis upon description rather than explanation, the representation of reality through the eyes of participants, the importance of viewing the meaning of experience and behaviour in context and in its full complexity, a view of the scientific process as generating working hypotheses rather than immutable empirical facts, an attitude towards theorizing which emphasizes the emergence of concepts from data rather than their imposition in terms of a priori theory, and the use of qualitative methods for research. Qualitative methods are privileged within the naturalistic approach because they are thought to meet a number of reservations about the uncritical use of quantification in social science practice: in particular, the problem of inappropriately fixing meanings where these are variable and renegotiable in relation to their context of use; the neglect of the uniqueness and particularity of human experience; and because of concern with the overwriting of internally structured subjectivities by externally imposed "objective" systems of meaning. This approach fits with the mandate of this particular study. Eisner (1998) claims that qualitative research tends to be field focused. In education this means that researchers go out into schools and district offices, visit classrooms, watch children play, and observe teaching and learning. This approach speaks to this study on coping with stress in the Counselling Psychology internship. I was also reminded that qualitative research has an interpretative character. Researchers try to "account for" what they have gathered in their data. Qualitative research is also concerned with matters of meaning, and getting beneath the obvious claim or the obvious behaviour. In this study it was important for me to pay great attention to particulars. Eisner stresses that it is important to hold onto the flavour of the particular situation,

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individual, event, or object, and it is important to hold on to the uniqueness of particular features. This is done, in part, by employing multiple forms and multiple sources of evidence (Eisner, 1998). Creswell (2008) notes that researchers need to listen to the views of participants in our studies and that we need to ask general, open questions and collect data in places where people live and work. This approach is significant for this study that focuses on coping with stress in the Counselling psychology internship.

Merriam (1998) describes qualitative research as a way of understanding and explaining observed social phenomena with the least amount of disruption to the natural setting. Due to the nature of investigation of people in their natural settings, qualitative researchers feel that the area of qualitative inquiry can be among the richest and most rewarding explorations in social science (Gergen & Gergen, 2002). A qualitative approach best suits the needs of this particular study that focuses on coping with stress in the Counselling psychology internship. In particular the study asks the following questions: what are the causes of stress; how does stress manifest itself; what do interns do to cope with stress? It follows that researching how people cope with stress during their internship can be best conducted by a qualitative approach. Such questions require taking into account the many and varied personal, professional and whole life factors that contribute to real life layers of stress. In order to achieve this goal it is important to collect the most helpful and trustworthy data. In qualitative research, the term *triangulation* means the combination of methods or sources of data in a single study. By drawing on different types and sources of data, the qualitative researcher can gain a deeper and clearer understanding of the people and places being studied (Creswell, 2008). This study will make use of surveys, interviews and focus groups. Denzin and Lincoln

(1998), state that qualitative research is multi-method in focus. It involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. This mandates that the researcher study participants in their natural settings and attempts to interpret the data in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative inquiry helps us to understand "the particular context with which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions" (Maxwell, 1996, p.17). This is crucial for a study on intern's stress. In order to have a true understanding of how interns cope with stress, it was helpful to view it in terms of the whole picture of their lives. Their reality defined the parameters of the study. The parameters of this study allowed to contribute "to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 14). This allows for a richer and fuller study of interns coping with stress.

In terms of planning this study, Creswell (2008) is helpful as he writes about various forms of research designs. It can be said a research design is similar to an architectural blueprint. It is a plan for assembling, organizing, and integrating information (data), and it results in a specific end product (research findings). The selection of a particular design is determined by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises, and by the type of end product desired. That point bears fruit in this particular study.

In terms of qualitative research, this study can be seen to fit the mould of a case study. The nature of the research questions, the amount of control, and the desired end product are issues to be considered when deciding whether case study is the most appropriate design for investigating the problem of interest. A deciding factor is whether a bounded system (Scott and Usher, 1996) can be identified as the focus of the investigation. That is, a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group.

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This study centers on how a group of interns, in a graduate Counselling Psychology Program, experience and cope with stress. Therefore they constitute a "bounded" system. What we are talking about here is an instance drawn from a class. If the researcher were interested in the process of mainstreaming children into regular classes, for example, he or she would select a particular instance of mainstreaming to study in depth. An instance could be an individual child, a specific program, or a school. A case might also be selected because it is itself intrinsically interesting, and one would study it to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible. Choosing to study a graduate counselling program is an example of selecting a case for its intrinsic interest. In both situations, the mainstreaming process and the counselling program, the case is identified as a bounded system.

Case study has in fact been differentiated from other research designs by what can be called "interpretation in context." By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity, "the case", aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. The case study seeks holistic description and explanation. As Creswell (2008) observes, case study is a design particularly suited to situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context. That is often true in a study about experiencing and coping with stress.

The qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources. These attributes apply to this particular study.

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Case studies that go beyond description are interpretive in nature. The researcher uses the data to analyze, interpret, or theorize about the phenomenon. Finally, many case studies are evaluative in that they are undertaken to assess the merit of a particular practice or program. In reality, most case studies are a combination of description and evaluation. McMillan and Wergin (2002) talk about case study as "an in-depth analysis of one or more events, settings, programs, social groups, communities, individuals, and other *bounded systems*" (p.120). A case study can be both enlightening and activating: If case study sometimes provides illumination, it does so because in social life and social science we work pretty much in the dark. Our scientific understandings of social life have all too frequently fragmented it into "manageable" bits, which conceal from us the context-embeddedness of social phenomena, their dynamical coherence, their reflexive effects and their true significance, which is in action rather than theoretical discourse. Case study, because it is naturalistic is especially well placed to make an assault on that fragmentation and its associated obstacles to our understanding. Authentic insights reached through case study have the capacity to work reflexively to change the situation studied. The action possibilities created by case study are grounded in the situation itself, not imposed from outside it. The literature on stress and managing stress indicates that it is neither simple nor fragmented, and needs to be treated as a whole.

The first method of data collection for this study was a survey. It was thought that surveys data would help this particular study because surveys differ from conversations in that: "1) they are based around a single type of exchange (question- answer), (2) the survey designer attempts to pre-determine the course of the discussion and (3), the person

who is really asking the questions is not present"(Low, 1999, p.505). The results from the surveys were most helpful in setting interviews and focus groups (See Appendix C).

In qualitative research, you do not begin data collection with a pre-established instrument to measure distinct variables. Instead, you seek to learn from the participants in the study, and develop forms, called protocols, for recording data as the study proceeds. These forms pose general questions so that the participants can provide answers to the questions (Creswell, 2008, p.56). In this study about internship stress information from the surveys led to the formation of the interviews. Generally speaking, in qualitative research, interviewing needs to be flexible and dynamic (Creswell, 2008). In-depth interviewing, for example, often means repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and participants directed toward understanding the participants' perspectives on their lives: work, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words. Very often the in-depth interview is modeled on a conversation between equals. It is more than a formal question-and-answer exchange. For the researcher, part of the challenge is to learn what questions to ask. This was true in such a personal and professional study as this one.

Interviews were an integral part of the data collection for this study because at the root of in-depth interviewing is "an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1998, p.3). Through interviews the researcher can probe the thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives of an interviewee (Wellington, 2000). "The purpose of interviewing ... is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2000, p. 341) (See Appendix D). However, it is important to remember that in interviews people are subject

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to the same fabrications, deceptions, exaggerations, and distortions that characterize talk between any persons (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). We all see the world through our own experiences and mindsets. This is where triangulation and thick descriptions help the study. In completing this study it was important to set the right tone. The tone with in-depth interviews is more of a partnership than a "researcher-subject" relationship. It makes sense to place the important research questions out front. This may help avoid misunderstanding later. Therefore it is important to discuss:

Motives and intentions. It is very important to talk to participants about what you hope to get out of the project. People often worry that their words will be used against them or that they are being judged.

Anonymity. It is always wise to use pseudonyms for people and places. There are substantial risks in using actual names and places. Ethics committees insist on protecting people involved in research.

Final say. It is important, and ethical, to tell participants that they will have an opportunity to read and comment on all written documents that involve them.

Logistics. It is important to settle on a rough schedule and a place to meet. The frequency and length of interviews did depend on the respective schedules of the people involved. These semi-structured interviews usually lasted from one to two hours in work places and homes of the participants. Even though the topic of the inquiry was often challenging, it was important that people were as relaxed as possible, and, and there were few interruptions. Many participants were comfortable with the use of recorders. This meant that I was able to have the interviews transcribed, and in that way I had very valuable data that I was able to work with more easily.

Focus groups are becoming an important aspect of qualitative research. Very often researchers find that focus groups, done with participants who have been interviewed individually, add substantially to the collected data (Creswell, 2008). Given the nature of this study it seemed particularly beneficial that the research process involve the use of focus groups. There was great value in collecting the shared understandings from the individuals who had been surveyed and interviewed individually. According to Creswell, "A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six" (2008, p. 226). The focus group for this study consisted of five individuals. In this study on intern's stress, focus groups were used to refine the data gathered from the surveys and interviews. A focus group can be beneficial in a qualitative study because "the informal group discussion atmosphere of the focus group interview structure is intended to encourage subjects to speak freely and completely about behaviours, attitudes, and opinions they possess" (Berg, 2001, p. 111). Focus groups can be seen as "a valuable tool, efficient for collecting data and sometimes giving insights in addition to one-to-one interviews" (Wellington, 2000, pp.126-127). The great value for this study was the opportunity to extend and reflect on shared and diverse views (Patton, 2002). "Focusing the group discussion on a single topic brings forth material that would not come out in either the participants' own casual conversations or in response to the researcher's preconceived questions" (Morgan, 1998, p. 21). Morgan's claim proved accurate for this study on intern's stress (See Appendix E).

According to research experience, as well as the literature on qualitative research, there are a number of basic strategies an investigator can use to ensure the value,

trustworthiness and internal validity of a study. This study made use of triangulation and member checking.

1. *Triangulation* can mean using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings (McMillan and Wergin, 2002).

2. *Member checking* means taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible. In fact it is a good idea to do this continuously throughout the study; it is a good way to keep us honest (Creswell, 2008). In this particular study members were given the transcripts of interviews as a means of checking trustworthiness and internal validity.

Although researchers can turn to guidelines and regulations for help in dealing with some of the ethical concerns likely to emerge in a case study, the burden of producing a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner lies with the individual investigator. I took this obligation seriously. No regulation can tell a researcher when questioning of a respondent becomes coercive, when to intervene in abusive or illegal situations, or how to ensure that the study's findings will not be used to the detriment of those involved. The best that an individual researcher can do is to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process, from conceptualizing the problem to disseminating the findings. Above all, the investigator must examine his or her philosophical orientation vis-à-vis these issues. Self-knowledge can form the guidelines one needs to carry out an ethical investigation (Scott and Usher, 1996; Dana and Yendol-Silva, 2003; and O'Donaghue and Punch, 2003). I kept these ethical ideals in mind as I conducted this study.

This study made use of purposeful sampling. "The research term used for qualitative sampling is purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2008, p. 214). The subjects of this study were interns who completed their internships for the Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology, at Memorial University. In Patton's terms, these interns were "information rich" (1990, p. 169). Contact information for interns was obtained from the Faculty of Education's Counselling Psychology Program. Graduate students, who have completed their Internship since the winter semester of 2003, were listed as possible participants. Starting alphabetically, interns were asked to volunteer for the study, until five participants had agreed. Those participants formed the purposeful sample of the study. (See Appendix A: The Counsellor Letter of Invitation, and Appendix B: The Counsellor Consent Form for participating Interns).

The five interns experienced stressors and initiated coping behaviours that were specific to them personally. Maxwell (1996) is helpful in claiming that the qualitative researcher understands "the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved with and of the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences" (p.17). This study focused on the goal "to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations..." (Wellington, 2000, p.16). It is crucial that this study also focused on the social world which can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action that is being investigated – in this case coping with stress (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007). The goal of this study was to gather insight and understanding from the perspectives of those

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interns in a fashion which offers "the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (Merriam, 1998, p.1).

The information gathered from interviews, the focus group, and surveys provided the raw data for the research questions. Patton (2002) claims, "Qualitative data analysis transforms data into findings" (p. 432). After collecting data from these three methods, it was necessary to prepare it for data analysis. "This analysis initially consists of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding description and themes about the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2008, p. 244). Broad themes or categories were gleaned from the diverse detailed databases, namely surveys, interviews and focus groups. It was necessary in this analysis to read the data several times while conducting an analysis each time. In that way I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the data. These findings are presented in the following chapter.

Summary

This chapter laid out the rationale for using a qualitative case study and mapped the various methods used to complete the study. Attention was paid to the use of surveys, interviews, focus groups, ethics, triangulation, and member-checking. The following chapter will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter describes the findings from the data collected through the survey, one-on-one interviews, and the focus group of the intern participants of this study. Counsellor demographics and the data that emerged from the survey will be presented first, followed with the findings from the interviews and the focus group. The data analysis described in this chapter provides insight into how these five Masters of Education Counselling psychology interns experience and cope with stress.

Intern Demographic Information

A total of five interns participated in this study. All of those interns participated in all three data collection forms. That is, all five completed a survey, a one-on-one interview and participated in a focus group meeting. There was one male and four female counsellor interns. At the time of data collection, each intern had completed their internship as Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology students from Memorial University of Newfoundland, and all of the interns were working in the Counselling field.

The theoretical orientation of the counsellors was split between solution focused and holistic/person centered practice. Three interns identified themselves as being orientated to solution focused and two as oriented to holistic/person centered counsellors. All subdivided the categories by describing their approach as integrative including elements of feminist, solution-focused, and narrative.

Two participants completed their internship at a senior high in an urban setting. One participant's internship was at a campus counselling centre. Another participant's internship was at an inner city facility for displaced youth. The fifth participant completed the internship at a mental health hospital in an urban setting. The sample group interned in the areas under school boards, community agency, and health care categories.

In order to have a fuller understanding of the interns, additional pertinent personal information was requested on the survey. This was done to build a holistic picture of the lives of the interns that is conducive in a qualitative investigation (Creswell, 1998). To best understand the interns' experienced stress, manifestation of stress, and the coping of stress, the study and interpretation of the data had to be conducted in view of the interns' natural setting. The relevance of the experienced stress and how individuals coped with that stress could be seen in terms of the meaning the interns' gave to their experiences (Denzin, Lincoln, 1998).

During the period of data gathering for this study, two of the participants were married and had one child each. One was married seven months prior to beginning her internship, and her child was born during the internship period. One other intern became engaged during the internship. The two other interns were single but in relationships during their internships. The participants' ages ranged from the mid-twenties to late forties.

Counsellor Survey

Commitments

The counselor survey (Appendix C) responses provided an environmental landscape within which to place the participants' internship experience. The specific questions on the survey were formulated to gain a holistic view of each intern. They were asked to describe if they were married and the number and age of dependants; where their internship placement was; the community where the internship took place; what commitments they had during the internship period including family and work commitments; they were asked to list stressors experienced during the internship period. The survey questions provided a base from which to grow in understanding the interns. The questions also helped establish the investigation in that the survey answers would determine the issues the interviews and focus group would further investigate (Low, 1999).

The interns were asked to list what other commitments they had during their internship period. They were asked if they worked during the data-collecting period. Three interns did not work other positions during the internship time. The fourth did work as a substitute teacher for two weeks during the internship period. The fifth finished the last two months of the school year as a teacher while beginning the internship part-time; the internship became full-time at the end of the school year.

When asked about other commitments they had during the internship period, intern A (Anna) listed thesis research and student facilitator of a community organization group. Intern B (Beverley) listed being a parent and partner as the biggest commitments. Intern C (Candice) listed building a new home and being pregnant during the internship. Intern D (Douglas) stated that a personal partnership role was the biggest commitment.

Intern E (Eva) listed taking a graduate course, being on a Board of Directors for a committee and job search as commitments. These are fictitious names.

Inside Stressors

In order to cope with stressors they must first be identified. To that end, the participants were requested to list the causes of stress experienced during their internship. The interns listed a variety of stressors. The lists can be generally placed under stressors from outside the internship and stressors within the internship. Inside stressors are those that were caused directly from the internship placement.

Anna stated that inside stressors were the school-to-work transition; personal issues; coping skills for stress; the struggle with methodology/ theoretical underpinnings of the internship; relationships with other staff members; pressure to meet internship expectations; "fear of abilities as a counselor when the internship first started; and ethical issues/ fear of malpractice."

Beverley listed adjusting to the role of "intern" as opposed to the role of "co-worker" as a stressor. She had been a teacher prior to beginning her Counselling internship. Time management was a big stressor. "Finding time to prepare/research topics so that I would be better equipped to help students" was a stressor. Feeling unprepared professionally to complete the internship was a stressor for Beverley.

Candice listed "trying to get the internship done before the baby came" as the number one stressor inside the internship. The second was an initial inability to adapt her own expectations to the reality of her clients even in issues such as appointment times. "Their reality is that basic needs such as food and shelter are often challenging to get.

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Meeting for Counselling is not the first priority." Her third issue was not feeling comfortable with ethical issues such as lack of parental consent. As most minors she counseled were not living at home, there often was no one to whom she could approach for consent. There was a very real concern of malpractice allegations. Her fourth stressor was that she had entered the program as a part-time student but had to complete the internship fulltime over the summer.

Douglas listed the strained relationship with the on-site supervisor as the biggest inside stressor. The intern felt "not invited to participate in the internship." When the internship time was half completed, the intern was required by that supervisor to create a program to be utilized in the unit. As the program was to be completed in addition to the scheduled hours, researching and completing that program was a cause of much stress the intern reported. Inside stress for Douglas could be extremely high at times.

Stressors inside the internship for Eva included her personal mental health issues of high anxiety and depression; "the requirement to adapt quickly to the fast pace and high demands of a high school setting"; Counselling a wide range of student/ client issues, adjusting to the school system, including conceptual language, as the intern did not have a teaching back ground; being without a on-site supervisor for two weeks; and transportation to the internship setting.

Inside stressors for the interns ranged from an expected adaptation period to new roles and environments to struggling to maintain a professional relationship with an on-site supervisor. Adjusting to new and challenging situations can put stress on anyone. The stress can be intensified if the person is not quite sure of the expectations of the internship and the relationships that come from working with in that internship. Like many people in

various work places there are often professional concerns placed on interns. For example, there can be the enormous stress of feeling unprepared professionally. There was the expressed stress of meeting the expectations of clients, who often held and expressed a different worldview. There is often stress caused when professionals collide in terms of status, role, and responsibility. It is evident that interns are not only professionals, but they are people also. The connection between the personal and the professional can be sources of stress, anxiety and depression. It was obvious in this study that this internship in Counselling psychology was indeed a stress inducer.

Outside Stressors

The survey question that asked interns to list their stresses generated a category that were not caused directly by the internship placement. Those were termed outside stressors. For Anna, a big outside stressor was "the lack of social support." The intern's partner was working in another part of Canada. Another stressor for Anna was that she was planning her wedding during her internship.

Beverley listed that fact that starting the internship meant leaving her infant child for the first time. The time spent with him significantly decreased at that time. There were other stressors related to child care as both the infant's grandmothers shared babysitting duties. Beverley wrote that "trusting them; their respecting our guidelines re: nap time, routine, food, etc; and having grandparents living with us during the week" were all major outside stressors.

Candice and her husband were overseeing the building of a new home. This in itself was stressful. However, that stress was secondary to the fact that she was pregnant

during her internship. In fact, the internship was interrupted as the baby was born prematurely.

Douglas's major outside stressor was the lack of personal support from a significant other. In fact, the partner felt neglected and much energy had to be expanded "to negotiate the maintenance of a relationship" which was listed as very stressful.

Eva listed significant financial problems as a major outside stressor. Family member illnesses were other stressors. Also, ongoing personal mental health issues such as anxiety and depression were named as stressors for Eva.

Outside stressors ranged from financial concerns for one intern to giving birth during the internship period. Issues with significant others and family members were listed as stressors for interns. As indicated above taking on a professional internship in Counselling Psychology is a source of stress in itself. This stress is compounded when there is a real or perceived lack of personal or social supports from significant others. Separation from significant others only adds to such stress. As with many ventures in life, completing an internship does not mean that other duties and responsibilities vanish: being pregnant and building a house or financial pressures and family illness would surely fit that claim.

Manifestation of Stress

How we experience stress is individual for all of us. The counselor survey asked the interns to describe how their stress manifested. Anna sub-listed manifestations of stress into physical, emotional and sexual categories. Physical manifestations included outbreak of pimples, weight gain, fatigue, stomach pain, and asthma attacks. Emotional

manifestations of stress included "feeling down." This intern also recalled, "becoming emotionally numb." Anna became withdrawn in social settings and felt compromises were made more readily. Anna stated that the sexual manifestation of stress resulted in "not a gig". Anna refers to her lack of sexual desire as well as the fact that no partner was present either.

Beverley stated as well that fatigue was a manifestation of stress. Also listed were headaches, and "feeling angry/impatient/general bad mood at home." The impatience was directed at her son, husband, mother and mother-in-law.

Candice stated that she too took it home and "snapped at those around me." The manifestation also showed in feelings of being overwhelmed and simple tasks were difficult to perform. Her mind would "race with thoughts of what if: what if the baby comes early: what if I don't finish: what if I get sued." It was physically exhausting.

Douglas also was irritated and irritable when stress manifested. Headaches and a 'spaced out' feeling would result in a need to physically leave the immediate work setting to regroup in the office. Douglas stated he "felt tired, worn out, and exhausted" as stress manifested itself.

Eva felt anxious and driven as stress manifested itself. There was a withdrawal from friends and social activities. Eva took up smoking after a long abstinence; felt fatigued, and ate more. Concentration and memory were adversely affected as stress manifested itself in this intern.

Manifestations of stress for the interns could be placed in physical, emotional and sexual categories. Fatigue was a physical symptom felt by all interns. Irritability was a common emotional symptom. Other interns commented on a lack of sexual desire, mood

swings, and even anger. Such expressions of stress would lead to additional stresses. Such stress often brings with it a need to withdraw from family, friends, and normal activities. Stress also puts significant strain on cognitive activities needed to function as a professional counselor.

Coping with Stress

Finally the survey asked interns what they did to cope with their stress. Anna stated that her coping skills involved communicating. She wrote in her journal, talked with another intern who was at the same site, and spoke with the internship faculty supervisor to help cope. There was also "a decision to burn the candle from both ends as there was an end date and I knew I could engage in self-care then."

For Beverley in-depth discussion of issues with her partner was her first coping skill. Sleeping was the second coping tool she employed. The connection with fellow interns who had the same faculty supervisor was listed as a coping skill. Good communications with her on-site supervisor was also helpful. "Journal writing helped me process, reflect and progress" through the stress. Prioritizing a to-do list was a coping skill. Asking for and receiving help from her partner so there was time to study and focus was most helpful when dealing with stress for Beverley.

Candice coped with stress by communicating issues with her partner whose role served as a sounding board. When stress was overwhelming Candice would "take a day off and do nothing... recharge by reading and sleeping. I would stay in bed all day... literally." Another coping skill was to go out with friends and not focus on the internship.

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Douglas practiced long entrenched coping skills of meditation. The intern "could then enjoy a deep rest as if in a cocoon of peace." Taking more rest as in longer time allotted for night-time sleep, reading and avoiding caffeine were the other coping skills implemented as a regime to combat the manifested stress for Douglas.

Eva relied on communications with friends and her significant other as well as supervisors. Other coping skills included smoking, watching T.V., and reading educational material to strengthen knowledge about the work setting. Keeping meetings with the psychologist, practicing self-hypnosis and sleeping as much as possible on the weekends were part of the routine to cope with stress for Eva.

Reactions to stress are dependent on the individual's personal factors, the demands of the situation and the resources available to the individual. For example, the interns in this study who had social and personal supports in place utilized those relationships to help cope with stress. The ability to communicate with colleagues, supervisors, and partners was an important aspect of coping with stress for the interns who participated in this study. Personal habits developed and practiced by interns such as journal writing, meditation, reading and watching television proved most helpful for certain interns. Other interns were willing to take time to refocus and regenerate before going back to the daily grind. As Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted reactions to stressors are individual in nature. This certainly was true for these interns.

One-On-One Interviews

Stressors

The one-on-one interviews provided the opportunity to delve deeper into the manifestations, causes and coping mechanisms of stress with the five interns of this study thus creating fuller meaning. I had time to come to know the interns somewhat from their survey responses. As a result, I entered the one-on-one interviews seeking to know more about several broad themes that had emerged from the surveys. Fontana & Frey (2000) noted that structured interview questions are a way to lead to negotiated text. The interviews began by acquiring more information about the interns' survey responses.

Anna confirmed that the biggest stressor for her during the internship was the outside stressor of not having a personal support network. Fiancé, family and closest friends were not living in Newfoundland at the time. Anna's roommate was dependant. There was no counter balance when the work day was done, as Anna still played a counselor's role at home. "Counselling stopped when I went to sleep" was the response when asked when she stopped. Anna stated that if she was doing her internship now her experience would be different. Personal support would be in place as her spouse is at home and family and friends are closely networked.

Anna's second big stressor is the school to work transition. She stated that having little work experience proved to be a big cause of stress. Questions such as "will I find out I can't do this?" caused her to be nauseous in the mornings during the initial internship period. Having no work experience to act as a base the intern "went in with an empty bag and picked things as I went."

Beverley's biggest outside stressor was that she had to leave her fifteen month old infant for the first time. It is difficult to obtain a space in a daycare facility for a baby less than two years old. As a result, Beverley's living arrangements changed as the baby's

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grandmothers babysat. One set of grandparents lived in the Intern's home during the week. Beverley confirmed that, as stated on the survey, the biggest outside stressor was trusting that the grandmothers would adhere to prescribed wishes for the baby's routine for feeding and naps. "Guilt and anger about having to leave the baby were the big feelings." Beverley's biggest inside stressor was transitioning from co-worker to intern in a school administration system. There was a feeling of being left outside the school faculty community.

Candice's biggest outside stress was also due to a transition. Seven months after being married, the internship began. The couple became pregnant one month after the marriage. They also were having a house built during this period. Candice was a full-time teacher for May and June and began the Internship in May part-time. When the school year was completed, the internship became full-time over the summer. The baby was due in September which was stressful in terms of getting the internship completed before due date. When the baby was born one month prematurely, the internship was interrupted. Some hours and the internship report had to be completed at a later date.

One of the biggest inside stressors for Candice were adapting to the reality of the clients being served. The intern felt a big learning curve in coming to understand that concepts of time (meeting time) was not important to someone who was struggling to find food and shelter. "The huge ethical questions arising from assessing and Counselling minors without parental consent took a toll" on Candice. As many of that agency's clients lived on the street, parental consent was not a probable reality. Still, the fear of being sued for Counselling clients was real for this intern. When she felt extremely high stress

levels she stayed at home and slept. Gellis' (2004) study showed that avoidance of stressful situations served only to increase job dissatisfaction.

Douglas's biggest outside pressure were problems in the relationship with his significant other. His partner felt ignored or "placed on a shelf" as Douglas attended to the internship requirements and to his stress coping regime. Not having the needed personal and social support created more stress for Douglas.

Douglas's biggest inside stressor was the very strained relationship with the on-site supervisor. The situation was such that the intern "would not recommend it to anyone" to complete their internship at that facility. Besides the feeling of stress all interns of the study went though, Douglas had "the added extreme stress of feeling the on-site supervisor did not value my presence to the point of being hostile towards me." Douglas stated that this resulted in feelings of being handicapped in terms of Counselling opportunities as his supervisor vetoed many suggestions he made. Gellis (2004) identified autonomy and control as factors in job satisfaction. Lack of autonomy and control are factors in job stress. Eva's biggest outside pressures included significant financial problems, family member illnesses, as well as ongoing personal mental health issues. A history of anxiety and depression has been an ongoing and long term battle for Eva. In view of that, the internship was not different in terms of outside stressors. As the intern was beginning to manage the anxiety better at the time that the internship began, that internship semester would be an artificial period in terms of viewing life stress for Eva. That is, anxiety and depression would be present even if an internship had not been completed.

Eva's biggest inside stressor also included those issues of anxiety and depression as they impacted performance and coping skills. Not having a background in teaching, "the requirement to adapt quickly to the fast pace and high demands of a high school setting" proved to be a big inside stress. Learning the school system was a "big learning curve" for Eva.

Manifestation of Stress

The counselor survey had asked the interns to describe how their stress was manifested. During the one-on-one interview, Anna elaborated on those manifestations of stress. Feeling exhausted and "burned out" at the end of the internship resulted in Anna taking the whole summer to re-group and feel centered again. Feeling really tired and fatigued, Anna slept each day of the first week post-internship from ten in the evening until very late the next afternoon. She took one course during that summer and compared to the previous semester "took the whole summer off."

Beverley stated in the survey that fatigue was a manifestation of stress. Also listed were headaches, and a generally angry and impatient mood. After the internship, the impatience that had been directed at her son, husband, mother and mother-in-law dissipated. As she is now working full-time and is spending the same amount of hours away from her son, I asked what changed to allow the guilt and anger to be resolved. The response was that the internship was over, and time has passed. As the extended family 'survived' the internship, that transition is completed and Beverley is more comfortable with everyone's role.

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Candice stated in the survey that she too took the stress home and "snapped at those around me." The manifestation also showed in feelings of being overwhelmed and simple tasks were difficult to perform. In the interview, Candice also stated that as the internship is over, those stresses are also over. There is no 'what if' stress as in the past. At the time the internship was completed, she too was physically exhausted.

Douglas also reported in the survey that irritation and irritability were experienced as manifestations of stress. There were headaches and a 'spaced out' feeling that accompanied those manifestations that resulted in a need to leave the hospital ward that was his internship placement to re-group in the office. Douglas "felt tired, worn out, and exhausted" as stress manifested itself. Douglas reflected in the one-on-one interview that experiencing prolonged stress levels "became a true lesson" in terms of realizing personal limitations and truly knowing that going past those limits can take a huge personal toll.

Eva felt anxious and driven as stress manifested. There was a withdrawal from friends and social activities. Eva confirmed in the one-on-one interview that she had started smoking after a long abstinence, felt fatigued and ate more. Concentration and memory were adversely affected as stress manifested in this intern. Eva added that as the stress level was high during the internship and that the pace had been so rapid, relaxing and slowing down only began to happen several months after the internship ended.

Manifestation of stress is reflected in physical and emotional symptoms. The interns of this study experienced physical symptoms including headaches, fatigue, and a 'worn out' feeling of exhaustion. Coping and surviving included self-care techniques such as taking a day off during the internship period when the stress level reached extremely high levels. It also included taking the whole summer off to recoup from the

exhaustion after the internship was completed. This is a reflection of the cost of stress for individuals and society in lost time, money and productivity.

Focus Group

The five interns met with me at the home of one of the interns. This focus group was conducted after the surveys and one-on-one interviews had been completed. Therefore, themes, as indicated above, had been defined when we met for the focus group. These themes were shared with the interns. While the survey and the one-on-one interviews asked interns how they experienced and coped with stress, the focus group concentrated on the coping skills they used.

The first thing the focus group agreed on was a definition of coping with stress. The word coping may mean different things to different people. Beverley suggested "coping means not letting stress take over my whole life; not to let it get bigger than the rest of my life." The others agreed and Beverley's became the working definition from which we conducted the focus group. Coping with stress were those things interns initiate to lessen the stress so that it was not bigger than the rest of their lives. Being 'burnt out' referred then to the fact that the stress had become bigger than the rest of their lives and that coping skills did not succeed in making stress more manageable.

Eva stated that stress has a physical manifestation also. Coping with stress is changing the perception we have about the stressor. Candice stated that her significant other was used as a "sounding board and reality check." Feelings were acknowledged and verified. Open communications helped place issues in perspective or change perspective

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entirely. For Candice it meant that the stress became manageable again. "The stress didn't change. How you responded to it did!"

Douglas stated that a "conscious effort was made to take care of myself." Extra sleep, watching dietary requirements, reading and mediation were regimented and the routine was closely followed. Others spoke of feelings of guilt if they expended such time and energy on themselves during that time. However, all five interns spoke of getting extra sleep as a coping skill. Either it was used as way to rest for the days and weeks ahead or, in the case of Candice; it was used as a "rejuvenation mega dose." On a few occasions when the stress became overwhelming, she would take a day off and stay in bed, sleep and rest. It would be precipitated by two hours of crying the night before, and then a realization that "I have to take tomorrow off." Candice admitted it would have been a better coping style if she had been proactive in self-care all the way through and not waiting until stress management was in crisis mode. Anna told the group that a time out coping skill turned into a whole summer of "off time" after the internship. Eva stated that the block of time after the workday was devoted to telephone conversations with friends where the day's events were debriefed.

Each of the interns was asked to list their most important or helpful coping skills. Beverley stated that communication with significant others was the prime coping skill implemented. Candice and Eva agreed that communication and a healthy relationship with their significant other was the biggest and most effective coping skill. Anna could not avail of that communication with the significant other. Douglas's relationship proved to be the biggest outside stressor and no assistance in his ability to cope with stress.

Candice stated that taking the whole day off only occurred when stress levels were ten out of ten – a total saturation point. It happened when the intern was "being consumed by stress." Douglas stated that reading and meditating on such books, as Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul* was the first of many coping skills implemented. This was done on a daily basis. Candice stated that she used a book called The Power of Now in the same way.

Some interns used journaling as a coping skill. Both the journal submitted to the faculty supervisor and personal journals were ways for interns to debrief and place stress in perspective. It was a time where the intern had to stop and reflect on their day and communicate to the supervisor and/or themselves how the day had evolved.

Talking with their faculty supervisor was a source of debriefing. Anna "always felt better after talking with him. He reminded me I am a professional and I should learn to trust myself." The relationship with the faculty supervisor proved to be important for all interns. It was a support as well as a confirmation of and for the interns.

In addition to the open-ended questions on experiencing and coping with stress, I asked the interns what they learned about themselves during their internship experiences. This question was intended as a focus group closure and a summary. Anna stated that there was a realization of just how important relationship is: "I have to be surrounded by the people I love." She also learned assertiveness and confidence and that survival was possible. Client Counselling issues also opened up old wounds for her. "It became a time to heal. I am on more solid ground now." Beverley simply stated, "I am grateful. I have a sheltered life... a home... I have a bed to sleep on. Many do not." Candice agreed by saying "there for the grace of God go I." Douglas disclosed that the relationship with self

became very deep. There was a realization that "I could be on shaky ground at any time. I now know how a person can become... all splintered off inside." This is consistent with the claim made in the literature that stress can be a "discouragement, destructive personally and professionally, as well as physically and emotionally" (Klas, Kennedy, & Kendell- Woodward, 1985, p. 33).

Eva agreed that self-knowledge was a result of the internship experience. She agreed with the other interns that the big learning curve that was their internships provided all of them with insights into other people. "It helped me look outside myself." All concurred that Counselling is the profession in which they wish to continue working and growing in.

Summary

The information described in this chapter provided insight into how five Masters of Education Counselling Psychology, Memorial University interns coped with stress. The chapter reviewed the findings from the data collected through the survey, one-on-one interviews, and the focus group of the intern participants of this study. Themes emerged from the analysis of the survey, one-on-one interviews and the focus group. These broad themes included the naming of inside stressors and outside stressors, the diverse manifestations of stress, various coping skills, and self-learning that were identified as the data was analyzed. The following chapter will analyze these findings, provide conclusions, and offer suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis and Conclusions

This study examined how Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology, Memorial University interns experienced and coped with stress. A total of five interns participated in this study. The data summary from the qualitative study was presented in Chapter 4. Analysis and conclusions are presented in this chapter as well as suggestions offered for future studies in the area of coping with stress during the Counselling Psychology internship.

Analysis of Findings

Stressors

An analysis of the data collected showed a clear delineation of stress into inside stressors and outside stressors for the interns of this study. One of the central inside stressors included those that were related to transitions. The transition from work to school was an example of such stress. Such a transition was made more difficult and stressful when the person had little or no professional experience. Part of such a transition is in not being totally familiar with the discourse being used in the new professional environment. The switch in status from being a professional teacher to being an intern can also be stressful. We fully realize that we are often viewed and judged by our roles in society. Such changes bring with it the demands of increased work pace. Such a transition can be further complicated when a positive relationship is not established between intern and supervisor. This reality can set up unease and power struggles in terms of

expectations and responsibilities. Such tensions can lead to hostile relationships. Such a professional situation clearly can lead to stress.

In any professional circumstance there can be ethical issues that arise. This was evident where it was difficult to obtain parental consent. As stated above adjusting to the new and challenging realities of the internship were stressful. This stress can be intensified when the individual is not sure of the expectations of the internship. This can lead to personal ethical questions: am I doing the job, am I able to do the job? It is clear that the professional relationships brought on by internship can be both troubling and rewarding. It was also obvious that meeting the expectations of clients was not always possible or prudent: clearly there were different expectations held by client and counselor. An added burden was the fact that the professionals, involved in the internship, collided in terms of status, role, and responsibility. Sometimes, as in other professional relationships, issues of power came to the front. Interns, by the very nature of the professional triad, are sometimes in a powerless situation. There is seldom a clear separation between the professional and personal lives of interns. These findings support the work done by Cartwright et al (1997). It is evident, in this study, interns are not only professionals, but they are people also. The connection between the personal and the professional can be sources of stress, anxiety and depression. This study clearly indicates that this internship in Counselling psychology, for the people involved, was indeed a stress inducer.

An analysis of outside stressors, as noted in the previous chapter, indicated the lack of social and personal support for some of the interns involved in this study. For example, a partner feeling neglected meant much energy had to be expanded maintain a

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relationship and away from the demands of the internship. On a similar personal front, being separated from an infant was a significant outside stress. Like many people in professional situations, being caught between the demands of the internship and domestic life is most stressful. For example, building a home and having a baby means that the stress from completing an internship is not the only one. As was noted by Thoits (1995), we are social beings. It therefore should be of no great surprise that the quality of the relationship with a significant other comes into play when determining issues of stress and coping with stress. The findings of this present study support the research done by Duxbury and Higging (2003). It can indeed be a cause of the biggest outside stress if the relationship is not functional or is non-existent. Conversely, it can be the prime means of managing stress levels if it is functioning on a healthy, supportive level.

In addition to these outside stressors can be added financial problems, family illnesses, as well as ongoing personal mental health issues. These stressors can be present in any profession, and were quite evident in the lives of these interns. When professional and personal lives are in competition for time and attention stress does occur.

Manifestation of Stress

High on the list of interns' physical manifestations of stress were fatigue, nausea and headaches. One intern, in particular, related to being "tired, worn out, and exhausted" as stress manifested. Concentration and memory loss also affected interns who were highly stressed. An analysis of the data reveals that these or similar physical manifestations were felt by all interns involved in this case study at various times during their internship.

Interns also experienced similarities in emotional manifestations of stress. Most interns felt impatient, angry and irritable, with an underlying general "bad mood" at home. All interns felt that their overwhelming fatigue, which resulted from their experienced stress, also resulted in emotional manifestations of stress. These triggered cycles of stress can be intense and defeating. The interns cited change in behavior as emotional stress manifested. Becoming withdrawn at social events, "spacey" or snapping at those around them were behaviours exhibited by interns when they were experiencing high stress levels. Interns felt irritated by situations that were not irritants prior to experiencing prolonged high stress levels. Being irritated caused them to be impatient and irritable in their behaviour with significant others. Interns reflected that when they were fatigued from high stress levels, an event could cause them to feel irritated, which is an emotional response. They would then act out in an irritable manner. Being irritable is a behaviour; a result of feeling irritated by a stressor. It is evident from an analysis of the data that the interns experienced physical, emotional and behavioural manifestations of stress. These findings are borne out by the literature (Lazarus and Folkman (1984); Gabriel, 2006).

Manifestations of stress, as an analysis of interviews and focus group showed, remained consistently high for all interns throughout the internship period. It follows that interns experienced a long period of sustained high stress levels. As an analysis of the data from this case study demonstrates, this particular sample group of interns experienced and coped with stress in specific ways. It is crucial to ask if this phenomenon applies to the general body of Masters of Education Counselling psychology.

Coping with Stress

In analyzing the data presented in chapter four, it was evident how important significant other relationships were in the coping skills of all the interns. These findings reflect the literature on the individuals' personal life situation in relation to dealing with stress (Duxbury and Higgins, 2003). The presence of a healthy supportive relationship with a significant other helped two of the interns cope with their stress by communicating and finding coping strategies with their partners. This was particularly true when interns were in a position to discuss internship issues with a significant other. Often a partner was able to be supportive by acting as a sounding board. In this way perspective could better be gained on issues and experiences could be normalized. On the opposite side of that equation, one intern's biggest outside stressor was that his relationship with his significant other was not supportive. The relationship itself is not necessarily the deciding factor, but how that relationship functions. If a partner feels neglected, additional energy might need to be expended to maintain the relationship. This certainly can be an added source of stress, and calls for other means to help cope with stress.

In analyzing the data it became evident that coping skills often centered on communication. For this group of interns it involved talking with another intern at the same site or speaking with the internship faculty supervisor. These forged connections were significant in dealing with the stress associated with the internship. This supportive group allowed interns to benefit from each other's understanding and experiences. Issues and coping strategies were discussed in a positive fashion.

Another means of coping with stress involved journal writing. This represents a type of self-communication and reflection. Sharing an internship journal was a solid and

fruitful communication tool with her faculty supervisor. The journal also allowed interns to process, reflect and progress through the stress. It was further noted that that the journal was a means towards self-growth. Very often interns returned to true and tested coping mechanisms. Such entrenched coping skills included meditation, yoga, spiritual and inspirational reading. Such practices traditionally help with life balance and stress reduction (http://www.mindtools.com/stress/RelaxationTechniques/Meditation.htm).

It is also evident from the data that the individual discipline to complete required tasks of both internship and other commitments served as a coping mechanism. This strategy might well mean that personal needs are put on hold until the internship was completed. The notion of "burning the candle from both ends" surfaced in a number of interviews as well as in the focus group. In other words, a personal price is paid for the professional commitment.

Escape also served as a means to manage stress. Sleep was one such escape mechanism. Another form of escapism was to take time, usually a day, away from the demands of the internship. Such days, spent resting and reading, served as a means of rejuvenation. Yet another form of escapism, used as a coping skill, was to go out with friends and not focus on the internship. Not focusing on internship issues would help bring the stress level down to a more manageable level. It was also evidenced from the data that people under professional stress sometimes reverted to old habits: for example, smoking and watching television. In that way high stress could be reduced to a more manageable level. While such remedies for stress were short-lived they did help to a limited degree.

As indicated above, the disciple needed for professional work, for example, prioritizing a to-do list, was used as a coping skill. Such lists serve as a visual aid to tasks that have to be done both in the professional and personal spheres. It is believed that priorizing tasks lowered stress levels, in that there was a greater sense of control. Such priorizing represents only one of the many ways these graduate students used to cope with the real and sustained stress that they experienced while completing their Counselling Psychology Internship at Memorial University.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Study

Denzin (1998, p. 8) states, "Qualitative researchers ... seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning." Participants in this study were asked to describe how they experienced and coped with stress during their internship. A more holistic picture of their experience and coping with stress was constructed by analyzing the collected data.

This study collected raw data from interviews, a focus group, and a survey. The data was analyzed for themes and conclusions constructed from the themes. The significance of the study is that the results may be used by future interns, and may be incorporated in student courses in the Counselling Psychology program at Memorial University.

From my first reading of the surveys completed by the interns participating in this study I was struck by the type of inside stressors. It appears that the background work and life experience an intern brings with them makes a difference in what becomes a big stressor for that intern. School-to-work transition or teacher-to-intern transition could be

studied with a view to assisting a better understanding of how stress is related to what the intern brings to the internship.

The outside stressor of not having a functioning personal and social support, especially of a significant other, appears to greatly impact interns' ability to cope with stress. In fact, for some interns not having a supportive significant other was deemed the biggest stressor. Conversely, having a supportive social system especially of a significant other was deemed the most important tool when coping with stress. Future studies could examine how and why the relationship of a significant other has such an impact on interns experience and coping with stress.

Individual interns developed, or utilized previously tried methods, coping systems. These ranged from a regime of self-care, more sleep, journaling, meditation, dietary monitoring, inspirational reading, rest days, over eating, did not exercise, and began to smoke cigarettes and marijuana when stress became overwhelming. All experienced extremely high levels of stress. Future studies could examine the effectiveness of coping techniques and how they impact the levels of stress experienced by interns.

Stress, as indicated by the literature and this study, is a natural part of life. Some stress is required in order to give impetus to performance. The literature shows that working in a helping profession can bring its own stresses. The internship completed by a Master of Education, Counselling Psychology student can be a period of high stress. All of the interns who participated in this qualitative case study described high levels of extended stressful periods. All interns reported being physically and emotionally exhausted both during and after the internship period. All interns required much self-care

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and attending after the internship to regain a higher level of functioning on more manageable stress levels.

All interns who participated in this study referred to the importance of a personal and social support system to help reduce stressors and to enable them to employ coping techniques. Communication with others was a base for which all interns began to cope with stress. A support system could be set in place for interns to avail of that basic need to communicate, vent and change perspective on stressors so that they can cope more readily. An intern group could meet at a specific time as required, perhaps weekly. It could be run as a self-help group whose goal is to help interns identify and cope with stress. Faculty or interns themselves could initiate such a group. As workers in the helping field, the professional ability will be present to organize a successful support group for interns.

Information on and practice of constructive coping skills like good sleeping and dietary habits, exercise, mediation, reading and breathing exercises for relaxation could be made available through short-term programs by the faculty, inclusion in other courses, or through the self-help group. Even themselves would not deem some practices employed by the interns who participated in this study as good coping skills.

As stated above, much data was gathered from the surveys, on-on-one interviews and the focus group of this study. Some of the outstanding information surrounding counsellor stress related to the relationship to the significant other. The interns fell into two groups in terms of personal relationship. Three interns were engaged in a functional and therefore stress reducing supportive relationship. Two interns were in a situation where there was an absence of that significant other relationship. That led to not having

the ability to communicate and relieve stressors with another. It also led to adding 'big' stressors to those interns.

It appears that the relationship with a significant other can be that primary support system where people go to avail of the basic need to communicate, vent and change perspective on stressors. A highly functioning relationship with a significant other enables people to cope with stress more readily. The presence of such a relationship implies that people more quickly and productively manage stressors. As social beings it may be the best tool to combat stress in our lives.

As stated in the Methodological Approach and Scholarly Significance sub-section of Chapter 1, the scholarly significance is that this study will add to the literature on stress. Specifically, it adds to the literature on counsellor stress.

Identification of the types of stressors, level of stress, manifestation of stress and coping techniques may serve future interns of the Masters of Education Counselling Psychology Memorial University program to better understand their stress and to implement effective coping skills.

Understanding the importance of good communication and supportive relationships with significant others may enhance the ability of future interns to employ effective stress coping skills and to limit physical and emotional exhaustion that may develop as a result of prolonged high stress levels.

Summary

As stated in the introduction of this thesis my personal experience was at the core of my interest to study this subject. My observations of students in the Masters of

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Education Counselling Psychology program at Memorial University of Newfoundland prompted me to further investigate how they cope with stress. In the statement of the problem, it was stated that "internship settings, supervisor relationships, family relationships, and other support systems may be studied in terms of what enhances or hinders the individual's ability to cope." At the time of writing that statement I had no idea just how much an impact those factors did have on the interns in this study. The findings in chapter four and the analysis of those findings in chapter five show the high degree of impact those factors have on experiencing and coping with stress.

The importance of a healthy significant other relationship when considering causes of, manifestations of, and coping with stress can not be overstated in the experiences of the interns of this study. It has ignited a desire to further investigate the significance of this impact on stress. I hope in the future to conduct such a study with the information found in this study as the basis to begin the research. In that way, I may come to a closer understanding of the importance of communication in relationship as it pertains to skills implemented to cope with stress.

This study has given me a glimpse into the causes, manifestation and coping of stress for five interns. The scope and implications of the findings have served to make me even more curious in this area of investigation. I was surprised to discover that experienced stress was so prolonged and at such high levels for all interns throughout their internship period. It is hoped that pro-active self help in individual and group settings may be employed to lessen that negative experience for future interns.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A:

Counsellor Letter of Invitation

Mary Ellen Doyle
M.Ed. Candidate
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
P.O. Box 69
Avondale, NL.
A0A 1B0

Dear Counsellor:

I am a Masters student in the Counselling Psychology program of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am presently conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. William Kennedy as part of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education. I am writing to provide information regarding my research project Counselling Psychology Interns: Coping with Stress. The information is to enable you to make an informed decision when deciding whether you wish to participate.

This study explores how Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Interns cope with their stress during their Internship placement. It is a time of transition from a school to work environment. The stresses that may be experienced are in addition to the stresses of modern living with both personal and family/ partnership pressures. The goal of this study is to explore the ways Interns cope with stress. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of how Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Interns cope with stresses during their internship placement.

This qualitative study has a triangulated data collection. I will be asking participants to complete a survey. I will be conducting one-on-one interviews with participants. I will also conduct a focus group with participants. The focus group will meet once.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire focusing on your academic and personal background information. The responses to these questions will enable me to categorize stressors labeled by participants; for example, Interns who have dependents may experience different stressors than Interns who do not have dependents. Secondly, you will be requested to meet with me to participate in a one-on-one interview. The questions will be semi-structured, and are posed to gain an understanding of stressors. The third request will be to ask your participation in a focus group. The group will consist of the five individuals in

the study that will further label and articulate stressors experienced during the internship placement.

All correspondence will remain confidential, the identity of all participants will remain anonymous, and any identifying data will be removed. All data collected will be secured in a locked cabinet. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data at any time. You may opt out of the research participation at any time and all collected data from your participation would be discarded. There will be no compensation for your participation in this study but you will be contributing to our understanding of how Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Interns deal with stress. Data will be destroyed two years after the thesis is submitted.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me at
(709) 229- 4431
medoyle@superweb.ca.

My thesis supervisor:
Dr. William Kennedy
(709) 737- 7617
wkennedy@mun.ca

Two copies of the consent form are provided. If you wish to participate, please sign both, keep one for your records and return the other one.
Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Doyle
Masters of Education Candidate
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Appendix B:

Counsellor Consent Form

Project Title: Counselling Psychology Interns: Coping With Stress

Investigator: Mary Ellen Doyle

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This project is exploring the question "How do Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology Interns cope with their stress?" The goal is to come to an understanding of how five individuals in this qualitative case study, cope with their stress.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

Complete a brief questionnaire regarding your academic and personal background.

Meet with me to participate in a one-on-one interview. The questions will be semi-structured and designed to gain an in depth understanding of stressors.

Participate in a focus group. The group will consist of the participants of the five individual case studies who will meet once as a means to further label and articulate stressors experienced during the Internship placement.

All collected information will be considered confidential and will be kept in a locked cabinet. The identity of all participants will be protected, and any identifying data will be removed. With anonymity thus preserved, study results may be shared in publications and presentations. The data collected will be destroyed two years after the publication of the final report. The results of this study will be available, if you are interested.

Your signature on this form indicates that you understand the study and agree to participate. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw, all data collected will be discarded. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact: Mary Ellen Doyle (709) 229-4431, (medoyle@superweb.ca), or Dr. William Kennedy (709) 737-7617 wkennedy@mun.ca

If you have any questions or issues concerning this thesis that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may also contact the Chair of the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics at (709) 737-8368 or email icehr@mun.ca.

_____   _____
Intern's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Investigator's Signature   Date

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Appendix C:

Counsellor Survey

Please answer the following questions regarding your background and the setting of your Internship placement. Please feel free to write your responses on a separate piece of paper or use the additional page attached. Thank you.

Name: _____   Date: _____

ACADEMIC INFORMATION:

1.   Academic background (e.g., B. A.; B. ED.; B. S.; etc.):

_____

2.   Graduation Date or Expected Date of Graduation with Masters of Education; Counselling Psychology:

_____

3.   Briefly describe your Internship placement setting (e.g., Senior High School, Community Organization; Hospital, Counselling Centre):

_____

4.   Briefly describe the community in which your Internship was conducted (e.g., rural setting with population of under 500):

_____

5.   Briefly describe the primary theoretical orientation of your Counselling (e.g., solution focused; cognitive behavioural; etc.):

_____

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

6.   Gender:

_____

7.   Marital Status:

_____

8.   Number, age and type of dependents (e.g., 2 children age 7 and 3;
Or a parent with Alzheimer's, etc.):

_____

9.   Were you employed during the period of your Internship outside of the Internship
setting? If yes, then indicate how many hours per week you worked and briefly describe
the work setting. (e.g.; self employed tutor at 15 hours per week; or T. A. at flexible 50
hours over 14 week semester, etc.):

_____

10.   List other commitments you had during the Internship period (e.g.; thesis
research, academic courses, parenting roles, partnership roles, community
responsibilities, etc.):

_____

11.   List the causes of the stress you experienced during your Internship period:

_____

12.   How did your stress manifest?

_____

13.   What did you do to cope with your stress?

_____

Appendix D:

Interview Questions

1) Did you experience stress during your internship? Please elaborate,
Did the level of preparation acquired in the courses you have taken in the Program limit,
or enhance, the stress you experienced in your Internship? In what ways?
What was your biggest stressor during the Internship? How did it manifest?
Has the stress been resolved?

4) What responsibilities or issues were causes of Internship stressors? (e.g.: time
constraints, completion of Internship requirements, Counselling clients with specific
disorders?)

5) How much of a stressor was questioning your own competency in a specific
professional area? Please elaborate.

6) Reflect on your own coping techniques, supports and self- discovery.

Appendix E:

Focus Group Questions:

Recall the biggest stressor(s) you experienced during the Internship, and how it (they) manifested.

Has the stress been resolved? Why or why not?

Reflect on your own coping techniques: What techniques did you employ to cope with your highest stress levels? Which techniques were most effective for you? Would all employed techniques be deemed as 'healthy' coping skills?

Reflect on your personal support network: How important were significant other relationships to your coping strategies? If significant other relationships were not seen as a support was that a significant added stressor?

Reflect on your self- discovery during the internship period. What have you learned about yourself?