A Teacher at Risk: Giving Voice to Teacher Secondary Traumatic Stress

Ofelia Schepers

University of Colorado at Boulder, ofelia.schepers@gmail.com
A TEACHER AT RISK: GIVING VOICE TO TEACHER SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

by

OFELIA SCHEPERS

B.S.E, University of Kansas, 2008

M.S., University of Kansas, 2012

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the

University of Colorado at Boulder in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Education

2017
The thesis entitled:
A Teacher at Risk: Giving Voice to Secondary Traumatic Stress
written by Ofelia Schepers
has been approved for the Department of Education, University of Colorado at Boulder

________________________________________
Kathy Escamilla, Ph.D.

________________________________________
Elizabeth Dutro, Ph.D.

________________________________________
Lucinda Soltero-González, Ph.D.

________________________________________
Terrenda White, Ph.D.

________________________________________
Cindy White, Ph.D.

Date____________________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB Protocol # 16-0027
A Teacher at Risk: Giving Voice to Secondary Traumatic Stress
Thesis directed by Professor Kathy Escamilla

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, it was intended to capture how the phenomenon of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) affected a U.S. teaching population. Secondly, it sought to understand better how these teachers perceived and embodied their students’ traumas. Within the field of psychology, STS intends to capture the impact of witnessing clients’ traumas on the professionals who work with them closely. Recent work by Borntrager, Caringi, van den Pol, Crosby, O’Connell, Trautman, and McDonald (2012) has addressed the importance of considering the impact of STS on the teaching field. Though education differs significantly from other helping professions, they are similar in that schools provide an environment in which teachers are engaged on a daily basis with the lived experiences of many individuals.

This study employed a mixed methods design. In Phase I of the design, an attitudinal survey to measure levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress in Teachers was administered to one rural school district in the U.S. In Phase II, I conducted a qualitative, semi-structured interview to ten teachers who self-selected into the interview. The interview was used to explore what types of traumas teachers were witnessing and how they perceived to embody this kind of stress. A thematic analysis was conducted on the data.

Findings indicated that teachers all experienced varying levels of STS. Most teachers experienced moderate levels of the phenomenon, with smaller percentages being at either end of the spectrum. Further, White, working-class, elementary school teachers were more likely to experience higher levels of STS. Safety and Normal were two themes of the six themes that
arose as teachers navigated their concerns for students. All teachers responded that they were stressed about the job and their competency. They used various types of emotions to discuss their perception both of student traumas and personal stressors. The findings support a need to continue research on how STS impacts the teaching profession. Further investigations would be beneficial in informing teacher preparation programs and teacher professional development.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In response to my inquiry on how to explain my work to my family (who have not experienced the world of higher education), I was told by a close friend that “though my chance and opportunity in higher education has been a personal endeavor, it will always be dedicated to those I love.” I sat with this response for a long time, and as I worked on my acknowledgments, I chose to reject this notion for many reasons. Though I agree that the work that I do in higher education will always be dedicated to those I love, I reject that it is a “personal endeavor.” And while all of the work that I have done getting to this point has physically been “personal” in that I have spent hours writing, reading, etc. alone; I could not have completed this journey alone.

To my advisor, chair, and mentor, Dr. Kathy Escamilla, I appreciate your guidance and support throughout this process. Your gentle feedback has not only encouraged me to grow academically and personally but has done so in a way that never broke my spirit and worth. Having been welcomed into the loving EECD and Literacy Squared community was a continued support that was not only necessary but also immeasurable. I will be forever grateful.

This dissertation is dedicated to the students and teachers with whom I was privileged to teach and work. Students: Your genuine love, compassion, and bright outlook on life have been a consistent reminder of how we should aim to treat people and look at the world. Moreover, the way you shared your lives with me and allowed me to share mine with you is the foundation of this research. Teachers: Your love and dedication to the students you teach may often go unseen, but students know and feel it. I hope that this work honors the work you do.

To my supportive husband Josh, your patience to learn and grow with me through this process has been foundational in my ability to continue. You have been my rock and I am sure that I would not have arrived here without your love and support. Your ability to maintain a positive home for us through our many transitions have not gone unnoticed. I am eternally grateful that you are on this journey with me.

To the strongest woman in my life, my mother, you are an inspiration, and your story continues to give me drive. To my step-father, though you are unaware of the cultural brokering that you provided, I am grateful that you stepped into our life story. I am thankful that as a team you both strove to give us opportunities you never had. Thank you. To my siblings, thanks for continuing to teach me things throughout this process and for your dedication to answering my phone calls any time of day and night. For my in-laws, I am forever grateful to you for walking with me through my college experience, though I would have made the journey without you, it would have been far more challenging. Your support of me throughout this process has been pivotal.

I am thankful for the members of my dissertation committee, as you all provided helpful guidance in my educational journey. I am also thankful for all of my dear colleagues at the University. There are so many wonderful people in my cohort that have provided such a loving and productive space. I especially want to thank Paty, Vanessa, Susan, Adriana, Cecilia, and Monica: Thank you for being an amazing support system.

I want to acknowledge the Kettmann Klinger family for generously providing the “Janette Kettmann Klinger Doctoral Fellowship” I am hopeful that my work continues to help culturally and linguistically diverse students in a way that honors Dr. Klinger’s work and legacy.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ..............................................1
  INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................1
  RESEARCH PROBLEM .........................................................................................................5
  RESEARCH QUESTIONS .......................................................................................................9
  CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .............................................................................................9
    A Critical Theory of Trauma ...............................................................................................13
    Embodiment ......................................................................................................................15
    Emotions: Affect approaches in schools .............................................................................16
    Public Private Binary .........................................................................................................17
  PSYCHOLOGICAL NOTION OF TRAUMA: A VIGNETTE OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS ........18
  INSIDIOUS TRAUMA: A VIGNETTE OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS .........................19
  CONCLUSION .....................................................................................................................20
  SIGNIFICANCE ...................................................................................................................21

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ......................................................................................22
  INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................22
  METHODS ...........................................................................................................................22
  GENERAL RESEARCH ON TEACHER TURNOVER ............................................................23
  THE DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT ON TURNOVER OF THE GENERAL RESEARCH .................32
  SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ON TEACHER TURNOVER ...................................................35
  SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS ...............................35
  SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS IN TEACHERS ............................................................38
  CONCLUSION .....................................................................................................................40

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................42
  STRATEGY OF INQUIRY ......................................................................................................42
  RESEARCH SITE ................................................................................................................43
  ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER .............................................................................................44
  STUDY DESIGN ..................................................................................................................45
  RESEARCH QUESTIONS ......................................................................................................46
  QUANTITATIVE DATA SOURCES, INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT, AND COLLECTION METHODS ....46
    Data Sources ..................................................................................................................46
    Instrument Development ..................................................................................................47
  COLLECTION METHODS ...................................................................................................55
    Participant Selection ......................................................................................................55
    Variables .........................................................................................................................56
  QUANTITATIVE METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS ................................................................58
  QUALITATIVE INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT, DATA SOURCES, AND COLLECTION METHODS ....60
    Data Sources ..................................................................................................................60
    Interview Protocols .......................................................................................................60
    Collection Methods ......................................................................................................61
    Participant Selection .....................................................................................................62
    Technology ......................................................................................................................62
  QUALITATIVE METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS ................................................................62
    Interview Data Analysis .................................................................................................62
    Internal validity ..............................................................................................................63

CHAPTER 4: SURVEY FINDINGS .........................................................................................65
  INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................65
  DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ........................................................................................................65
  FINDINGS ...........................................................................................................................66
CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS.................................................................91
INTRODUCTION .........................................................................................91
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ..............................................................................91
FINDINGS .................................................................................................91
RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: WHAT TYPES OF STS DO TEACHERS REPORT EXPERIENCING? 92
TEACHER NARRATIVES.........................................................................93
Ben and Samantha ..............................................................................93
Rosario .................................................................................................96
Mayline .................................................................................................99
Esmeralda .............................................................................................104
Kiley ..................................................................................................107
Raegan .................................................................................................110
Margaret ..............................................................................................113
Sally ..................................................................................................115
Roger ..................................................................................................117

QUESTION THREE: HOW DO THEY EMBODY THIS TYPE OF STRESS? 121
Theme 1: Emotion ..................................................................................122
Theme 2: Stress .....................................................................................124
Theme 3: Safety .....................................................................................127
Theme 4: Normal ...................................................................................129
Theme 5: Competent ............................................................................131
Theme 6: Resilience ..............................................................................135
SUMMARY ............................................................................................138

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION .....................................................................141
RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: WHAT LEVEL OF STS DO TEACHERS REPORT EXPERIENCING? 141
Sub-Question 1.A Does STS vary by school demographics? .................143
Sub-Question 1.B Does STS vary by teacher demographics? ...............144

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: WHAT TYPES OF STS DO TEACHERS REPORT EXPERIENCING? 148
RESEARCH QUESTION THREE: HOW DO THEY EMBODY THIS TYPE OF STRESS? 149

IMPLIEDS ..............................................................................................154
Implication 1. Explore, expose, and address STS in schools. ...............154
Implication 2: Preparing pre-service teachers to cope with student trauma and embrace emotion. 156

Implication 3: Breaking the public private binary that is prominent in school institutions. 156
Implication 4: Social services in high needs schools. 157

LIMITATIONS .......................................................................................158
FUTURE RESEARCH .............................................................................159
CONCLUSION .........................................................................................160
APPENDIX A: PROJECT TIMELINE ........................................................................................................168
APPENDIX B: TEACHER SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS SURVEY ..................................................169
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM: TEACHER SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS SURVEY
..............................................................................................................................................................................177
APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM: SEMI-STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEWS ..................179
APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .................................................................180
TABLES

Table 1: Student Demographics of Franklin School District

Table 2: Certified Staff Demographics of Franklin School District

Table 3: Research Questions and Data Sources

Table 4: Symptoms and examples of symptoms of STS

Table 5: Variables and their name, type, explanation of the variable

Table 6: Demographics of teacher population, survey and interview samples in percentages

Table 7: Quantitative Research Questions and Data Sources

Table 8: Teacher Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale Item Difficulty

Table 9: Secondary Traumatic Stress of Teacher by School Demographics

Table 10: Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress in teachers by teacher demographic

Table 11: Responses to the items regarding arousal symptoms by percentage

Table 12: Responses to the items regarding negative changes symptoms by percentage

Table 13: Responses to the items regarding avoidance symptoms by percentage

Table 14: Responses to the items regarding intrusion symptoms by percentage

Table 15: Qualitative Research Questions and Data Sources

Table 16: Themes Related to Teacher Embodiment of STS
FIGURES

Figure 1: Comical representation of the need for a new conceptual framework. .................. 1

Figure 2: Theoretical Framework and focus of study: the teacher responding to student traumas .......................................................... 11

Figure 3: Construct Map Continuum of Secondary Traumatic Stress ................................ 51

Figure 4: Histogram of Teachers' Total STS Scores ................................................................. 70

Figure 5: Average Score per Item .......................................................................................... 71

Figure 6: P+ Values by Item ................................................................................................... 72

Figure 7: Item correlation without item included ................................................................. 73

Figure 8: Wright-Map ........................................................................................................... 80

Figure 9: Standard Error of Measurement ........................................................................... 81
A Teacher at Risk: Secondary Traumatic Stress in Teachers and Its Impact on Teacher Turnover

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

As I was scrolling through the many images and articles in the blogosphere, I stumbled upon a comic that had been posted proudly by a teacher. The comic by Bacall (n.d.), pictured in Figure 1 below, captures key elements that I want to explore in this study: teacher positionality and embodiment of emotion. That is, how does society position teachers and how is this occupation embodied by teachers?

![Figure 1: Comical representation of the need for a new conceptual framework.](image)

First, the comic highlights how society positions teachers. As a reader, I’m conflicted: on the one hand, I want to embrace the notion that as a former teacher I have a big heart. Indeed, I’m flattered by the comic’s implicit positioning of teachers as more caring, loving, and kinder than an average person outside of the field of education. I can’t but appreciate its intention to give the
reader a sense of the love (represented by the heart) and emotion that teachers have for their jobs and students. On the other hand, this comic is a reminder of both the assumptions and the unsupported emotional load that teachers face. Indeed, a common cultural assumption is that the work of a teacher should be done out of the goodness of one’s heart. Indeed, the illustration shows the physical embodiment of teaching. This emotion is embodied by the inevitable “growth” of one’s heart because of the good deed of teaching children. In which the very symbol of an enlarged heart is a contradiction. The comic intends it to be a positive thing, yet biologically an enlarged heart typically results from high blood pressure or coronary artery disease and can lead to congestive heart failure.

Second, this comic calls to mind a typical contradiction in schools regarding public and private binary. This is to say, in the past decades there has been a push from the public, often through policy, to engage in discussions about teachers needing to divide their work with their students from their emotions attached to these individuals. For example, there was a push when I began teaching that we were not allowed to touch students, which included consoling a weepy first grader with a warm embrace. This comic lends itself well for me to discuss this binary and this contradiction. The teacher in the comic is in the private confines of a doctor’s office. The doctor is explaining to the teacher that she is suffering from an ailment: an enlarged heart. In this sense, a common perception of doctor’s offices and internal organs is that they are intimate and personal. One often goes to the physician alone or with close confidants, and one discusses ailments and internal organs in the privacy of their home, again often only with close confidants. Paradoxically, the doctor explains that the illness is mainly brought on by this woman’s profession, which is in the public sphere and considered public service—a service in which workers are often asked to leave their emotions in the private confines of their lives.
So why is it important for us to disrupt the public/private binary and talk about how teachers in public spaces embody emotion? Often research in teacher turnover, which is intended to capture why teachers leave the profession, does not engage in research perspectives that would attempt to capture the intricacies of emotion and the role it plays in teaching and potentially high stress, burnout or turnover. Even though, as the image captures, teachers are emotionally affected by many aspects of their jobs. Therefore, if we only focus on “public spaces” as a source of teacher stress or distress, we fail to acknowledge the impact of how the public sphere influences the private sphere and vice versa. Figure 1 helps me represent a concern that is so central to my study. This image captures the essence of my proposed research by allowing me to explore the contradiction between the public and the private and also by considering how society positions teachers and how teachers embody their job. Engaging in research that considers the aspect of embodied emotion, which I draw from the perspectives of critical theories of affect and trauma, would bring an approach that has not been widely taken up.

Researchers have documented teacher stress and anxiety as early as the 1800s with the advent of urban public schooling. For example, David Tyack’s history of United States urban education discusses a survey administered by the National Education Association in 1905 that shows the numerous and varied stressors experienced by teachers. Beyond presenting a general overview of teachers’ concerns ranging from compensation to laws imposed on female teachers’ rights to make life decisions without losing their job (e.g. marriage, having children), the survey also captured many expressions of emotional exhaustion, entrapment, stress, and frustration, as shown below:

“The strain is so great and the salary allows no sum for recuperation there is no line of work which so drains that vitality.” (Emphasis added)
“If I could get something else that would pay better, I would give up teaching in spite of the fact that I love the work, but after teaching ten years most of us are unfit for anything else. We give the best years of our lives to the work and how few live to enjoy the pension!” (Emphasis added)

“I am so worn out from teaching sixty pupils that most of my money goes for medicine and trips for my health.” (Emphasis added)

(Tyack, 1974, pp. 258-259)

Over a hundred ten years ago teachers were expressing signs of stress, “drain[ed] … vitality,” and health problems directly related to their profession (Tyack, 1979, pp. 258). Much like Figure 1 was exploring, this survey voiced teachers’ ailments from the job.

While other studies have explored stress that impacts teachers directly, in this study, I investigated secondary traumatic stress, which pays particular attention to the stress caused by hearing about students’ trauma. This exposure to the traumas that students witness and bring to school on a daily basis (both inside and outside the school) adds a layer of stress and trauma on teachers that has not been extensively explored (Borntrager, Caringi, van den Pol, Crosby, O’Connell, Trautman, & McDonald, 2012; Motta, 2012). Given the fact that secondary traumatic stress has been shown to cause high levels of burnout in other helping professions (Figley, 1995), it seemed pertinent to explore how it impacts levels of stress and potential burnout and turnover in teachers.

The relationship between trauma and burnout is not merely an academic concern, but also an emotional interest. Like many of the people I am currently surrounded by, I too make up a percentage of individuals who have left the classroom. Two years before attending graduate school I suffered a severe panic attack that changed who I am drastically. As a young, outgoing,
healthy individual I was baffled by the sudden agoraphobia that accompanied this ailment. I was later diagnosed with panic attack syndrome and prescribed anxiety medication. Having been a part of a close-knit school community, I freely shared my incident with many teachers. What was most perplexing, from my experience, was the number of teachers that had suffered similar attacks and how many of my colleagues had been on anxiety medication for many years. My inspiration for this study came from my desire to better understand various causes for teacher stress and burnout, as told by the teachers themselves, with a particular focus on secondary traumatic stress. My aim was to document the social, emotional, and psychological experiences of teachers in schools (particularly diverse schools) to create socially and emotionally appropriate contexts for educators and students. I examined secondary trauma and explored how it impacts teacher stress levels and potential turnover.

Research Problem

Over the past few decades, there has been an increased effort to reform schools with the intention to increase student achievement. The focus of school improvement has relied on a quantitative framework that looks closely at individual student outcomes in attempts to link those directly to school and teacher performance (Harvey, 2014). Movements such as these, mostly rely on standardized assessments as markers of success, and they have provided some useful understandings of marginalized groups of students that shed light on discrepancies in their educational opportunities (Escamilla, 2011). However, these measures are incapable of, and not intended for, capturing the everyday lives of the teachers and their experiences with students (Boler, 1996). The accountability of teachers based on students’ standardized assessments has created an era of public shaming of schools and educators, placing the blame directly on teachers’ ability to teach and in some cases threatening teachers with the termination of their
jobs. Ironically, reforms have focused on teacher recruitment efforts, pitting teachers as both the problem and solution. Positioning of teachers as both the problem and solution has added to the external pressure teachers face as a result of their success being measured by students meeting academic standards (Harvey, 2014). Unfortunately, the accountability reform has led to a rhetoric where the educational and political leaders in the United States blame teachers for failures in the school system that are better attributed to larger societal inequities (Harvey, 2014; Gay, 2010), and in the process, may contribute to teacher trauma and stress.

The emotional issues that plague our public school teachers not only directly affect teachers’ physical, emotional, and mental health, but more broadly impact education through teacher turnover (Gold & Roth, 1993; Barmby, 2006; Davis and Wilson, 2000). As the external stressors of the job have increased over the past few decades so have the rates of teacher turnover. The turnover rate is at an all-time high, at the same time, enrollment in teacher education programs are at an all-time low (Simon & Johnson 2015; Harvey, 2014). The mass exodus of teachers disproportionately impacts high-need schools serving mostly students of color (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015) and affects teachers of color at a disparate rate (Watson, Bristo, & White, 2015). A recent review of teacher turnover indicated that while teacher turnover has remained constant, the rate of teacher turnover for White teachers was 15%, while the rate of turnover for Black and Hispanic teachers was 21.8% and 20.6% respectively for

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines a high-needs school as “within the top quartile of elementary and secondary schools statewide, as ranked by the number of unfilled, available teacher positions; or is located in an area where at least 30 percent of students come from families with incomes below the poverty line; or an area with a high percentage of out-of-field-teachers, high teacher turnover rate, or a high percentage of teachers who are not certified or licensed.” As cited in http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html
the year of the study (Watson, Bristo, & White, 2015). Moreover, though the number of minority teachers has increased over the past few decades, minority teacher turnover rate grew by 28% (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014).

There exist three distinct gaps in the literature, which I addressed in detail in my dissertation research. First, research in teacher turnover has been approached in various ways, few of which focus on internal stressors and their direct contribution to teacher turnover. The research typically focuses on factors of school organization, tests as a form of accountability, and occupational stress directly related to organizational factors (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Johnson, 2006; Gold & Roth, 1993). Researchers have mostly explored occupational stress on teachers through the use of self-reported surveys, which have been a useful indicator of overall trends of this phenomenon. Teacher stress in various forms is a major factor contributing to teacher turnover. However, the emphasis on teacher stress from these studies has focused on school organizational factors such as policy implementation and teacher requirements (Košir, Tement, Licardo & Habe, 2015). Further, it has not explored secondary traumatic stress that teachers face when working closely with children who have experienced trauma (Borntrager, et.al., 2012; Motta, 2012). It is important to explore and document additional stressors that may be impacting teachers, by expanding the types of stressors that are studied in educational surveys, it would acknowledge and validate the emotional distress that teachers experience and the traumas they witness.

There is a need to explore the effect of prolonged witnessing of trauma in the teaching population because approximately one in four children will suffer from a traumatic experience before they reach the age of sixteen. This number is likely much higher for schools who receive Title I funding (La Greca, et.al., 2008). Because of the extended time that teachers spend with
students, teachers expose themselves to prolonged witnessing of trauma (Motta, 2012). To my knowledge, the trauma that teachers experience indirectly has been accounted for in one study (Borntrager et. al., 2012). Furthermore, the study relied heavily on surveys that were developed by the field of psychology, for the field of psychology and not education.

Though the field provides useful frameworks for conceptualizing the witnessing of trauma, they are framed around the institution of mental health services which works within the confines of client-therapist relationships. It is not appropriate for educators to rely too heavily on tools intended for the field of psychology. However, the conceptualization provided some insight on how to move this phenomenon into other helping professions that have a very different structural organization. In the field of psychology, the exchange between client and therapist can contribute to therapist taking on the trauma of their customers; this phenomenon is called as secondary traumatic stress (STS). Extensive studies in the field have posited that empathetic engagement may put one at risk of developing STS and eventually lead to long-term burnout; (Borntrager, et. al., 2012) because of the interconnected nature of teaching, this phenomenon made sense to explore in educators.

This phenomenon has been studied widely in the field of psychology mostly looking at STS in other helping professionals, such as therapy, counseling, social work, etc. generally ignoring educators even though they can be identified as helping professionals (Borntrager, et. al, 2012; Motta 2012). My dissertation engaged with and extended existing scholarship on STS in school personnel while also considering how STS may contribute to turnover in public schools by using an interdisciplinary perspective. I employed a mixed methods approach using survey and interview methodology to expand an explanation of Secondary Traumatic Stress further.
Research Questions

The overarching problem explored in this study is to examine secondary traumatic stress in teachers. This study is guided by three primary research questions:

1. What level of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is evident in K-12 public school teachers?
   1.a. Does STS vary by school demographics?
   1.b. Does STS vary by teacher demographics?
2. What types of traumas do teachers report witnessing?
3. How do they embody these types of traumas?

Question one and its sub-questions will be answered using quantitative methods. Question two will be answered using qualitative methods, and Question three will be explained both in the quantitative and qualitative sections.

Conceptual Framework

Affect and trauma theories were critical perspectives in my study. I used critical theories of affect and trauma to give voice to the secondary traumatic stress that teachers experience. The long-term effects of stress and trauma manifest themselves in teacher turnover. Therefore, for my analysis, I drew heavily on the research from teacher turnover. I used the term “teacher turnover” as opposed to teacher attrition. I did so, knowing that this term is often times used interchangeably, but wanted to rely on the work of Ingersoll and May (2011) to define the term. Teacher turnover encompasses the moving of teachers between grades, between schools, and those that leave that profession altogether. This definition allowed me to make a deeper analysis of how STS is embodied in and expressed by teachers.
These theories provided a framework to analyze the ways in which emotion and affect function in the context of schools. I argued that there is a need for embodied, emotional, and critical-affective research to be taken up in the literature about teacher turnover in order to impact practice and policy related to this phenomenon (Cruz, 2012). Most surveys investigating teacher stress do not measure the construct of secondary traumatic stress. By having considered an incident that may be influenced by the intricate bond that is forged between student and teacher, I intended to capture the complexity of these types of relationships and their impact on teaching staff (Butler, 2004).

Figure 2 is a visual representation of student-teacher interactions that was the focus of this study. In the framework, I argued that teachers witness the trauma of students in their classroom settings and that this trauma, in turn, can be a form of trauma for the teacher resulting in high levels of STS. STS is said to be caused by exposure to others’ traumatic events; it was important to delineate that for teachers and for this study, the trauma in question was the traumatic experiences of students. It encompassed traumas that students experience at school, home, and/or the community. Those most at risk for STS are those who work with traumatized children. The trauma of students ranged from the psychological notions of trauma (abuse, violence, natural disasters, etc.) or insidious trauma (“as the repetitive demonization of emotionality during development and beyond” (Cates, 2014, p. 36)), which was derived from critical theories of trauma. It is typical that psychological notions of trauma are often used by the field of psychology, whereas the definition of insidious trauma stems from critical theories of trauma. Psychological concepts of trauma are often limited to physical traumas that occur to people or extremely distressing occurrences (such as the death of a child) and often don’t include types of wounds that are identified by insidious trauma. Relying solely on the definitions of trauma from
the psychological notion was limiting, which is why I also drew on critical theories of trauma, adequately incorporating insidious trauma, to situate trauma within the sociopolitical context of schools. The circle represents the focus of the study.

I drew on both psychological definitions and feminist theoretical interpretations of affect and trauma to conceptualize STS and its potential effect on teacher turnover. For example, you can see in the figured that there are two types of student trauma represented in the visual: insidious trauma and psychological trauma. These two types of trauma can be the cause of student trauma that teachers witness. Insidious trauma is defined by critical theories of trauma. These approaches incorporate consistent marginalization, poverty, etc. as forms of trauma that affect students widely (Craps & Buelens, 2008). Psychological trauma, which is defined by Craps and Buelens as “Western Notions” of trauma, encompass what is culturally acceptable including but are not limited to overt, non-discriminatory occurrences ranging from abuse, neglect, the death of
family, etc. These two types of trauma feed into what students’ experience as trauma. Though both of these traumas are separate in the figure, it is important to that the work of critical trauma, and thus my perspective is to bring these two types of trauma together. In the visual representation, they are combined when thinking about student trauma. Figure 2 then attempts to capture what happens with this student trauma, which is captured by the red circle. Within the red circle note that student trauma is then witnessed by teachers and this witnessing of trauma can lead to teacher secondary traumatic stress.

When considering interactions between teacher and student within a social context, these theories can be applied to gain a better understanding of phenomena that happen within the context. I used theories of affect and trauma to help explore the role of secondary trauma in teachers. Clinically secondary trauma is said to share the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. This trauma is caused by the indirect exposure to traumatic events or situations. Other terms that capture similar symptoms, but are not interchangeable with STS are compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, compassion satisfaction, and burnout (Borntrager, et. al., 2012). The symptoms of STS, which are said to mirror the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, currently reported in the research are avoidance, negative changes in thinking and mood, changes in emotional reactions, and intrusive memories (Borntrager, et. al., 2012; Figley, 1995).

Figure 2 also indicates the theories that aligned with the process of acquiring secondary traumatic stress. I began by focusing on a critical theory of trauma, then moved to the right in Figure 2 and explained the process of embodiment that is possibly happening with teachers. I contextualized it by considering emotion and how emotion is treated in schools, which will bring us back to the public/private binary that is often seen in schools. Lastly, I drew on my personal
teaching experiences and incorporate vignettes attempting to explain the two types of traumas that students experience and how I, as a teacher, embodied these student traumas.

A Critical Theory of Trauma. Though I was invested in exploring the possible connection between teacher turnover and secondary traumatic stress, I don’t believe that eliminating secondary traumatic stress through prescriptive antidotes that stem from the clinical field is possible, nor even desirable. In the arguments of trauma studies, scholars often argue to suppress or avoid the presence of difficult, even horrific, human stories in texts (Caruth, 1995, 2016; Hartman, 1995). I argue that naming it and learning to navigate it is more productive than ignoring that it exists or attempting to eliminate it because we will all carry traces of our traumas and colonial imprints with us (Cruz, 2001; Dutro & Bien, 2014). Though it is carried and brought into spaces, Hartman cautions that there is a need for people to be careful with regard to secondary traumatization:

“[…] even with the testimonies. Because they are powerful enough to cause a secondary traumatization. And then, what is complicating, is that a certain amount of secondary traumatization is, in fact, needful—if you’re going to have a strong empathic response” (Hartman & Ballengee, 2001, p.226-227).

Though there is possible traumatization, Hartman, much like the critical trauma scholars mentioned above, does not argue that people should avoid these interactions, but rather learn to navigate and cope with possible trauma.

Unlike many of the studies that have been taken up in the field of teacher attrition/turnover, I focused on emotional responses to student trauma and how those emotions are transferred and embodied from students to teachers. This is why I chose to use a feminist lens to navigate the complexity of secondary traumatic stress that occurs when witnessing traumatic events. Ball
(2000) refers to this type of witnessing as vicarious trauma, and in an interview done by Ballengee (Hartman & Ballengee, 2001), Hartman discusses that witnessing another person’s trauma can engender similar feelings in the individual who is doing the witnessing. But it doesn’t just require being an empty vessel or a blank slate (Dutro, 2009) witnessing requires an investment (a call to action) to become vulnerable as well (Behar, 1996; Butler, 2004). This vulnerability would engender a relationship that does not put the burden of hearing someone’s trauma on one person; rather it becomes an exchange. I would argue that teachers witness daily, but often it is one-sided and it is rare that they reach out and become vulnerable to students. Though there is not a shared vulnerability, teachers still take on the traumas they hear from students or of students by family members, social workers, school counselors, etc. much like Ball (2000) and Hartman and Ballengee (2001) discussed.

Perspectives that consider a critical approach to trauma can be beneficial in identifying and analyzing these relationships in a novel way. This is important because work on STS has mostly been taken up using clinical terms and symptomology. It is often that treatment is localized to the individual. Treatments typically focus on self-efficacy and building “healthy” habits in order to mitigate symptoms. The “psychologization of social suffering” has encouraged “the idea that recovery from the traumas” is “a matter of the individual witness gaining linguistic” and emotional “control over his or her pain” (Craps & Buelens, 2008, pp.4). Though STS has been widely researched in psychological fields for certain helping professions, it is only recently that researchers have taken a focus on teachers in relation to secondary traumatic stress (Motta, 2012; Borntrager, 2012). As Boler (1999) writes, “A related objection to analyzing emotions and education in terms of psychoanalysis is that “education is not therapy.” While in fact, educators are not trained as therapists; the dynamics between teacher and student can parallel the
therapist/client relation” (p.17). The two studies that have been conducted on secondary traumatic stress and school personnel have used surveys currently used in psychological fields and have focused primarily on symptoms. I am mostly interested in how this phenomenon is voiced by teachers but do so by framing secondary trauma through trauma and affect perspectives. “Trauma theory introduces a psychoanalytic skepticism as well, which does not give up on knowledge but suggests the existence of a traumatic kind of knowledge, one that cannot be made entirely conscious, in the sense of being fully retrieved or communicated with distortion” (Hartman, 1995, pp 537). Craps and Buelens (2008) push on the western view of trauma, which I refer to as psychological notions of trauma, by insisting that this view has only served to further explore White traumatic events. They make a case for the existence of an “insidious trauma” one which captures the traumatic effects of oppression. While the consequences of oppression are not overtly threatening to the physical well-being, they do violence to the soul and spirit. In redefining trauma through affect and trauma perspectives, I can explore insidious trauma that has not been widely captured in research of student trauma because it doesn’t meet the psychological definitions of trauma (wars, natural disasters, mass school shootings, etc.). In Hartman’s view of this new type of knowledge (the traumatic kind), the power is situated in the patient/client rather than the psychology expert.

**Embodiment.** The theorists that I draw on in Affect and Trauma take on critical feminist perspectives. These feminist lenses will allow me to take into account the affective relationship of students and teachers and the importance of shared “affective” experiences exchanged because of these relationships (Boler, 1999; Butler, 2004). These emotional exchanges offer, not an ‘empathetic’ type of response, nor psychological individualized exchange, rather they are felt in the bodies of teachers. Therefore, teachers embody the emotional exchanges and unavoidably the
traumatic experiences of students (Cruz, 2001) generating their own sense of trauma and stress surrounding these encounters. Because of this embodiment, it is imperative to integrate the body into research (Cruz, 2001; 2006).

Chicana pedagogies are inextricably connected to the bodies and agency of *mujeres* and discuss the ways in which women of color inherit histories that are stored in physical bodies. Teachers, especially women and women of color, carry the trauma of colonialism imprinted on their bodies (Anzaldúa, 1987). This type of trauma is vital to understanding the interaction of the intricacies between teacher and students and to not incorporate it decontextualizes it from mediating factors; effectively limiting its role in schools. I argue that disconnecting research from educators’ bodies fails to capture the complexity of an agent that is seen as both the problem and the solution to educational reform aims. Further, I believe that using embodiment as a tool offers valuable lines of inquiry when considering emotions in a female dominated profession. This complexity requires research to use perspectives that can capture the lived experiences of women in the context of teaching.

**Emotions: Affect approaches in schools.** Though the exchanges and relationships in which teachers and students share trauma, is an integral part of the job (to teach), emotions time and time again have been banned from public discourse and thrust into the private sphere (Boler, 1999); even though it comes into the classroom whether invited or not (Dutro & Bien, 2014). Since the existence of urban education, students, families, and teachers have been positioned in the school system that has historically worked to marginalize and oppress certain groups, including the very population that is placed at the head of the classroom (Tyack, 1974). This clear marginalization and oppression have become a source of insidious trauma for many students and families. I argue that one should consider feminist perspectives of affect and trauma
in research regarding teacher turnover as a viable tool to explore these intricacies. This is vital because of the large population of teachers that are women and the interconnectedness of student-teacher relationships; I find it pertinent to build on scholars’ work on emotion and affect.

In an effort to bring the tradition of affect into the field of education broadly, Dutro (2014), Boler (1999), Ahmed (2015), Cruz (2012) embed it into their work in many ways. The tools that are most pertinent to my research are ways in which people resist binaries and normative approaches to teaching. These researchers have approached affect in schooling by exploring “Embodiment,” and “Collective Expression” among other theories and practices that help define Trauma through an Affective lens such as “Critical witnessing” and “Corporeal vulnerability.”

Current research in the field of teacher turnover has indicated that schools are organized like families (Ingersoll, 2003), yet little research has been done that incorporate perspectives of affect and trauma when considering teacher retention. I believe that using the tools of public/private binary, embodiment, and critical theories of trauma can inform an inquiry on teacher resilience and turnover in relation to STS.

**Public Private Binary.** Emotions are often left to the private sphere and have “not been considered noteworthy within the male-defined perimeters of historical scholarship” (Boler, 1999). Further, emotions have been pushed into the private sphere and as Boler states, “is inextricably intertwined with the simultaneous consignment of women to the private sphere, and the related neglect of women’s’ histories” (1999). Often, schools follow the same type of dismissal of emotions and because meritocracy has a firm grasp on the functioning of our schools, the system places success or failure on the individual, whether student or teacher. This decontextualized view of agents from any mediating factors only serves to continue to squash emotions through the promotion of an individualistic perspective (Boler, 1999).
Because feelings don’t “belong” in schools (Boler, 1999; Ahmed 2015) teachers are being pushed out of their healthy bodies and healthy minds. This push-out can be seen not only through high teacher turnover, but also through the large number of teachers that suffer from high levels of stress and potential burnout, but do not leave the profession (Dworkin, 1985). In order for healing to happen the emotions must be brought into the public sphere (Ahmed, 2015).

It is important to note that affect and trauma theories provide a lens that allows the private to become public, as it is already politicized (Ahmed, 2015). These approaches allow for an interrogation of binaries because the idea that relegating emotion and trauma to the private sphere, when the spaces of school are public, is conflicting. Already teachers are stepping into a context where the private and public are in false binaries; exacerbating the trauma that teachers feel and experience. Furthermore, all the expectations of what is “ok” to physically and emotionally inflict on teachers are captured by the comic in Figure 1. Even in the comic, it’s a private appointment in a doctor’s office and the inside of someone’s chest, but the cause of the infliction (larger heart) is deemed to be brought on by a public job that is experienced in the public sphere.

**Psychological notion of trauma: A vignette of secondary traumatic stress.**

_The scent of lilies followed us as we walked through the parlor of St. Michaels.’ I took a deep breath and clutched my husband’s arm as we made our way into the sanctuary, the tears continued to well in my eyes, and I could feel the stubborn lump in my throat. I looked around at the grief-stricken parishioners in search of one person in particular. I spotted her in the back near a group of adults. She was clutching her favorite teddy bear in one hand and twirling her long locks with the other. As I gently touched her shoulder, she acknowledged me, “Mrs. Schepers! You came,” her voice as sweet and tender as always. “Of course, Hailey,” my voice_
trembled. I knelt beside her and her six-year old arms wrapped around my neck in a tight
embrace. I wasn’t sure how much time had passed, but I wasn’t going to be the first to let go.

***

Six years have passed, and though the traumatic experience was not my own, my heart
breaks every time I think about Hailey, my then 1st-grade student, in her beautiful dress at her
father’s funeral. As I reflect on this experience, I consider the emotions we shared that allowed
for our lives to collide beyond what schools overtly demand. In the span of a year, I grew to
respect and love every student in my class. They were as attuned to my emotions as I was to
theirs. Our relationship continued long after they left my classroom.

**Insidious trauma: A vignette of secondary traumatic stress.**

I reached the phone before the third ring. As I raised my hand the room fell silent. I strained
to hear Mrs. Samuels soft voice, “You have a new student that enrolled today. He will start
tomorrow morning, but they would love to come meet you.” Cheerfully responding, “We can’t
wait to meet him,” I hung up the phone and prepared my class to meet Joe. Joe, who insisted we
call him Joey, was a six-year old who was big for his age. He was shy of five feet and towered
over his other first grade peers, and he loved hugs. As the weeks passed by we all got to know
Joey really well. He wore the same tattered white shirt every day and often had dirt on his face. I
drove by Joey’s home on the way to school most days: The Tumbleweed Motel. The family of five
shared one room.

***

I have spent much time reflecting on the many thoughts, feelings, and analysis of the
situations which my students faced, but the year of “Joey,” is a particularly hard year for me to
reflect on. I spent countless nights sharing stories of Joey with my husband. I cried the evening I
realized he lived in a motel and feared that they would be kicked out again. I had a sense of guilt that I carried heavily that year. As I drove in my reliable, safe car, to the “good” part of town, my heart broke thinking about Joey going home to one room “home,” to share a bed with his two older brothers. As a teacher in a Title I school, the presence of students who lived in precarious circumstances was the norm, but when poverty, caused so much insidious stress and trauma for Joey it wasn’t difficult to bear to witness. Years have passed since the “Year of Joey,” and I still wonder what has become of him, where he lives, and if he and his family are healthy and safe.

What is often forgotten in these reflections is the perceptions of the staff and students that were evident in the everyday happenings of the school. The secretary would make remarks about Joey’s mother “not knowing anything, but always meddling,” the nurse encouraged Joey to change shirts every few days with some that she had kept in her office for him, and students often teased this first grader for his disheveled look. He and his family were marginalized at our school because of their life circumstances.

Conclusion

In the field of education, STS has been looked at minimally (Borntrager et. al. 2012), but major works of research allude to emotional/psychological factors that resemble STS (Gold & Roth, 1993; Barmby, 2006; Davis and Wilson, 2000). Further, there is little research on how STS may impact teacher stress levels and turn over. The most recent studies in teacher turnover, as will be explored in depth in the literature review, does not capture STS rather it uses conceptual frameworks that demarcate researchers to either look at the individuals or the organization, but not how they function together.

Research in the area of teacher turnover/attrition would benefit from an affect and trauma lens, specially when considering the teachers, school organization, and secondary traumatic
stress. Taking into consideration the traumas that teachers embody and how historically they have been positioned in schools, are factors researchers cannot capture by relying on a supply and demand framework. Viewing education organization through resources and capital, both physical and human, does not get at the complexities of schools if affect and interaction between agents and conditions are not considered. Finally, secondary traumatic stress should not be considered by only addressing the symptomology. The process of embodying someone else’s trauma requires an exchange between the “victim” and witness, and this can have many benefits: be that bridge to cross-cultural solidarity and a new form of community (Craps & Buelen, 2008). Though this exchange is necessary, it is important to identify that it is occurring and engage teachers in navigating it productively and by doing so mitigating possible burnout situations.

**Significance**

This study is imperative because roughly 25% of children will suffer from some type of traumatic experiences before they are 16 years old (La Greca, A. M., Boyd, B. A., Jaycox, L. H., Kassam-Adams, N., Mannarino, A. P., Silverman, W. K., . . . Wong, M., 2008). Because of the extended time that teachers spend with students, teachers are exposed to prolonged witnessing of trauma (Motta, 2012). There has been little research on secondary traumatic stress in teaching staff. Most work has been done in the area of other helping professions, such as therapist, counselors, social work, etc. (Borntrager, 2012; Motta 2012). The benefit of identifying levels of secondary traumatic stress could lead to the creation of resources to help mitigate the symptoms. Further research would be needed to determine which resources work best for educators in K-12 public school settings. Adding to the empirical studies in this area, this study uses theories and methods that differ from the research currently done in both teacher attrition/turnover studies and secondary traumatic stress in helping professionals and school personnel.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review of literature is organized into two sections that explore the empirical research on teacher turnover and secondary trauma. Again, while my study is not directly exploring teacher turnover, studies that focus on teacher turnover explore stressors that teachers experience that may later lead to burnout and turnover. This research, as will be shown below, often captures common stressors that teachers face. The first section examines the general research on teacher turnover and is followed by a subsection that explains who is most affected by teacher turnover. The following section explores Secondary Traumatic Stress in Helping Professionals and is followed by work done in the field regarding teaching staff.

Methods

I conducted the review of the literature using electronic database searches and backward referencing pertinent articles. The search terms that I used included a combination of the following words and phrases: “secondary traumatic stress in teacher turnover,” “secondary traumatic stress in helping professions,” “who is impacted by teacher turnover,” “teacher stress,” “measures of secondary traumatic stress in education,” and “vicarious trauma.” The criteria I used to examine the search results and reference sections of each article were as follows: the research had to address teacher turnover, teacher secondary traumatic stress, and more broadly teacher stress. I included studies that are considered seminal works in the field that were published as early as 1980 and the latest work in the field to provide an outlook of recent trends. I examined each article to identify their conceptual or theoretical framework approach, the methods they employed, and the outcomes they recorded. The review captures researchers in two
separate but equally pertinent fields; teacher turnover and secondary traumatic stress in teachers and other helping professionals.

**General Research on Teacher Turnover**

Sass, Bustos Flores, Claeys, and Pérez, (2012) conducted a study on teacher turnover that used quantitative data and employed a data survival analysis on 22 years’ worth of district information in the state of Texas. The database focused on public school teacher data and was acquired from the Texas Education Agency. Sass and colleagues disaggregated the data to only include teachers who had entered and departed the teaching profession between a 22-year time span. There was a total of 215,482 teachers left in their sample for the first part of their study and 128,127 for the second part of their study. The first part identified teacher turnover overall in the 22-year span and the second part of the investigation focused on the years 1995 to 2009 which was considered the “testing era.” The 22-year span looked at how many teachers had left the field during two "testing windows." These windows intentionally focused on the early nineties which was when the first wave of standardized assessments began and then more recently the testing that came on the heels of *No Child Left Behind*. They found that during the implementation of high stakes tests, teacher turnover spiked. The likelihood of quitting during the testing era was 24% higher. Though no causal inference can be made, the correlations indicate that something was happening during those time frames. Though their study focused on teacher turnover during testing eras, their analysis also included teacher turnover over the 22-year time span while looking at teacher demographics. They found that gender, ethnicity, age, and content or grade level also show differences in turnover levels. Female teachers are likely to remain in the profession longer than male teachers. African Americans, Hispanics, and those labeled as non-White or Other had a lower risk of leaving the profession than that of young
White teachers. Also noted in their finding, secondary teachers have a higher rate of turnover than elementary teacher, and within the secondary field mathematics and sciences, teachers exhibit higher rates of turnover.

In an earlier study, Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2005) conducted an 8-year study that looked at a large district to identify if teacher turnover changed through the 8 years. The researchers were investigating the impact that high stakes testing had on 4th-grade teachers in New York public school teachers. They focused on 4th-grade analysis which is one of the grade levels that is heavily impacted by testing (they test in reading, writing, math, and science). They obtained an eight-year record of Personnel Master File, which is part of the Basic Education Data System of the New York State Education Department (Boyd, et. al., 2005). The researcher employed a quantitative approach in which they performed a Logit Model that established the probability of a teacher departing from the profession based on particular teacher attributes. They found that during testing year implementations 4th-grade teachers were actually not as prone to leaving neither their vocation or their current schools or grade levels. This could be attributed to teachers in these classes being more experienced; fewer first-year teachers went into this grade level. Even though they found a decline in turnover in fourth grade, over the course of the 8 years, teacher turnover overall (through all grade levels) had increased. Within their analysis, they found that teachers who were most affected by turnover were consistent with other studies. Leaving was higher for first-year teachers, teachers in urban schools, and teachers at low-performing schools had a higher propensity to depart from the school or field altogether. They also found that Hispanic teachers and those who taught in the NYC metro area were more prone to quitting.
Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) began their study by presenting a new theoretical framework. This framework considers the organizational context of teacher workplaces that may be an influencing factor of their commitment to their professions and schools. They used data from a larger study that was intended to capture the social organization of schools. The scope of their sample was gathered from the recruitment of eight Tennessee school districts that had administrative support regarding the project. The participants totaled 1,213 teachers from 78 schools. Teachers were asked by their principals to take a 30-minute questionnaire, and the study had a 70 percent response rate. As they noted, their findings negated previous findings that student SES was a contributing factor to lowered commitment by teachers. They also found that different organization factors impacted teacher engagement differently, at different levels. For example, novice teachers’ commitment was more directly influenced by factors relating to managing student and interruptions. In contrast, experienced teachers were affected at higher rates by organizational features that encompassed their discretion and autonomy held in the school context. They reported on why each level of teacher would have a lowered commitment and therefore be more likely to leave.

In a similar study Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, and Liu (2001) researched working conditions (in the form of school culture) that new teachers experienced when first joining a school team. The methods of this study were mostly qualitative in nature as they relied on interviewing as a primary source of data collection. They gathered data from 50 Massachusetts public-school teachers. The teachers they focused on were beginning their career as teachers and had started their first or second year in the field. The teachers were purposively selected to get a breadth of teacher demographics that included urban and suburban schools, grades varying from Kindergarten through twelfth grade, small and large schools, as well as charter and conventional
schools. Their interviews lasted 1.5 to 2.5 hours with individual respondents. After inductively coding their data, their findings showed three types of school cultures that new teachers experienced: novice oriented, veteran oriented, and integrated cultures. They indicated that the best kind of work culture was one that took into consideration both the needs of new teachers and experienced teachers (integrated culture). Teachers in these types of work situations were more likely to have had an adequate induction into the teaching field. They further claimed that this kind of environment could be enforced by school management and leadership.

An exploratory, interview-based study was conducted by Torres (2014) to investigate the role autonomy played in teacher retention or turnover in charter schools. The research goal was to see why and how teacher autonomy is linked to turnover. In his methods, Torres interviewed 20 New York City teachers who either taught in or recently left the teaching profession. He used semi-structured interview methods that lasted roughly an hour and were in person. The findings indicated that teachers in charter schools, both charters that were associated with Charter Management Organizations and those that weren’t, perceptions of autonomy and control were a mitigating factor of their turnover. More specifically, he discovered that educators who felt that they had no “voice” regarding student behavior had a higher proclivity to quit the profession. They expressed attitudes towards leaving or indicated that a primary reason for leaving was if they felt like they had no teacher autonomy, particularly on their beliefs about how students should be socialized.

One of the prominent researchers in teacher turnover has recently begun to study the field using a lens from the field of economics. In his work looking at retention, Ingersoll (2003) stated that though he relied on an economic framework, it was important to remember that schools are not typical of businesses (which use economic structures), rather they more closely resemble a
family unit. With that caveat, he continued to look at working conditions in relation to a business model. For this particular study, he took a quantitative method approach using nationally representative data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. The survey he focused on was the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the follow-up survey that is conducted one year after the initial survey named Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). The surveys are administered to a random sample of 53,000 teachers, 12,000 principals, and 4,500 districts and are representative of various school types and districts across the 50 states. The TFS was sent the following year to a random sample of all teachers that had moved or left the profession to obtain information on their reasons for leaving. This survey only contains a sample of roughly 7,000 teachers. When considering the data, Ingersoll used a multivariate statistical analysis. There were five factors that teachers cited as reasons for leaving: retirement, school staffing action, family or personal, to pursue other jobs, and dissatisfaction. Personal grounds of turnover accounted for more turnover than retirement and school staffing operations. These are also common to all occupations. More notably, almost fifty percent of those leaving reported: “job dissatisfaction or desire to pursue a better job, another career, or to improve career opportunities in or out of education” (Ingersoll, 2003, p.16). He found that recruitment efforts had worked. Unfortunately, working conditions in schools had created what he called a “revolving door.” More teachers were coming into the profession, but many of the same teachers were leaving long before retirement. Findings indicated that the problem is teacher retention and not teacher recruitment and that within 5 years, 40-50% of all new teachers will have left the classroom. This revolving door varies widely when considering the type of school, the teacher’s primary field, and the teacher’s ability as measured by standardized assessments such as SAT/ACT and licensure exams. In this regard, the data indicated similar
trends to those of various other studies, teachers who worked in math, science, and elementary special education had higher rates of turnover than other teachers. Teachers who had scored higher on standardized assessments indicated on the SASS also had a higher rate of turnover as well as teachers who worked in high-poverty public schools.

In 1999, Hanushek, Kain, and Rifkin conducted a study which looked at teacher mobility and student performance to investigate whether teacher salary was correlated with teacher quality. In this study, when they were considering movement, they were considering what most researchers recognize to be teacher turnover. They employed a matched panel dataset in which the teachers and students were matched pairs in the data. To answer their research question, they first analyzed the relationship between teacher mobility both inside and outside of the state of Texas. They also looked at other teacher and district characteristics to explain where teachers were moving. One of the features they analyzed was teacher pay at the district level. Through this analysis, they found that the correlation between teacher mobility and features such as student demographics had much higher relationships than those of teacher pay. For the purpose of my study, this indicated that teacher pay did not play as large of a role on teacher mobility (turnover) as did characteristics of the schools and students.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) used qualitative methods. They approached the study using a longitudinal interview methodology. They began with 50 Massachusetts public school teachers. In order to diversify their participants, they were selective in the recruitment demographics. They recruited teachers who had attended both private colleges and public universities. They also chose teachers who were teaching in primary and secondary schools and diversity with gender and race/ethnicity. They collected data from the same teachers every year over the span of three years. The first interview lasted between 1.5 hours and 2.5 hours and was in-person. The summer
after the first interview they contacted the respondents for a follow-up interview. All follow up interviews were collected in-person by telephone. In their work, they agreed that working conditions delimitates who enters [and more importantly] who stays in the teaching profession. Their findings indicated that they began the first year of the study with 50 teachers and in year two of the study 7 had moved to new schools, 37 stayed at the same school, and 6 left the profession entirely. In year three of teaching, of the teachers that had moved, three moved for a second time to a different school, three stayed in their new schools and one left the profession. Of the 37 who had stayed at the same school, 6 moved to new schools, 28 remained in the same school, and 3 left the teaching profession. The aggregated demographic information showed that 42% of non-traditionally certified teachers left within 3 years compared to 16% of teachers who went through more traditional programs. Through the interviews, there were three categories of teachers that arose: leavers, movers, and stayers. Various themes emerged for reasons why teachers left. The leavers had two themes for why they left the profession. They either left the classroom because teaching was a short-term career goal or they were dissatisfied or overwhelmed by the lack of curriculums and resources. These themes were similar to that of the movers. There were two types of stayers, those who were settled or unsettled. Those who felt settled were satisfied with their school, resources, and their abilities to teach. Those who were unsettled had similar dissatisfaction of those who left or moved. They concluded that recruiting teachers would not guarantee an unequivocal solution for school staffing shortages and other means to retain teachers should be considered.

In search of mitigating factors related to teacher turnover, Smith and Ingersoll, (2004) found that school districts who participated in new teacher induction programs and extensive mentoring programs for novice teachers were successful in helping retention efforts. Further, it was
important that new teachers were paired with a mentor teacher in their same grade level and area of expertise. This furthered the empirical research that indicated a need to focus on teacher retention efforts as opposed to teacher recruitment alone. These findings came from a study they conducted using quantitative methods looking at the National Center for Education Statistics, a nationally representative survey that is administered in cycles. The sample included all beginning teachers in the United States in 1999-2000. This allowed them to look at teachers who were participating in induction programs and those who were not.

Dworkin, Haney, Rosalind, and Dworkin (1990) using quantitative methods sent out a questionnaire to a simple random sample of roughly 800 unionized teachers. They had a 37% response rate. Though the demographics were not representative of the larger teaching population, they were representative of the 1,500 union members. The questionnaire focused on questions of stress, illness, and social support. The survey also asked questions about their school conditions which included participant indication of their administrative support. The researchers were exploring if their teaching responsibilities and support types induced stress related illnesses. The scale on their questionnaire showed reliability with a .751 Cronbach’s coefficient alpha measure. The findings showed that all teachers showed some stress-induced sickness behaviors connected with their teaching responsibility. Even though one-quarter described reduced levels of illness, one tenth reported they were habitually so ill they required medical attention. There was an association between stress and illness as indicated by a zero-order correlation test. They then calculated what other school conditions based on the questionnaire showed a relationship between stress and illnesses. To calculate whether principal support was related to stress-induced illness, they ran a t-test and found it to be statistically significant. Less supportive principals were more likely to induce stress- illnesses as reported by participants.
In Dworkin's (1985) work, he began to capture the phenomenon of teacher burnout which is considered seminal work in this field. Using a mixed methods approach, he analyzed data from 3,500 teachers in Houston. The data comprised of attitudinal survey measures and exit interviews that were given after teachers had quit, over a five-year period. The findings of the study showed that teachers suffered from burnout and stress and that the rate was higher for teachers in elementary schools. Further, not all teachers who experienced burnout and stress left the profession. He believed that this was an indication of entrapment. Entrapment was defined by the participants who expressed a desire to leave but indicated that they had no skills that would translate to other professions. This investigation delved into the effects of teacher burnout and stress on students and found that untended burnout and stress had damaging implications in the classroom. Students who had teachers who had self-reported lower levels of self-efficacy and higher reports of burnout and stress had smaller gains throughout the year as students' whose teachers had reported higher levels of self-efficacy and lower levels of burnout and stress. However, teachers who "owned" everything (had the highest levels of self-efficacy) were more likely to produce smaller gains with students and indicated in questionnaires that they were likely to leave the classroom.

In Dworkin's later work he and his colleagues investigated the relationship between teacher victimization and fear on turnover, burnout, and stress. Dworkin, Haney, and Telschow (1988) conducted a quantitative study with the intention of separating stressors into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. They delineated the two types of factors. Intrinsic to be those traits required directly by the classroom role, and extrinsic as factors that are not related to the function of teaching, but rather from social interactions that arise from occupying the position. The particular external factor they examined was violence and victimization. They drew a sample of
respondents from all active members of a large union in Houston, TX schools. To measure stress, they developed a questionnaire that they then sent out the 291 participants. Of the members who received the questionnaire 37% responded. They found that these stressors impact teachers differently based on teacher and school characteristics. They discovered that white teachers in urban settings were more likely to feel that they have experienced victimization (this ranged from feeling scared in the environment/community, to threats from students). These teachers who feared for their safety then found day to day stressors much more overwhelming.

In more recent research, Košir, Tement, Licardo, and Habe (2015) studied teacher stress by looking at teacher reflection and rumination practices, by also considering self-efficacy. They surveyed 439 elementary school teachers from different regions of Slovenia. They found that reflection was a positive attribute in considering what happened in the classroom and how it could have been better, then moving on. It then examined rumination as a negative impact, identifying it as a perpetual consideration and energy spent contemplating the bad things that had occurred. They found that rumination was a strong moderator of stress in teachers. Teachers who reflected had lower levels of emotional exhaustion. However, the amount of self-efficacy had diminishing effects. Indicating that if teachers felt entirely responsible for the success or failure of their students, they were more likely to not only suffer from higher levels of stress but also more likely to leave the profession. Teachers leaving the profession was indicated by a self-report on the likelihood of leaving the job.

**The Differential Impact on Turnover of the General Research**

Ingersoll and May (2011) conducted a study using two decades’ worth of data from the Department of Education. The data was gathered using a national survey that is sent out by the U.S. Department of Education. Their interest with the data was to investigate if there were
shortages of teachers of color; primarily in recruitment. They were also interested in seeing where minority teachers were employed and their retention rates. Their findings reiterated that there continues to be a gap between the number of students of color and the number of teachers of color. This gap continues to increase, but it is not in part a failure to enlist minority teachers, rather because of a decrease in white student population and an increase in minority student population. The findings also indicated that minority teachers are more likely to be employed in urban schools serving high-minority, high poverty communities. These teachers were two to three times more likely to work in hard-to-staff schools. However, while there has been a rise in the recruitment of teachers of color and they have entered the profession at higher rates than white teachers, they have also left at higher rates. Moreover, minority teachers were more likely to switch schools and leave the professional compared to their white counterparts. Much of the movement that Ingersoll and May witnessed in the data could be traced back to school organizational management and leadership.

In 2009, Frankenberg conducted a study that was intended to capture teacher segregation. She explored this phenomenon through the use of a telephone survey that had been validated in a pilot study with a similar population a few years prior to her survey taking place. She took a sample from National Education Association for teachers. Though the intention was to survey from the two largest teachers’ unions, the other union denied the request for telephone numbers. The population of the study consisted of 1,002 teachers ranging from Kindergarten through Twelfth grade. The teachers represented 48 of the 50 states. The study found that White teachers made up the majority of teachers, which reinforced the national numbers. However, though they make up the majority of teachers in schools, they were the least likely to have any experience with cultural or racial diversity. Moreover, this study found that African American teachers were
likely to have 60% of the students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, while their White counterparts had 35% of these students. Similarly, Latino and Asian teachers taught in schools where the population of English language learners was twice the proportion that of their White teacher counterparts. The study concluded that non-White teachers contemplate switching schools or professions at much higher rates than their White counterparts.

Seminal work in the field of teacher turnover began in the 1980’s. Dworkin’s studies are used widely to explain turnover in urban areas while considering teacher demographics. In his 1980 study, Dworkin examined the attitudes of teachers towards continuing in the teaching profession and how it varied by race and professional background. In conjunction with a much larger study that was taking place in the large urban district they sampled, he was able to send questionnaires to the homes of roughly 7,000 teachers. The total number of returned and completed questionnaires were 3,549. The questionnaires looked at attitudes toward quitting. The demographic and organizational variables indicated that the sample was representative of the districts’ overall population. His findings showed that though it was once true that people from lower socioeconomic status used teaching as a profession to move from working class up to middle class, this is no longer applicable. Black and white individuals who went into teaching were already considered part of the middle class. Chicanos, though a small number of the teaching population, drew some people from the working class. They also found that teachers that were part of the middle class were more likely to leave the profession if they perceived their obligations as undesirable. This same sentiment was not true of teachers with a working-class background. He speculated that this was because teachers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds had family that wasn't as supportive of this type of work and they also had the means to leave the profession for something else. Whereas, they believed that teachers from
lower-socioeconomic backgrounds and non-White teachers were more revered as teachers in their communities.

**Summary of Research on Teacher Turnover**

The review of literature within this first section on teacher turnover was intended to explore what teacher stressors are researched in the field of education. Again, while my study is not directly exploring teacher turnover, studies that focus on teacher turnover explore stressors that teachers experience. These stressors may later lead to burnout and turnover. While the stressors captured in these studies are important, they do not capture the secondary traumatic stress that I will be researching in my study.

The general research in teacher turnover indicates that the following factors are stressful enough to contribute to teacher turnover: high stakes testing, school organization factors and working conditions, and teacher burnout and stress. The studies reviewed indicated that factors that cause teachers to leave vary from the implementation of high stakes assessments to school leadership and resource availability.

Furthermore, the research on teacher turnover gives insight into which teachers are most likely to be affected by teacher turnover. The teachers likely to leave the profession or switch schools are those who teach in high need schools, teachers of color, and young, inexperienced white teachers in urban schools. My study used a mixed methods design to examine secondary traumatic stress as a stressor that may affect teachers.

**Secondary Traumatic Stress in the Helping Professions**

The indication of a need to incorporate management systems to identify Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) led me to question how STS looks in other helping professions. The studies that have been done in this field capture a different setting than is experienced by
educators. These studies don’t apply directly because the contexts in which they were conducted vary drastically because of the organization of schools. Nevertheless, these studies are useful here in how they define and measure STS. Secondary Traumatic Stress has long been used interchangeably with compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma. Though there are some differences, much of the work in this area uses literature that considers them to be similar constructs.

In a study on compassion fatigue following the September 11 terrorist attacks, researchers Boscarino, Figley, and Adams, (2004) conducted a study to identify the levels of secondary traumatic stress in social workers. The participants of the study were randomly selected social workers that were affected by the attacks of September 11th. Two hundred thirty-six social workers responded, eighty percent of whom reported being involved in disaster counseling efforts following the attacks. The participants were mostly White, females, over the age of fifty. The study used a survey methodology that also worked as a validation study of the survey they used. This study relied on Figley’s concept of the vicarious transmission of traumas through the therapeutic process. Their initial validation study supported the idea that compassion fatigue is a unique feature of workplace environments and not aligned with negative life events, personal trauma, or lack of social support. They found that the scales combined were able to predict psychological distress and can be useful in identifying caregiving professionals at risk for secondary trauma, psychological problems, and burnout. The limitation of their study is similar to other studies that use prominent scales on secondary trauma or vicarious trauma; they contain no satisfaction or reverse-worded items. Beyond the validation of the previous study, this study found that mental health care professionals who worked with victims of trauma were at greater risk for compassion fatigue when controlling for all demographic factors.
In a similar study that focused on forensic interviewers, Perron and Hiltz, (2006) examined factors associated with burnout and secondary trauma. The quantitative study used an online survey and distributed it to 115 potential participants who were forensic interviewers. Sixty-six of those recruited to take the online survey responded, which was an overall response rate of 60%. The respondents were chosen because of their work with child care advocacy center across the United States. The majority of the participants averaged 30-34 years of age, and 90% of the respondents were White females. The survey included the use of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory and the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale. These were used to measure burnout and secondary trauma. The results of the survey indicated a statistically significant inverse relationship between organizational satisfaction and burnout and secondary trauma. They also found that there was an inverse relationship between self-efficacy and disengagement and secondary trauma. Perron and Hiltz indicated that secondary trauma is a relatively new area of research. They also found that the literature on secondary trauma signifies an acute response to trauma that can lead to burnout if left untended.

Researchers in psychology have continued their attempts to identify the cost of working in a helping profession. In the article, *The Cost of Caring*, Tehrani (2007) investigates secondary traumatic stress indicating that workers who are exposed to others’ traumas often describe symptoms similar to those directly affected by the trauma. The survey used quantitative methods in which they surveyed 149 care workers who have regular contact with clients who are in distress or have been traumatized. The survey was a 21-item attitudinal inventory. The analysis included a factor analysis that resulted in four independent factors. Three of the factors involved the negative impact of the work on participant’s beliefs and the fourth gave insight to the positive beliefs or what they called “post trauma growth.” The findings concluded that secondary
traumatization in its various forms and names are an occupational hazard (Tehrani, 2007).

Workers who are more vulnerable and empathetic tend to be at greater risk of experiencing secondary traumatization, and these professionals experience similar symptoms to those of their patients. Secondary traumatization manifests itself often through trivial changes such as lack of time and energy for self-care, increased cynicism, sadness and seriousness. When dealing with cases that are more distressing, therapists experience various symptoms of arousal which include heightened emotions and being hypersensitive to violent acts. Some careers in the field built-in defense mechanism, such as avoidance, in order to avoid feelings of grief and helplessness. They do so by incorporating training that includes informal self-assessment of STS and various coping mechanism for therapist/social workers/ first respondents/etc. to access.

**Secondary Traumatic Stress in Teachers**

The work on teacher burnout and stress revealed that some work in the field has attempted to capture variations of STS. Teacher disillusionment, features of PTSD in teaching staff, and emotional exhaustion were topics that were mentioned in the literature. These types of studies laid the groundwork to the work that I want to explore regarding the emotional investment that teachers make. This section reviews the literature on STS relating to teachers.

There have been two studies that focus specifically on the contexts of schools. Motta (2012) began work in this area by concentrating on the tools that are currently used to explore secondary traumatic stress. They found that there was a need for this type of work to include school personnel. This study identified the four most common surveys and questionnaires that have been used to identify secondary traumatic stress and raised a concern that none were applicable to children. They further indicated the need for school personnel, specifically school counselors, who have worked with students who have had traumatic experiences (such as mass school
shootings, natural disasters, etc.) to have a tool to measure adverse effects of witnessing trauma. This is necessary because of the extended time that school personnel are exposed to students.

The second study that was done came out in the same year as the previously mentioned investigation but instead used the tools provided by the field of psychology to identify secondary traumatic stress. The researchers believed that the literature on helping professions such as nurses, social workers, therapist, etc. was pertinent to teachers and other school personnel. Borntrager, Caringi, van den Pol, Crosby, O’Connell, Trautman, and McDonald (2012) surveyed upwards of 300 school staff members using four surveys and questionnaires; two of the measures were unpublished (Public School Demographic Workplace Questionnaire and the Peer Support Questionnaire), and the other two were the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (Bride, Robinson, Yegidis, & Figley, 2004) and the PROQOL (Stamm, 2005) across six schools in the Northwest. The participants were on average 45 years old, mostly female, and mostly White. They, much like Motta, et. al., made a case that teachers and other school personnel develop relationships with students and spend extended periods of time with these individuals. The literature on trauma they identified indicated that 25% of students in the US will have experienced a traumatic event before they reach the age of 16. The authors believe that this could be a source of teacher stress. They found that a large percentage (over 50%) of school personnel showed signs of primary and secondary trauma and that it was a higher percentage for those who lacked structural support through peer mentorship. Because of the vast majority of school staff members that experienced a significant amount of stress related to traumas, they recommended that educators have access to on-the-job secondary trauma management systems, similar to that available to professionals in other helping professions.
Conclusion

Large numbers of teacher turnover have detrimental effects on students and schools. This impact makes it imperative to continue expanding work in the field. Work that has been done on teacher turnover that focuses on teacher stress, often looks at this through a lens that requires teachers to have more self-efficacy or mitigate their stress by creating "healthier habits" or "ruminating" less (Košir, et. al. 2015). Though there are strategies that may be able to help teachers, focusing on the individual fails to recognize the conditions in which the agents act. If policies are being implemented (e.g. high stakes testing and other accountabilities) that are impacting teacher turnover, it is highly possible that they are also affecting teachers through added stressors, etc. Policy makers, therefore, should consider stress as a focus in their reforms.

In my research, I want to examine secondary traumatic stress (STS) and its potential impact on teacher turnover. My research approach will differ from current literature on teacher turnover by exploring STS. More importantly (to me) I would not rely on an economic framework to consider the interactions between teachers, students, and their environment. Though economic structures have proven useful to the field, I believe that the use of affect and trauma lenses to guide the study can capture the complexity of these relationships.

Like much of the recent research that reframes this debate, looking at working conditions (however they may be defined) is helpful in pushing for policies and implementations of working conditions that can help mitigate teacher turnover. However, I feel that the definitions of working conditions are too broad and can be taken up in a variety of ways. This can be useful, but can also be damaging if taken up with a lens that would take us back to not only blaming teachers but also blaming students and families. Further, it lacks the explicit acknowledgment that educators and students are agents in a socially constructed environment. This agency requires a lens that
acknowledges that agents don't act outside of conditions (Butler, 2004). Separating them out signifies that they are not interdependent, as others would argue that they interact. The working condition I would primarily focus on in the study is "psychological" factors, but again I feel that separating this working condition from the others Johnson mentioned fails to capture the complexity of school systems, and the agents which act inside of them.

With this review of the literature, I explored what existing research said about my research questions. With regards to my first question, I am able to find a gap where the research fails to examine Secondary Traumatic Stress in educators. There is one published article on the topic that was released four years ago and was mentioned in the review of the literature by Borntrager, et. al. (2014). I argue that there is a continued need to pursue research in this area and expand the methods and conceptual frameworks that have been used. For the following question, I also find that there is limited research in the teacher turnover that has explored secondary traumatic stress or similar affective explanations for teacher turnover, most of which was discussed in the sections on teacher turnover general research and secondary traumatic stress in teaching staff. Finally, I examine some work on survey tools that have been used to investigate Secondary Traumatic Stress in school personnel. Through this analysis, I continue to rely on critical theories of affect and trauma.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Strategy of Inquiry

This is a mixed-methods study, which used both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather information from a district and a small sample of teachers. This approach allowed me to use both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study, which provided the necessary information for a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2013; Charles & Mertler, 2002). I relied heavily on the rationale for mixed methods based on the argument of Howe and Eisenhart (1990) that the methods should follow a logical path from the questions of the investigation. The phenomenon I intended to capture benefited from the use of quantitative methods, but a further analysis required the use of qualitative methods. A mixed methods approach allowed for the use of both a survey to identify levels of STS and followed up with interviews to gain deeper analysis of this phenomena. The survey was distributed to all teachers in a school district. The survey had a large enough sample of teachers ensuring statistical power. From the survey, teachers volunteered to participate in an interview.

Qualitative interviews with teachers from the district allowed for an in-depth analysis of how teachers take on students’ traumas and stress. Interviews also provided insight on other factors that affect teacher stress dynamics as well as relationships that teachers indicate with other teachers, families and the community in which they reside. A set of qualitative codes were developed and utilized in the analysis of responses given in the interviews. The categories that were developed were primarily done through inductive coding. Once interviews were coded and narratives were written, member checks were conducted to ensure that the material that was analyzed was not taken out of context or misinterpreted.
Research Site

Franklin School District \(^2\) is a small rural school district in the High Plains region of the United States, serving students from Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade. Though this site is considered a rural setting, the student demographics are primarily comprised of minority students. This contributed to a focus on teachers who work with students from diverse backgrounds for the survey administration and interview selection.

According to the district website, the demographics of the population have remained constant over the last five years. The majority of the students in the district are Latino and qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. The district has a total of 12 schools, 7 primary schools, 2 intermediate schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school. The district is going through a restructuring and will be moving back to an elementary school structure that would eliminate the intermediate schools by including Kindergarten-6\(^{th}\) grade at the elementary level. Middle Schools and the High School would remain the same. This has caused some administrative changes and some forced shifts for teachers and staff.

Table 1: Student Demographics of Franklin School District

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>5,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial/Ethnic Makeup</td>
<td>76.9% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.9% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.14 % Black or African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.99% Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Franklin School District, 2017)

\(^2\) This is a pseudonym for the district.
Though the student demographics are varied, the teachers’ demographics have similar trends to that of national statistics. The teacher demographics of the district can be seen in Table 2. The district has been implementing initiatives to increase their teacher diversity, but have failed to make the gains that other districts are making in their recruiting and retaining of minority teachers. This made this school district an ideal site because of its resemblance to other districts nationwide and the similarity of its student demographic to other larger, urban settings.

Table 2: Certified Staff Demographics of Franklin School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Employed Teachers</th>
<th>377</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial/Ethnic Makeup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more Races</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data was gathered from School Officials of Franklin School District. (Franklin School District, 2017)

In the findings, I will discuss the demographics of the teachers who participated in the survey and interviews.

Role of the Researcher

I consider myself to be a part of the Latino community. I was born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. before I was school-aged. I learned Spanish at home, and once I began pre-school, I started acquiring English. I spent all of my schooling years in U.S. schools in English medium classrooms. I was once part of the community I researched and am sympathetic to the students who are seen as deficient and the teachers who empathize with these children. Though I can relate to the students and most of the teachers, I understand that my positionality as a researcher gives me an etic position as well. I was able to engage in simultaneous insider/outsider experiences throughout the research with teachers (Spradley, 1979).
As a teacher who suffered from job-related anxiety and depression, I am invested in learning more about what role emotion plays in the school and classroom setting. As a teacher in an English medium school with many emerging bilinguals that were strategically segregated into my classroom, I have been able to see the practices of what happens to language minorities systemically. Being invested in working in a Title I school, I also experienced high levels of empathy for my students, 90% of which were on free and reduced lunch, and many of which had experienced life circumstances that would be considered traumatic. Furthermore, I developed an essential support system in my school with my colleagues that allowed me an insight into teachers who had been dealing with signs of STS for many of the years that they had been teaching.

**Study Design**

In this study, I used a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, that required two phases (Creswell, 2013). A sequential explanatory mixed methods approach begins with the collection of the quantitative, numeric data. Phase one required the administration of a web-based survey (An extensive timeline in Appendix A shows the opening and closing of the survey time frame as well as survey reminder e-mail timeline.). The goal of Phase I was to identify the relationship of selected variables on the levels of secondary traumatic stress, to attempt to make a correlational link between demographic teacher factors and secondary traumatic stress, and finally to allow for purposefully selecting informants for the second phase of the study. In the second phase, I focused on the qualitative multiple case study approach. This required that I collect data through semi-structured interviews to help gain a better understanding of what external and internal factors that were captured in phase one were significant predictors of high levels of secondary traumatic stress. The rationale for this method was that the survey (quantitative method) would
provide a better understanding of the presence of the phenomenon and overall characteristics of the sample, while the interviews (qualitative method) would provide an in-depth understanding of how the phenomenon is experienced by various cases within the sample.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that guided my study are descriptive and comparative, as well as phenomenological (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). The research questions began with the quantitative phase using a survey to explore the levels of STS in teachers. It is then followed by interviews that explore the perceived cause of the phenomenon. Table 3 indicates how each question and sub-question were examined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Sub Question</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What level of STS is evident in K-12 public school teachers?</td>
<td>Does STS vary by school demographics?</td>
<td>Survey of STS developed for K-12 educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does STS vary by teacher demographics?</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do they embody this type stress?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What types of STS do teachers report experience?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do they embody this type stress?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantitative Data Sources, Instrument Development, and Collection Methods**

**Data Sources.** Based on the literature review, I identified a need to develop a survey for STS that would be specific to the field of education. I named the survey “Teacher Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale.” The variables of the quantitative analysis were chosen based on the development of the survey, which was intended to capture secondary traumatic stress in teachers. The survey instrument was validated via a pilot study that was conducted in Fall 2015.
Instrument Development. The survey was developed by drawing on research in the field of psychology on STS and adapting these to the field of education by making the wording more appropriate for educators. Words like “client” were changed to “student” and phrasing regarding the therapists’ work were adapted to mirror working in school environments. This resulted in twenty-eight Likert-style statements designed to measure levels of STS in teachers. Also included at the beginning of the survey were ten demographic questions that gave pertinent information about the respondents to help inform possible predictors of STS. The two final survey questions were open-ended questions, the first allowing the respondents to provide feedback and the second allowing the respondents to volunteer for the interview phase of the study. The survey was created using Qualtrics software and disseminated through the software as well. Appendix B shows the survey in the Qualtrics format.

Validity. “To what extent are we actually measuring what we think we are Measuring?” (Keller, 2006, p.61). This question embodies the thought and process behind validity arguments regarding quantitative methods. The initial pilot test allowed me to check this measurement tool for validity. There was a total of 52 respondents, and of those 52 only 44 completed the survey to its entirety. The demographics of respondents in the pilot test aligned with my initial hesitation for using a snowball method. When not considering the administrators, who took the survey (29%), most of the respondents were Elementary Classroom Teachers (44%) and over half of them worked in Title I schools (68%). The rest of the respondents fell into the following categories: 10% who taught ESL, 5% who were middle school teachers, 10% who were special education teachers, and 5% were Title I teachers. The demographics are not a surprise, and because of the recruitment method, the sample for the pilot study was not representative of
current demographic trends of K-12 teachers. Ninety percent of my participants were female, which is higher than the average nationwide and most were white.

I began the process of validity checks from the beginning of this project in the form of content validity when developing the construct. I then continued with face and content validity of the construct measure by recruiting an expert panel to review the questions. The expert panel consisted of Dr. Kathy Escamilla, Dr. Elizabeth Dutro, and Dr. Terrenda White, though all in the field of education, their expertise in various areas in the field of teaching allowed me to adapt the questions in a way that would be appropriate for teachers and that would align with my theoretical framework and study design. Finally, after the survey was piloted, I was able to test for test content validity, response process validity, internal test structure validity, and the validity of the testing consequences.

I used Wilson’s (2005) approach for conceptualizing a construct. The construct that I was interested in measuring is STS in public school K-12 teachers. In defining the construct, I relied on the literature mentioned in the review of literature and on Motta’s (2012) body of work examining secondary traumatic stress in children. He defined secondary trauma as the “transfer and acquisition of negative affective and dysfunctional cognitive states due to prolonged and extended contact with others, such as family members, who have been traumatized” (2012, p. 257). Secondary trauma thus encompasses the spread of traumatic reactions from those affected by trauma to those in close contact with the distressed persons (in this case children). Research shows that individuals that have close contact with traumatized victims are at risk of vicarious trauma or emotional exhaustion, these people have been identified as school mental health workers or social workers, but little has been done to consider teachers who spend extended time with students (Borntrager, et. al., 2012). Those who experience secondary trauma do not have to
directly experience the trauma, the mere act of hearing students’ traumas can cause teachers to experience secondary trauma (Motta, 2012).

In operationalizing this definition, I was interested in what the medical field and what current research defined as observable symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. Salston and Figley (2003) found that symptoms of secondary traumatic stress often mimic post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. These symptoms include respondents indicating that they experience intrusive memories, avoidance, arousal, and negative changes in thinking and mood.

The Mayo Clinic symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress included all of these symptoms as well and examples featured in Table 4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intrusive memories</th>
<th>Avoidance</th>
<th>Negative changes</th>
<th>Arousal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic event</td>
<td>Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event</td>
<td>Negative feelings about yourself or other people</td>
<td>Irritability, angry outbursts or aggressive behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again (flashbacks)</td>
<td>Avoiding places, activities or people that remind you of the traumatic event</td>
<td>Inability to experience positive emotions</td>
<td>Always being on guard for danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upsetting dreams about the traumatic event</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling emotionally numb</td>
<td>Overwhelming guilt or shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe emotional distress or physical reactions to something that reminds you of the event</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of interest in activities you once enjoyed</td>
<td>Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much or driving too fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hopelessness about the future</td>
<td>Trouble concentrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Memory problems, including not remembering important aspects of the traumatic event</td>
<td>Trouble sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty maintaining close relationships</td>
<td>Being easily startled or frightened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


When considering the literature on secondary traumatic stress, I formed a continuum of STS based on the interpretation of two surveys: the PROQOL and the Secondary Traumatic Stress
Scale. These surveys originated in the field of psychology and have been used in two studies conducted on school personnel (Bride, et al. 2004; Stamm, 2005). Both of these surveys indicated that the three subscales on the scale move together. As these move up, this indicates a higher level of experienced secondary traumatic stress. However, both leave out the construct of negative changes in behavior, according to Bride et. al. (2014) who relied heavily on the work of Figley, “negative changes in behavior” can also be a symptom of burnout and for their work, they decided to leave it out of the survey. The authors of the PROQOL also left out negative changes in their survey but included various other constructs that they measured in their survey; of these constructs one capture burnout. I investigated all four symptoms of secondary traumatic stress in the measurement tool.

The original construct map was a comprehensive example of how the scale moved, the scale described a positive correlation between the four subscales, but with little explanation. I hypothesized that they would move up and down the continuum together. The current construct map explores my hypothesis of how each sub-construct moves in relation to the others more explicit. This study will look at respondents as compared to each other; rather than looking at set levels of the constructs, because there are no set levels for this construct. I began by identifying the two extremes of the construct and described the attributes of someone who exhibits an extremely high level of Secondary Traumatic Stress and someone who shows a low-level secondary traumatic stress or no secondary traumatic stress. While I initially anticipated only having three categories because they aligned closely with previous studies on secondary traumatic stress, I decided that the groups in the middle are where one can find out the most about the scale because that is where most of the participants were likely to be found. In
predicting the middle sections, I was forced to consider more closely how all four sub-scales moved in relation to each other.

The construct map (Figure 3) describes the four levels in detail ordered from low to high and matched to the 4-Point-Likert-style response categories. Each level addresses the four subscales and how they change throughout the levels. Attention is paid to intrusion, avoidance, negative changes, and arousal as defined through the symptoms on Table 4. A respondent at the highest level of my construct would self-report *always* experiencing symptoms of intrusion, avoidance, negative changes, and arousal when considering their experiences with students who have been traumatized. As mentioned above, this aligns with my hypothesis that all four subscales are correlated and move in the same direction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level Description</th>
<th>Symptom Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3- Extremely High levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress</td>
<td>Always experiences all symptoms of intrusion&lt;br&gt;Always experiences all symptoms of avoidance&lt;br&gt;Always experiences all symptoms of negative changes&lt;br&gt;Always experiences all symptoms of arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- High Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress</td>
<td>Very often experiences all symptoms of intrusion&lt;br&gt;Very often experiences all symptoms of avoidance&lt;br&gt;Very often experiences all symptoms of negative changes&lt;br&gt;Very often experiences all symptoms of arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1- Low Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress</td>
<td>Occasionally experiences all symptoms of intrusion&lt;br&gt;Occasionally experiences all symptoms of avoidance&lt;br&gt;Occasionally experiences all symptoms of negative changes&lt;br&gt;Occasionally experiences all symptoms of arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0- No Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress</td>
<td>Never experiences all symptoms of intrusion&lt;br&gt;Never experiences all symptoms of avoidance&lt;br&gt;Never experiences all symptoms of negative changes&lt;br&gt;Never experiences all symptoms of arousal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Construct Map Continuum of Secondary Traumatic Stress*
To check face validity, I recruited an expert panel to identify if the survey was appropriate for the intended population: educators. As mentioned above, the group of experts consisted of Dr. Kathy Escamilla, Dr. Elizabeth Dutro, and Dr. Terrenda White. Again, while these professors are not specialists in the field of psychology, they are experts in the area of education, and their expertise in various areas in the field of teaching allowed me to adapt the questions in a way that would be appropriate for teachers. The panel requested the use of positively worded items, as all of the items initially were negatively worded to align with the way similar STS surveys created their items. Varying the questions would not allow respondents to merely checked the same column without reading every question. Per their suggestions, I also reduced a number of questions that were not directly associated with student-teacher interaction (Example: “I have become less active” would be a question that is not directly related to student-teacher interaction). I rephrased a few questions and also added some positively worded questions in response to their feedback.

**Test content.** One of the first areas that one can look for to demonstrate validity is the test content. The construct that I used has been established in the field of psychology. Though there is still some concern for confounding symptoms that are also employed in other constructs (such as depression), there have been studies that validate that STS is a construct (as mentioned in the Literature Review). Further, the questions that were adapted and changed for this measurement tool have been used in various surveys.

The threats to validity in this section were seen in my decision to add questions that were not adapted from the previous surveys and including negative feelings. Through the analysis, I believe that the rewording of some of the questions and also the newly developed questions were not as sound as the questions that had been adapted from other surveys. I also noted that the
positively worded questions (which has not been used in other STS surveys) proved to be less internally consistent. While it would create a more internally consistent test, I decided to keep these items for the benefits of having items that varied, rather than having all negatively worded items. I wanted to ensure that respondents were reading each question.

**Response processes.** In order to have validity in the response to process area, I would have to know if the questions were getting at the construct. The best way to have demonstrated this would be think-alouds or cognitive interviews. Unfortunately, I did not have the time or willing respondents to do either of those and because the survey was done online, I was not able to watch respondents as they took the survey. Cognitive interviews would have helped me make changes that would have clarified the statements. This is a threat to validity, and I did consider survey comments from respondents when I revised the survey to its survey. Though this is not quite a cognitive interview, it did give me some insight as to what some teachers were thinking regarding the survey questions. A few of the teachers recommended the rewording of some questions that were a little misleading. I took this into consideration when revising the survey after validation.

**Internal test structure.** The internal test structure of my survey consisted of two areas the Cronbach’s Alpha and how respondents were placed on the construct. Both of these areas proved to be valid. The way that respondents were placed on the construct led me to believe that the construct works in the way that I had initially hypothesized. The Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.92, which is high for an attitudinal test and showed internal consistency. Based on the item and person fit statistics, which were mentioned previously there were some concerns with a few items and a few people, and though I believe removing some of the items might increase the alpha, it is still high for the survey and shows internal consistency.
**Testing consequences.** Though I would like to believe that this survey could have considerable implications for policies that are enacted to retain teachers, I understand that this survey is low-stakes. It should be used for informative purposes so that teachers can pair it with strategies to cope with STS that may occur on the job and may lead to burnout. When mentioning this to other educators, they are extremely excited about the notion and often offer me a story of STS that they have experienced. I believe there is a use for it, but it will go hand in hand with interviews.

**Reliability.** The reliability of the survey instrument was tested during the pilot study that was conducted November 2016. The pilot study was conducted using a snowball method, so the number of teachers reached was unknown, but there were 52 respondents. Examination of the results from the pilot study resulted in the need to make some necessary changes to the survey questions. I eliminated questions that were not consistent with the measurement of STS. Even prior to the elimination of these items, the data from the pilot study were gathered and using “Secondary Traumatic Stress” as the single construct to be measured, Cronbach’s Alpha was conducted. Cronbach’s Alpha is a measure of internal consistency used to measure the items of a survey and identify if they are all measuring the same construct. If items are measuring the same construct, the alpha would near 1.00. An acceptable reliability coefficient is 0.7. The internal test structure of my survey consisted of two areas the Cronbach’s Alpha and how respondents were placed on the construct. The Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.92, which is high for an attitudinal test and shows internal consistency. This was very high and suggested that scores on the pilot test of my instrument were very reliable. A Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.92 thus indicates that 92% of the variance in observed scores represents actual differences in STS levels of respondents, with just 8% of the variance is due to error.
Collection Methods

The collection of data began after the Internal Review Board at the University of Colorado Boulder approved the project, the consent material can be found in Appendices C and D. To examine secondary traumatic stress (STS) in teachers for this study group, a web-based survey (found in Appendix B) was distributed via district-wide email to 377 certified employees of Franklin School district in January 2017. All certified teachers in the rural public-school district in the High Plains region of the United States had an equal opportunity to participate in the survey. With the approval from the school district, an e-mail was sent to every teacher employed in the district. The e-mail was sent to participants and included information about the survey and their informed consent embedded within the survey. Upon giving consent, participants proceeded to the twenty-eight survey questions and accompanying demographic information questions. The survey data was collected on the online survey tool Qualtrics. The survey was open for one month. After two weeks, I resent the survey to the entire district as a reminder. Once the month was reached, the survey was closed, and the data was used for analysis.

Participant Selection. In order to get a sample that was representative of the population, all teachers in the district had an opportunity to take the survey. For better survey turn out, I resent the survey one additional time before the window was closed. The email was sent to their school-based e-mail addresses directly from my Qualtrics account with the survey embedded. With the entire classroom teacher population having had the opportunity to take the survey, the survey demographics were intended to be representative of the district teacher demographics.

Technology. The survey was administered, and data was collected using Qualtrics, which is an online survey tool designer. The survey data was then uploaded to R Studio and STATA software for analysis. Though I am most familiar with STATA, RStudio provides different
analysis that will be needed for the survey, as such, I used both statistical package tools for analysis. STATA was used to run all descriptive statistics, and RStudio was used to run inferential statistics.

Variables. The data was collected from one school district. All teachers in the school district had access to take the survey. The survey collected information from each participant that compiled the demographic variables used to run various analyses. The particular project focuses on the demographics of teachers in Franklin School district and their level of STS and other variables that are intended to capture different characteristics of the teachers’ background and professional characteristics.

The dataset contains information from 115 teachers and had a total of 8 variables that were intended to capture teacher demographic information to use for the analysis. The variables used for this research are described in Table 5:
Table 5: Variables and their name, type, explanation of the variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable R-Studio name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Traumatic Stress</td>
<td>STS_Levels</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>STS is the phenomenon being measured. It is calculated based on how respondents answer the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>age</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Teachers age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>gender</td>
<td>Dichotomous</td>
<td>Self-identified gender, though initially had many choices, the data showed two categories chosen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>ethn_white</td>
<td>Dichotomous</td>
<td>Self-identified ethnic background was minimized into 2 categories: white and non-white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>class_working</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
<td>Teachers’ socioeconomic status based on upbringing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>class_middle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>class_upper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>class_high</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>beginning_t</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
<td>Three categories were decided based on the literature of when teachers are considered beginning, middle, and veterans in their field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>midcareer_t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experienced_t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>elementary</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
<td>Teacher Grade level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>middle_school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high_school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated Turnover</td>
<td>same_school_nxtyr</td>
<td>Dichotomous</td>
<td>Teachers were asked if they planned on staying at the same school the following year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that there are only two continuous variables and both of them are not true continuous variables as they are limited in how low or high they can go in their numerical values. However, identifying them as continuous for analysis purpose allows for the analysis to capture all ranges of each of the variables. The dichotomous variables in this dataset were decided based on either the number of categories that were actually chosen by the participants or, with regards to the variable on ethnicity, I decided to look at it through a dichotomous lens because the population of teachers of color in the district was small enough that it would be more efficient to group. Finally, categorical variables were categorized into groups that are typical of each variable, with the exception of the variable “Experience.” This particular variable was organized into three
categories based on the research of when teachers typically leave the profession or gain tenure as a reference to beginning and mid-career teachers and an arbitrary 20 years of experience for experienced teachers.

**Quantitative Methods of Data Analysis**

I began the analysis by cleaning the data. This included dropping incomplete cases and reverse coding the positively worded items so that they would be scored in the same way that the negatively worded questions and all move on the construct levels in the same direction. There were 7 items that needed to be reversed, and they were as follows: 3. When I thought about my students outside of work hours, I felt satisfaction., 8. I have become more active than usual., 10. When I thought about my students outside of work hours I felt successful., 13. I found joy in supporting students in all aspects of their lives., 17. I encouraged students to be open about their lives in my classroom., 20. I made it my goal to connect my curriculum to my students’ lives., and 23. I felt that students and their families trust me with information about their life experiences. Reverse coding, as mention briefly above, means that if a person agreed with any of these items and endorsed the question by responding with “Always,” for the analysis, this would reverse to “Never.” This was done because the construct moves up to the level “4” or “Always” with regards to the increased level of STS. These items would conceptually move a respondent towards the bottom of the construct. To ensure that they moved in the right direction reverse coding was necessary.

Overall, the analysis of the data was completed using methods from both the Classical Test Theory (CTT) and Item Response Theory (IRT), as well as, regression models that helped answer the sub-questions for question one.
In order to respond to the first question, “What level of STS is evident in K-12 public school teachers?”, I had to first find the level of STS for each respondent. This was done by finding the total theta of each respondent. For the purposes of this study, I chose to use the Rasch Model. To do this, I collapsed the categories from a four-point scale to a 2-point scale. The Rasch Model is based on the idea that a person’s probability of answering correctly for any given question will depend on the individual’s ability ($\theta_p$), and the difficulty of the question itself ($b_i$). This can be seen in the equation $P(X_{pi} = 1 | \theta_p, b_i) = \frac{\exp(\theta_p - b_i)}{1 + \exp(\theta_p - b_i)}$. In this case, a person’s probability of agreeing for any given question will depend on the person’s level of STS ($\theta_p$), and the difficulty of the question itself ($b_i$). This means we can determine for each item, the probability of a particular respondent agreeing with the statement based on both the difficulty of the question, as well as the respondents’ level of the construct. After the respondents have a theta, their theta will be compared to the item difficulties using the Wright Map. The Wright Map, therefore, provides a representation of the administered survey by placing the difficulty of the items on the same measurement scale as the construct level of our respondents (theta).

Having calculated the theta for all respondents, I was able to then run descriptive and inferential statistics on the respondents. The descriptive statistics were able to provide the information needed to respond to the subquestions of question number one: “Did STS vary by school and teacher demographics?” This question was answered using regression analysis of the demographics that the respondents provided in the survey. I began by running a regression on STS by teacher ethnicity. This was done so that I could have a baseline for the intercept of the statistical model. I then ran a regression on “school type” holding all other variables constant. I then ran similar regressions of STS on teacher demographics holding all variables constant.
The final step to the survey analysis was to ensure the test validity and reliability. Though this was done through the pilot study, I wanted to ensure that the survey held the strong reliability statistics with the changes that were made after the pilot test analysis. This analysis was done using classical test theory and checking item average, difficulty, and correlation for reliability. A standard error of measure was also performed.

Qualitative Instrument Development, Data Sources, and Collection Methods

Data Sources. The study relied on two primary data sources to gather information from teachers. This section gives an in-depth assessment to the second part of the study. To further examine the phenomenon of STS in teachers from the sample, qualitative, open-ended interviews were administered to a group of self-selected individuals. I generated interview questions based on the survey construct and my conceptual framework (Figure 2). The interview protocol had ten main areas that were points of discussion with the participants. These areas ranged in topics, but all directly related to teachers and their choices and experiences around their profession (see Appendix X for interview protocol).

Interview Protocols. The interview protocol that was used in this study was used to gain a better insight into how teachers viewed students, families, and schools, what they felt their responsibility was to their students, and how they may or may not take students’ lived experiences on personally. The interview protocol considered the following areas: (1) Background of the teacher, (2) motivation for working in the city/district (3) attitudes about school, students, and families, (4) teachers’ beliefs about students’ home lives (5) teachers’ beliefs about their responsibility to students, (6) attitudes about personal and professional stress, (7) beliefs about trauma and stress and (8) the understanding of students’ stress and traumas. All information was transcribed and uploaded into MAXQDA qualitative data software.
Collection Methods. To examine secondary traumatic stress (STS) in teachers for this study, a web-based survey (found in Appendix B) was distributed via district-wide email to 377 certified employees of Franklin School district in January 2017. Teachers who responded to that survey on the final question were asked if they were willing and able to volunteer for an interview. All certified teachers in the rural public-school district in the High Plains region of the United States had an equal opportunity to participate in the survey and thus to take part in the interviews had they chose to self-select into them. Teachers then set up meeting date and times for us to meet for the interview. Interviews took place at a location selected by the participant; this varied from coffee shops to individual schools. The times also varied to include periods during school hours, during their plan time, and after school. The interview consisted of 10 areas, and 52 questions and sub-questions combined but was formatted in a semi-structured manner, and additional questions were asked, and some were avoided if the participant had already answered (found in Appendix E). Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) posit that semi-structured interviews can be facilitated in a variety of ways depending on the effect you want. The interview protocol was intended to be used as a way to flesh out the research question. Research indicates that this type of questioning, semi-structured, can provide the necessary environment for participants to disclose personal experiences (Rueda & Garcia, 1996).

I took a position by Weiss (1995) that indicated that an interviewer should not provide too much information about the study. If information was provided that at the end of the interview would be the best time. For all interviews, I waited until the end of the meeting to divulge any personal experiences regarding the study and attempted to ask questions that would elicit more information without involving my own experiences in general. This was done to help minimize
possible skewed responses from participants. The interviews were then transcribed and put into a coding software for coding and analysis.

**Participant Selection.** The participation selection in qualitative research is often purposive in nature, rather than random (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The selection criteria had been set up in two ways. The first access to interview participants was through a voluntary basis following the survey protocol. Though it was a convenience sample method initially, major subgroups were identified, and the intention was to have a quota selection, with the intent in using instrumental selection (Stake, 1995) if the initial sample was not representative of a larger subset of the population. The instrumental selection process (Stake, 1995) would have allowed me to be able to gain a better insight as to how demographic differences may guide STS. Fortunately, the ten participants that volunteered ranged in demographics (e.g., biological sex, ethnicity, grade level).

**Technology.** The interviews were transcribed on a word processor. The transcriptions were then uploaded onto MAXQDA. MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis tool. The primary function replaces manually copying codes in order to be able to apply various codes to one segment as necessary without the needs to duplicate the transcription segments. The tool was used to create codes and display analysis in different forms.

**Qualitative Methods of Data Analysis**

**Interview Data Analysis.** In order to have an accurate record of the interview, each of the interviews was audio-recorded. This recording was later used for transcription of the interviews. Prior to the interview, each of the respondents was asked for their consent to record the interview. The audio-recorder was placed in a central, visible location and was started after the participant indicated they were ready to begin. The interviews all started with the explanation of
the research, answering questions participants may have, and explaining and signing the consent form.

Before analyzing the data, I listened to the interviews and read the interview transcriptions several times to familiarize myself with the statements. This overview of the data gave me a better understanding of the data and allowed me to gain a full and in-depth comprehension of the interview data. In order to code, I read the interviews line-by-line (Creswell, 2013). During the coding phase of the analysis, I condensed the codes into broader categories, as themes arose. Coding systematically allowed me to make connections between data sources and categorize them accordingly. During the initial coding process, I began with the inductive coding of the interviews. Using an inductive approach allowed me to look for patterns in the statements that were related to both the themes arising from the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Codes from this type of coding often came from consistent ideas or phrases that were common with many of the respondents (e.g., worry, safety, love). After the initial coding was complete, I passed through the data again and developed codes that came directly from the theoretical framework, research questions, and interview questions that were asked (e.g., emotion, trauma, STS). After each interview, if new codes developed, I used an iterative process and reviewed all interview transcripts to see if the code was present. The findings are reported in Chapter 4.

**Internal validity.** Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative measures do not rely on a statistical measurement to ensure that the data is “measuring” what was intended. The nature of qualitative data, which is interpretative by nature, requires that certain measures are put in place to ensure validity (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). With qualitative research, ensuring internal validity can take many forms. In my study, I decided to rely on two forms of internal validity checks with my interviews: member checks and triangulation.
One of the first steps to ensure internal validity was through member checks. This was an important step as it asked the participants to review the transcribed material to make sure that it captured what they intended to say. Member checking is formatted in a way that members of the group from which the data was collected have an opportunity to review and comment on analytic codes, analyses, and conclusions (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). Though all interviews were transcribed verbatim, the teachers were all given a copy of the transcription and asked to review and make comments or changes to their statements as they saw fit. All teachers were sent the transcripts after the transcription was finalized. They were given two weeks to respond, and non-responses were taken as no changes necessary. No teachers responded with changes regarding the transcribed interviews. Though ensuring that their statements and sentiments to the questions were accurate was important, equally important for validity was to ensure that the analytic codes and conclusions were accurately portrayed. To confirm that analytic codes and outcomes were internally valid the same member check steps were taken. Participants were e-mailed their written narrative, and the analytic codes assigned to their interviews and asked to review in the same manner as their transcripts.

The final step towards meeting internal validity that was taken in this study was triangulation. Triangulation is a method that I used to validate findings by taking three independent measures and identifying if the measures agree. (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). For the purposes of this study interview, survey, and theory were triangulated to ensure validity. This was done by looking at the data from the interviews and surveys and looking at how the data triangulate with each other and also with the theories with which this study was framed.
CHAPTER 4: SURVEY FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings chapters will follow the organizational pattern discussed in Chapter 3. It follows a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. This chapter begins with the demographic data of all who participated in the study. It is then followed by the survey findings, which explored the impact that STS has in the population. A more in-depth examination of the phenomenon is explored through the qualitative findings in Chapter 5.

Demographic Data

The demographics of my overall study and results can be seen below in Table 6. The demographics are broken down by sex and race/ethnicity. Because the survey drew from a closed population sample, the population demographic is also displayed in Table 6. A total of 377 surveys were e-mailed out to the population, and 115 complete surveys were returned. The demographics of the survey sample was representative of the population. This representation can be attributed to the randomization of the survey data collection. As seen in Table 6, the respondents in the Survey Sample represented the larger population. There was a 31% response rate which is a good response rate for an outside email survey; it is typical for outside surveys to get a 10-15% response rate (Hamilton, 2003). Not only was the survey sample representative of the population, it was also similar to national averages in the teaching profession. Specifically, in this state, male and female demographics are 23% and 77% respectively according to national data (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, SASS, 2012).

The demographics of the interview sample were not as representative of the overall population, but still reflected a percentage that was similar. There was a higher number of
women represented in the sample interviews and only white, non-Latino and Latino educators were interviewed for this study.

Table 6: Demographics of teacher population, survey and interview samples in percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Survey Sample</th>
<th>Interview Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial/Ethnic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers in all rows except the 2nd one is represented in percentage.

Findings

The results in this section are organized beginning with the quantitative survey findings that answer question one and the sub-questions associated with it and are followed by the analysis of the survey that answers question two. This was done to first understand the overall STS levels in the sample of teachers and then to gain an item level analysis of the responses. The questions, as can be seen in Table 7 below, are organized to be answered in sequence.

Table 7: Quantitative Research Questions and Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Sub Question</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What level of STS is evident in K-12 public school teachers?</td>
<td>Survey of STS developed for K-12 educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does STS vary by school demographics?</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does STS vary by teacher demographics?</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do they embody this type of stress?</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To answer the first research question displayed in Table 7 above, “What level of STS is evident in K-12 public school teachers?” and the sub-questions identified, I relied heavily on the data from the survey that had been sent out to all 377 teachers who were employed at Franklin Public School district for the 2016-2017 school year. This analysis is organized beginning with the central research question first and then proceeding with the sub-questions. I then did an item analysis to help answer question two of “How [teachers] embody this type of stress.”

The Teacher Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale was developed with the intention of capturing how teachers take on others' traumas, specifically their students’ traumas. I chose to conceptualize STS as “embodiment” and connecting it firmly to this theory as posited by the critical feminist underpinnings of Anzaldua (1987), Boler (1999), Butler (2004), and Cruz (2006). Embodiment, as is used by these theorists, considers historical oppression and its imprint on those that are oppressed, as well as the societal factors. Importantly, for my study, this concept of embodiment indicates that these historical and systemic traumas are felt in the bodies of teachers. That is to say, they can have an impact on the physical, emotional, and mental aspects of a person and thus the body should be a place that one can theorize the effects of STS. This part of the study used a quantitative tool to attempt to capture a phenomenon that can be theorized in ways that vary from how STS is typically seen in the field of psychology: an individualized problem to fix. The survey captured the witnessing and embodiment of student traumas that teachers take on as seen within the red circle of the theoretical framework in Chapter 1 Figure 2.

The survey was developed to capture the taking on of others' traumas based on STS. This process began with looking at the symptomatic level of STS. I used these symptoms (as seen in Chapter 3 Table 4), as well as other STS measurement tools (the PROQOL and Secondary
Traumatic Stress Scale, also mentioned in Chapter 3), to develop the items in the TSTSS. The attitudinal survey was 28 items with four scoring attitudinal measures that were intended to capture STS, or as I conceptualize embodiment. Respondents were able to respond to the items using the four attitudinal responses of Never, Occasionally, Very Often, or Always, based on how much they agreed with the statements that were made. Demographic variables were embedded in the survey as separate questions.

**Question 1: What level of STS is evident in K-12 public school teachers?**

In my research, I had four scoring categories for the attitudinal survey there were meant to assess embodiment or STS. These four categories (never, occasionally, very often, and always) were a means for determining how respondents’ attitudes toward STS varied. Since it is attitudinal, and there are no correct and incorrect answers, maintaining a four-point scale is appropriate. The first step was to clean the data this was done by removing incomplete cases and reverse scoring the following items: 3. When I thought about my students outside of work hours, I felt satisfaction., 8. I have become more active than usual., 10. When I thought about my students outside of work hours I felt successful., 13. I found joy in supporting students in all aspects of their lives., 17. I encouraged students to be open about their lives in my classroom., 20. I made it my goal to connect my curriculum to my students’ lives., and 23. I felt that students and their families trust me with information about their life experiences. The actual items were not changed, but how the respondents answered were modified to allow them to move on the construct as intended. As mentioned in Chapter 3, reverse coding means that if a person agreed with any of these items and endorsed the question by responding with “Always,” for the analysis, this would reverse to “Never.” This was done because the construct moves up to the level “4” or “Always” with regards to the increased level of STS. These items would conceptually move a
respondent towards the bottom of the construct. To ensure that they moved in the right direction reverse coding was necessary. So, if respondents answered Always it was coded as Never, Very Often was coded as Occasionally, Occasionally was coded as Very Often, and Never was coded as Always.

There were 142 responses prior to dropping incomplete cases. Two cases were dropped because the consent was not signed prior to beginning the survey. The rest of the cases were discarded because they were missing a significant portion of the survey responses. This left me with 115 responses to analyze. I began by running statistical analysis on the data to provide a descriptive analysis. This allowed me to better understand the data and answer question number one of my study. Figure 4 shows the histogram of the total scores.

The scores are relatively normal in distribution, with an average of 57, and a standard deviation of 7.9. The responses had a minimum total score of 38 and a maximum total score of 79 with the overall minimum and maximum ranging from 0-112. This indicates that teachers are experiencing levels of STS at varying levels. In other words, teachers embody the traumas of students at varying rates, but overall normal occurrences. The normal curve shows that there are teachers who experience low levels of STS and some who experience high levels of STS. Therefore, some teachers take on or embody, students’ traumas at very low levels and some at very high levels. However, the bulk of teachers indicated through their responses that they experienced moderate levels of STS as can be seen in the figure where the majority of the distribution is in the middle of the histogram. The minimum and maximum show that zero teachers experienced STS zero, but also zero teachers that experienced the max level of STS that would be possible.
Figure 4: Histogram of Teachers' Total STS Scores

Classical Test Theory

Item Average and Item Difficulty. The first thing I looked at was the average score for each item, as well as the P+ values. The p+ values are the probability of respondents answering the question at the highest level of the construct.
As can be seen in Figure 5 above, the average item score was a 2.04, indicating that on average, teachers had not experienced significant levels of STS. The scale was 1-4, again with 1 being that teachers Never experienced the statements, 2 being that teachers Occasionally experienced the statement, 3 indicating that teacher Very Often experienced the statement, and 4 being that they Always experience the item statement. The closer to the top of the scale or scoring it at a 4 or Always, means that it was easy, in that it is easy to endorse or agree with. On average, most teachers experienced STS based on each item Occasionally. Figure 6 shows the P+ values, which helped me determine the difficulty of each item. The p+ values indicate the probability of agreeing with a statement or marking a statement as “Always.”. The scale goes from 0-1. If everyone is able to agree with the statement, the probability is equal to 1. If no one is able to agree with the statement, the probability is equal to 0. Intuitively, if everyone can agree with a statement this item is considered to be easy (or not difficult to agree with) and if no one
can agree with the statement the item is deemed to be difficult. Difficulty does not consider the “hardness” of a skill, but rather how participants respond to items. P+ values ranged from 0.44 to 0.71, which provides a good range of difficulty of questions. The average p+ value was 0.43 with a standard deviation of 0.18.

![Figure 6: P+ Values by Item](image)

**Item Correlation.** The next step was to analyze the item correlations with the total score without the item included. If the correlation is high, it is telling me that the item is correlated to the item total. So, if a person responded positively to an item that is highly correlated, then that person is likely to have a higher overall score on the survey, a higher score on the survey indicated a high level of STS, this is because the more items a person endorses as “Always”, the higher they move on the construct (seen in Chapter 3 Figure 3), or on the level of STS they experience. The results of each item are shown in Figure 7. I used the item correlation without the item so as not to account for item variance.
When looking at the results, I am most concerned with the items that are negatively correlated. Item 3 (*When I thought about my students outside of work hours I felt satisfaction*) and Item 10 (*When I thought about my students outside of work hours I felt successful*) are both negatively correlated with the item total. These particular items came about after the expert panel on item revisions. They are statements that are incredibly easy to endorse whether or not you are experiencing any STS and have no bearing on how you will respond to other questions. These are also statements that were not adapted or revised from STS surveys or symptoms. Therefore, it is not surprising that they have a weak correlation. Though the pilot study and measurement validation of the survey showed a similar result with items that were positively phrased, I decided to keep them so that there would be questions that were positively phrased to ensure that readers read all of the items.
**Test Reliability.** Though the survey validated the tool, it was still important to check the empirical research for test reliability. In order to identify if variation or variance in the test is due to a respondent’s level of the construct or if it is due to error, I ran the test reliability coefficient for Cronbach’s Alpha. This shows how much of a respondent’s observed score, which includes the true score and error, is due to error. Cronbach’s Alpha assesses the internal consistency of a measurement took by looking at how all of the items are correlated to each other. Cronbach’s alpha uses the following formula: 

$$\alpha = \frac{N}{N-1} \left[ 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_{Total}^2} \right]$$

where the sum of item variance was 8.10 and the total item variance was 83.26. Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.81. This is moderately high and suggests that the survey items are internally reliable. A Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.81 indicates that 81% of the variance is related to their level of STS, rather than errors and only 19% of the variance is due to error.

**Item Analysis.** After understanding the distribution of STS, as was demonstrated through the respondents’ total score. I wanted to see how each item was answered by the respondents. I analyzed this data using the Rasch Model, specifically item response theory, where I looked at the discrimination and difficulty of each item. This information allowed me to see how teachers responded to each question using inferential statistics. The discrimination of each item helped me determine how likely respondents were to agree or disagree to each item based on their level of the STS construct, or theta. In other words, discrimination of an item relies on the respondents’ level embodiment based on witnessing students’ traumas, which is their total score. Discrimination indicates what items would they likely agree or disagree with when taking the survey based on their level of STS or embodiment. The difficulty of an item was based on how difficult it was for respondents to agree to a statement regardless of their level of embodiment, or Total STS Score. Table 8 below shows the difficulty of each item of the survey.
The survey can be found on Appendix B. Teachers were asked to respond to the statements by “considering students [they] work closely with who have had traumatic experiences” and indicated how true these responses were to them by reflecting specifically on the last thirty days of their work with students.

Table 8: Teacher Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale Item Difficulty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  I was preoccupied thinking of more than one student I teach.</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  I worried about the well-being of my students when they are not at school.</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  When I thought about my students outside of work hours, I felt satisfaction.</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  I found it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a teacher.</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  When I thought about my students outside of work hours, I felt ineffective.</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  I became more emotionally invested in students and their families.</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  I had little interest in being around others for fear that they may bring up students’ experiences.</td>
<td>0.03 Most difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  I have become more active than usual.</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  I avoided people, places, or other things that reminded me of my work with students.</td>
<td>0.04 Difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 When I thought about my students outside of work hours, I felt successful.</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 It seemed as if I was reliving the trauma(s) experienced by some of my students.</td>
<td>0.05 Difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 I purposefully avoided finding out all the details of my students’ lives.</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 I found joy in supporting students in all aspects of their lives.</td>
<td>0.82 Easiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 I felt discouraged about teaching.</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 When I thought about my students outside of work hours, I felt anxious.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 I encouraged students to be open about their lives in my classroom.</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I lost interest in aspects of teaching I once enjoyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I felt guilty about my current circumstances when thinking about my students’ lives outside of school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I made it my goal to connect my curriculum to my students’ lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I have considered leaving the profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>My heart started pounding when I thought about the lives and experiences of some of my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I felt that students and their families trust me with information about their life experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I had trouble sleeping as a result of hearing traumatic experiences from students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>My mind drifted off, and I began thinking about students’ traumatic experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I feared something bad might happen to one of my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I felt emotionally numb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I felt depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the students I teach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I had negative feelings about the children I teach or their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To calculate the difficulty of each item, I collapsed the categories from a four-point scale to a 2-point scale. The Rasch Model is based on the idea that a person’s probability of answering correctly for any given question will depend on the individual’s ability ($\theta_p$), and the difficulty of the question itself ($b_i$). This can be seen in the equation $P(X_{pi} = 1 | \theta_p, b_i) = \frac{\exp(\theta_p - b_i)}{1 + \exp(\theta_p - b_i)}$. In this case, a person’s probability of agreeing for any given question will depend on the person’s level of STS ($\theta_p$) or embodiment, and the difficulty of the question itself ($b_i$). This means we can
determine for each item, the probability of a particular respondent agreeing with the statement based on both the difficulty of the question, as well as the respondents’ level of STS.

This item level analysis informed which items were the most difficult to respond to and which items respondents had the easiest time agreeing to. These items are the most helpful in assessing respondents. As shown in Table 8 above, item number 7 was the most difficult item to agree with. The difficulty in agreeing with item number 7 (I had little interest in being around others for fear that they may bring up students’ experiences), means that most teachers disagree with this statement and are able to be around others without the fear that students’ experiences will be brought into the conversation. Items number 9 and 11 were almost equally as difficult for respondent to agree with (“I avoided people, places, or other things that reminded me of my work with students” and “It seemed as if I was reliving the trauma(s) experienced by some of my students.”) meaning that most teachers disagreed with these statements as well. These three statements were statements that used language that directly described secondary traumatic stress. Though teachers may experience some levels of STS, only those who experienced high levels of STS would be able to agree with these statements. Item 13 (I found joy in supporting students in all aspects of their lives) was an item that was easy for teachers to agree with. The analysis of item 13 seems to align with some intuition of teachers and the profession. It makes sense that most teachers would be able to agree with this item as an assumption can be made that most teachers genuinely care about their students and the lives of their students regardless of their level of the construct.

**Standard Error of Measurement.** The last thing I did in the Classical Test Theory analysis was calculating the standard error of measurement. The formula to calculate it is Standard Error of Measurement = std dev of the test * √(1-CA). The SEM for this survey was 0.56. In order to
explain this, I am reminded of the thought experiment on time travel and brainwashing. If the
same teacher could take the survey over and over again, in the same time and space and have no
recollection of the previous tests, the average of their scores would give us their true score. The
SEM tells us what the standard deviation of the average of the respondent’s scores would be if
the thought experiment could be completed. Unfortunately, time travel and brain washing have
not been created to my knowledge, so the SEM helps us find where a respondent’s true score
would be when considering the variance.

Considering my data, my SEM score of 0.56 means that if I were to send the teachers back in
time and have them respond to my survey, I would be 95% confident that their score would be
+/- 2SEM of their initial score. So, if they scored a 57 on this test (the average score), and were
to retake it, I am 95% sure that their score would be between 56 and 58.

**Item Response Theory.** Classical Test Theory provided some useful information not only on
how each survey participant responded to the items but also how likely they were to answer the
items in a similar way if they were to take the survey again. However, in order to ground this
information closely to the construct map item response theory is a necessary analysis. I began the
analysis by finding the level of theta, or construct that each respondent had using the Rasch
Model. After that analysis, I used the Wright-Map to visualize each respondent in relation to
each survey item. I finalized this analysis by finding the levels of the construct using the
Standard Error and Measure and placing each respondent on the construct map.

**Rasch Model Analysis.** Much like Classical Test theory, to analyze using the Rasch Model, I
had to collapse the categories from a four-point scale to a 2-point scale. In terms of attitudinal
surveys, the Rasch Model is based on the idea that the probability of a person agreeing with
statements depends on their level on the construct ($\theta$), and the difficulty of the statement($b_i$). I
relied on the same equation that was mentioned above, rather than looking solely for discrimination and difficulty. The analysis was done to determine for each item, the probability of a particular respondent agreeing with the statement based on both the difficulty of the question, as well as the respondents’ level of the construct. The Wright Map, therefore, provides a representation of the survey by putting the difficulty of the items on the same measurement scale as the construct level of our respondents’ theta, or their level of STS. For example, looking at the Wright Map shown in Figure 8 below, we can see that Question X14 (I felt discouraged about teaching) is the easiest question for respondents to agree with. Even someone very low in the construct (-3 logits) would have a 50% chance of agreeing. On the other hand, Question X10 (I avoided people, places, or other things that reminded me of my work with students.) was the most difficult question to answer correctly. It is visually apparent that including additional difficult questions would be beneficial to the survey, even for someone past three on the logit scale.
Standard Error of Measurement Analysis. As noted in the previous section on CTT a respondent’s observed score captures true score as with error variance. This is what Standard Error of Measure (SEM) is considered. In Figure 9 you will note that the SEM is a curve that indicates that when respondents are on the extremes of the construct, their SEM is higher. Much like I had previously done, one can calculate a 95% confidence level by multiplying the SEM by two.
The average SEM for my data is 0.54. This means that I would be 95% confident that a respondent’s scores are likely to be +/- 1.08 theta. The SEM in the Rasch Model allowed me to calculate the levels of my construct. When I developed my construct map, I anticipated having four levels. To calculate the levels, I began at the average theta, which was (-1.45). I then added +/- 1.08 (2SEM) to create the first level. I generate a level above and below the middle level. Based on the respondents’ values of theta, the most likely levels for my construct are as follows:

- **Level 1:** < -2.53 theta (n=18)
- **Level 2:** -2.53 to -0.37 theta (n=78)
- **Level 3:** > -0.37 theta (n=19)
There are the most respondents in Level 2, which would be the average level of the construct. This makes sense because most people would experience some but not a severe amount of STS.

**Comparing the Wright Map back to the Construct Map.** The final step that I did was to compare my Wright Map (Figure 8) back to my construct map (Figure 3). Using the groupings that had come from the SEM discussion above, I was able to look at the levels of the construct map with the items and the respondent theta levels. One of the major differences between my initial construct map and the results from Construct Map was that I had initially believed there to be four levels. The levels indicated three ways in which respondents were grouped instead of four, but the largest grouping was in the middle as mentioned above. The respondents did move in a similar way as the initial construct map.

In the lowest level (Level 1), respondents were only able to agree with questions that were more broadly discussing the needs of their students and their connection to them.

At the next level (Level 2), the statements mostly talked about work satisfaction, intrusion, and avoidance.

At the final level (Level 3), these statements were very specific questions about the trauma of students, intrusion, and avoidance. At this level, respondents had to agree with levels of STS that were attached to students, but also questions directly related to the teacher. For example, I felt emotionally numb, and I had little interest in being around others for fear that it may bring up student experiences.

I believe that the construct map was similar to my initial comprehension of it in which the levels of each subscale move up together. There were a variety of types of questions in each level (i.e., intrusion, arousal, negative feelings) and this leads me to believe that they move together.
Sub Question 1.a.: Does STS vary by school demographics?

To answer the sub-question “Does this vary by school demographics?” I had to find out the level of STS for all teachers, the theta, and run a regression of the variables that held constant school demographics. Table 9 has the regression outcomes for levels of STS by school demographics. The intercept represents Elementary School Teachers.

Table 9: Secondary Traumatic Stress of Teacher by School Demographics

|            | Estimated | Standard Error | T-Value | Pr(>|t|) |
|------------|-----------|----------------|---------|----------|
| Intercept  | 31.21     | 2.13           | 14.67   | <2e-16***|
| Middle School | -0.91   | 3.42           | -0.26   | 0.79     |
| High School | -5.88     | 3.29           | -1.79   | 0.08 .   |

N= 115; Significance: 0(***) 0.001(***), 0.01(**), 0.05(*)

The three main types of schools that were identified were elementary, middle, and high school. Unfortunately, there was only one teacher who responded to the survey that did not work at a school that was not classified as a Title I school. The results show that elementary school teachers experience greater levels of secondary traumatic stress than both middle school and high school teachers. However, this difference is only significant when considering high school teachers.

Sub Question 1.b.: Does STS vary by teacher demographics?

To answer the sub-question “Does this vary by teacher demographics?” I had to find out the level of STS for all teachers, the theta, and run a regression of the variables that held constant all teacher demographics that were reported. Table 10 has the regression outcomes for levels of STS by teacher demographics. The intercept represents White, Female, Elementary school teachers, who consider themselves as having been brought up in a middle-class family and are in the middle of their career. This was chosen as this is the typical demographic of a practicing teacher.
Table 10: Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress in teachers by teacher demographic.

|                          | Estimated | Standard Err. | T-Value | Pr(>|t|) |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|----------|
| Intercept                | 31.77     | 2.55          | 12.46   | <2e-16***|
| Working Class            | 6.01      | 2.63          | 2.29    | 0.02 *   |
| Upper Middle Class       | -8.52     | 4.16          | -2.08   | 0.04 *   |
| Male                     | -2.72     | 2.66          | -1.02   | 0.34     |
| Beginning Teacher        | -1.64     | 2.87          | -0.57   | 0.57     |
| Experienced Teacher      | -4.81     | 3.01          | -1.59   | 0.11     |
| Non-White                | -7.13     | 3.17          | -2.25   | 0.03 *   |

N= 115; Significance: 0.001(*) 0.01(**) 0.05(***)

As Table 10 shows, that Class and Race/Ethnicity have statistically significant differences in how they experience levels of secondary traumatic stress. Teachers who grew up in working class and upper middle-class families experience STS at different levels than those who grew up in middle-class families. With teachers from a working-class background experiencing STS levels at higher rates and teachers from upper middle-class backgrounds experiencing STS at lower rates than teachers from a middle-class background. These findings were significant at the 0.01 significance level.

How teachers experienced levels of STS also varied by race/ethnicity at a statistically significant level. Teachers who identified as non-White experience lower levels of STS than their White counterparts. This was significant at the 0.01 level. Though male, beginning, and experienced teachers experienced lower levels of STS than the intercept described above, none of these were statistically significant, and their numbers could have been caused by chance.
Question Two: How did teachers embody this stress?

After gaining a better understanding of who was experiencing STS and at what levels, I turned to descriptive statistics of each item to answer the second research question of how teachers were embodying STS. When the survey was developed, I relied heavily on the construct map as can be seen in Chapter 3 Figure 3. The construct map was designed by relying on the symptoms of STS, which can be seen in Chapter 3 Table 4. There were four main areas that when considered together made up STS symptoms: Arousal, Negative Changes, Avoidance, and Intrusion. The survey items were developed with these four areas in mind. I separated each item into the category which it corresponded to on the construct map and identified how each of the respondents answered statements. Each table has a description of the symptom that the item asked about and the item number.

The first category that I analyzed was that in which the items were looking at the symptom of arousal. These symptoms affect people in various ways, most of which have people feeling irritable, guilty, and being easily startled or frightened are some of the ways in which this was defined. There were six items in the survey that focused on this area. As can be seen in Table 11 below, when combined the majority of the respondents experienced these levels in the median, or only Occasionally or Very Often. Yet there were two items in this area, “Heart Pounding” and “Feared Harm,” which corresponded with items 21 and 25. These items asked teachers if My heart started pounding when I thought about the lives and experiences of some of my students, and I feared something bad might happen to some (one) of my students. Based on the circumstances that many students from Title I schools experience, and that all but one teacher in the survey worked at a Title I school, it makes sense that teachers who responded to this survey would fear harm of their students. The two main concerns that these teachers embody relating to
arousal symptoms are those of racing heart beats when they think about lives of some of their students and fearing harm of their students.

Table 11: Responses to the items regarding arousal symptoms by percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Related Symptom</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Felt Guilty</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Heart Pounding</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Trouble Sleeping</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mind Drifting</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Feared Harm</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Felt Depressed</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second symptom that was analyzed was that of negative changes. This symptom captured things such as having negative feelings about self or others that were brought on by witnessing students’ traumas. As can be seen in Table 12, the respondents in this survey were least likely to embody, or experience, the feeling of emotional numbness. However, teachers were likely to feel discouraged and considered leaving the field. Both of these questions indicate ways in which teachers embodied others’ traumas. Though feeling discouraged and considering leaving your profession are not specific to the field of education, it is important to note that these responses were in relation the witnessing of students’ traumas.

Table 12: Responses to the items regarding negative changes symptoms by percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Related Symptom</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Felt Discouraged</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lost Interest</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Considered Leaving</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Emotionally Numb</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On Table 13 below, which shows the responses of the items related to the symptoms of STS focused on avoidance, it is apparent that this area of the survey had all of the reverse coded items. For the purpose of this analysis, the positively phrased items remained positively phrased rather than rephrasing them in a “negative” way, which is how the rest of the survey was
phrased. Though visually it makes the analysis seem counterintuitive, when going through each item it makes sense to leave it in a positive phrasing. Almost all respondents were either occasionally or very often invested emotionally in their students, with very few at either extreme. Teachers who took this survey were not likely to avoid anyone on the basis that they may bring up students’ traumas. When considering item 8 which is positively phrased, there were very few people who became more active due to hearing students’ traumas, however, this item when converted to the “negative” alternative became “inactive” or “less active” which related directly to an avoidance symptom of STS, 85% of teachers would have chosen Very Often or Always to the negative version of this item. Though this item is the one item in which teachers embody STS negatively, it is important to note that teachers embodied positive behaviors and emotions that are tied closely to teaching. Because of the structure of the survey, the positive embodiment that comes from caring for others is seen in this particular section of the survey analysis. A large percentage of teachers were able to agree with and take on the responsibility of engendering trust with families of students, as well as, connecting the curriculum to their students’ lives, encourage openness from students, and emotionally invest in their students. Though all of these can be reverse coded and be considered negatively for the purpose of indicating STS as a negative effect, it is also important to consider these as ways that teachers embody the positive emotions that come from being closely connected to students and their families.

Table 13: Responses to the items regarding avoidance symptoms by percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Related Symptom</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Emotionally Invested*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Avoided Others</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>More Active*</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Avoided Reminders</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Avoided Life Details</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Joy Supporting*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Encouraged Openness*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Connected Curriculum*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final symptom of STS that I analyzed was that of intrusion. There was one question in this section that was reverse coded in as a “positive” item. Though this item was positively phrased, it was similar in responses to a few of the items in this section. Teachers were more likely to embody STS through the symptoms that were analyzed in Table 14 below. Teachers were preoccupied with thoughts about their students and their students’ lives at higher rates than other symptoms mentioned above. They were also more likely to worry about their students and students’ lives and had a difficult time separating their work life from their home life. Fourteen percent of teachers were able to agree that they “Always” worry about the well-being of my students when they are not at school, with an additional 43% of teachers indicating that they worry about the well-being of my students when they are not at school “Very Often.” This particular symptom of STS is the one negatively worded item in which all but 1% of teachers were able to agree that this happens to them either Occasionally, Very Often, or Always. Though not as prominent, preoccupation was also an item that all but 3% of teachers were able to agree that this happens to them teachers were able to agree that this happens to them either.

Table 14: Responses to the items regarding intrusion symptoms by percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Related Symptom</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Felt Satisfaction*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Difficult to Separate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Felt Ineffective</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Felt Successful*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Reliving Traumas</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

This chapter was organized in a way that would allow to analyze and respond to research question one and the sub-questions associated with this question. The analysis began by first showing the overall levels of STS that teachers experienced in Franklin School District. The findings indicated that teachers in Franklin School District all experienced STS, but at varying levels. That is to say, some teachers had lower levels of STS, while others had higher levels of STS. Overall, the majority of the teachers experienced moderate levels of STS, but important to note that the lowest raw score was about 8 points. Indicating that while this particular person experienced STS at very low levels because the majority of their responses were not aligned with positive responses or “Agree,” there was not a single participant that experienced no STS, or embodiment.

The descriptive statistics were followed by inferential statistics; this was done with the intent of gaining a better understanding of how the items move on the construct scale. Much like the pilot of the survey, the items are all correlated well, aside from two positively worded items. Again, while this was also true of the pilot study, the items were kept to ensure that participants were reading all questions. The Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.81 indicated that the survey had a moderately high level of reliability. This is slightly lower than the pilot study’s 0.95, but the sample changed to include a more heterogeneous population than that of the pilot study.

This chapter then responded to the sub-question using inferential statistics. These statistics indicated that Elementary teachers experienced higher levels of STS than Middle School and High School teachers. The difference was statistically significant for High School teachers compared to Elementary School teachers. Unfortunately, there were no other school demographic variables in this particular study. However, there were far more variables when
seeing the differences between teacher demographics. This analysis showed that White, working-class teachers experience higher levels of STS than middle-class teachers and those who identify as non-White. Also, upper middle-class teachers experienced far lower levels of STS than their middle class and working-class peers.

Finally, in identifying how teachers embodied their students’ traumas I used a descriptive analysis of the survey items to identify which items, or with what frequency teachers responded to each item. The items were separated into the four categories that were established to be symptomatic of STS. Then each area, arousal, negative changes, avoidance, and intrusion, were analyzed to underscore in what way teachers were responding to student traumas. In each area there were questions that many teachers agreed to feel, they ranged from negative to positive forms of embodiment, from teachers fearing harm of their students and feeling discouraged, to building trust with families and encouraging openness from students. There were no items that teachers were unable to agree with at least a three on the scale or “Very Often” or a 2 or “Occasionally,” indicating again that the majority of the teachers were moderately experiencing STS, or embodying students’ traumas.
CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Introduction

The qualitative section of the study was intended to delve deeper into the understanding of how teachers reported experiencing students’ traumas and what types of traumas they reported experiencing. This chapter begins with the demographic data of all who participated in the study. It is then followed by the interview findings, which explored what type of student trauma participants reported experiencing and how they embodied this type of stress. The findings are organized by research question.

Demographic Data

The demographics of my overall study and findings can be seen in Table 6 in Chapter 4. Of the 377 surveys that were e-mailed out to the population, 115 complete surveys were returned. The 115 survey respondents had the opportunity to opt into the interview. Of all survey respondents, 10 educators agreed to participate in the interview. Though there was a low response rate for interviews, the sample was relatively varied, meaning that there was more than one group of people represented. Unfortunately, because the interview sample was self-selected, it did not capture the range of the population as closely as the randomized survey had done. Eighty percent of the interview participants were female, seventy percent were White, and thirty percent were Hispanic.

Findings

The findings in this section are organized beginning with the exploration of what types of STS teachers report experiencing. This addresses this first question noted in Table 15 below. I
then address the second qualitative question, which was also answered by the survey, “How do [teachers] embody this type of stress?” The questions are answered sequentially in this section.

Table 15: Qualitative Research Questions and Data Sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What types of STS do teachers report experiencing?</td>
<td>Teacher Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do they embody this type of stress?</td>
<td>Teacher Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer the first research question displayed in Table 15 above, “What types of STS do teachers report experiencing?”, I relied heavily on the data from the interviews. The questions that teachers were asked in the interviews were opened ended, and the semi-structured format allowed me to make necessary changes to the questions as the interview participant guided the discussion in areas that were pertinent to the study.

Teachers were first asked to explain their career path and what lead them to teaching. The questions, as can be seen in Appendix E, were intended to collect demographic information from the teachers that are more in-depth than could have been gathered in a survey. The questions were intended to gather information about the work of teachers and their relationship with other teachers, students, and families. To that end, teachers were also asked to reflect on their students’ lives and how those experiences have impacted them directly. These questions were developed with the intention of capturing what kinds of things happen to students that teachers witness and how teachers perceive that they take on, or embody their students’ traumas.

Research Question Two: What types of STS do teachers report experiencing?

In responding to the types of traumas that teachers report experiencing, this question ties closely to my theoretical framework in Chapter 1, Figure 2. The focus of this question is to better understand the specific types of traumas that teachers witness. To respond on this, teachers had to reflect on the what they know about their students and their students’ lives and if they believe
these lived experiences impact students negatively. The intention was to recognize if there is a need to consider various types of traumas when thinking about STS in teaching and to further understand what teachers witness and embody. My theoretical framework, which is focused on embodiment, continues throughout the qualitative analysis as it allows me to give teachers a voice on how they believe that other peoples’ traumas impact them. Embodiment of student trauma is captured within the red circle of the theoretical framework in Chapter 1 Figure 2.

**Teacher Narratives**

For each interview, a narrative was written to enable the researcher to conduct analysis, identify patterns and themes. The narratives are organized by first describing the demographics of the interview participant, then how each participant voices STS, and my analysis of each profile. All names used are pseudonyms.

**Ben and Samantha.** The first people that I interviewed were a couple that had recently moved to the High Plains for a job at Franklin School District named Ben and Samantha. I had only anticipated an interview with Ben, but his wife Samantha had joined him. After finding out that she too had worked in the school district, I asked her if she would be willing and able to participate in the interview.

Ben, who is in his 50’s, had begun his first year of teaching in Fall 2016. He was an Army veteran and had served in the military 20 years. Ben now teaches Science at the high school. He expressed a sincere like for the school, district, and the administrators where he works. Much like Ben, Samantha was also on her second career having left the field of medical transcription after moving. She began at the district as a long-term substitute for a high school Algebra classroom.
Voicing STS. In his first year of teaching, Ben expresses that most of his stressors are closely tied to learning the process of teaching and also engaging students in the content. Though Ben expressed feeling that he rarely thinks about students’ lives, he shared stories of students whose lives were impacting their school work, and he also expressed that there were some students and their situations that he thought about on occasion. When Ben was asked if he felt that he took on the stressors and traumas of students, he felt that this was not an issue for him, but then expressed that a few months into teaching his doctor had recommended anxiety and depression medication. Though he didn’t attribute this to students, he did attribute it to the stressors of the job.

Samantha explained that in her time there she was not nearly as supported as regular classroom teachers and that she feared to ask the administration for help fearing she would look like a failure. Samantha said that she stressed a lot about whether or not the students were accessing the content and wanted them to be successful. Ben added that Samantha started to internalize the job and placed a lot of blame on herself for how the students fared. They discussed the harmful effects of the job as follows:

I was so upset I just sat there and bawled and bawled; and I said, “I will never do this again!” Ben said, “I would much rather you not be so stressed.” He said, “I want you to talk to the sub – “she oversaw all the substitutes, and he said, “I want you to talk to her and see if she can find somebody to replace you. For me, I had to get out of it. It was…seriously, my health…I mean, I was staying up really late trying to get papers graded and, you know, thinking what can I do? What can I do with these kids?

(Samantha, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 183, emphasis added)
Though isolated, they had found community in a local church and tried to involve themselves in the school community as well. Though they expressed frustration of typical school organization structures that have been expressed in work around teacher burnout, they had begun to instill coping strategies to separate their work from their personal lives so that they would not internalize the job and stressors associated with the work. However, there was still a sense of teaching being an extremely difficult adjustment and Ben related it to his previous profession as follows:

This is probably one of the most stressful things I’ve ever done. I mean, I spent all those years in the [military]; this was much more stressful than the time I spent in the [military], and…People might think I’m exaggerating, but honestly, I knew exactly what I needed to do, when I needed to do it, and who I was doing it with.

(Ben, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 125)

**Analysis.** In answering what types of traumas these teachers reported experiencing it was difficult to unravel from the stressors that they attached to the job specifically mostly because there was an effort on their part to create a boundary between their work and lives. Samantha was able to create a physical boundary, in that she ended up quitting, but Ben maintained that he needed to let some of these things go. Ben insisted that he would continue to go to public events that the students had, but had to maintain a boundary of what types of things that he thought about regarding the students. His boundary included intentionally not learning a lot of details of his students’ lives. Though some would argue that this lack of personal connection may be seen as impersonal and unengaging for students, Ben still attended the after-school activities of his students. He felt that if he and Samantha were present at these events in the community that students would see and understand that they care about them outside of the classroom as well.
This speaks to the false binary that has been instilled in school between the public and the private. Even the act of attending after-school events, Ben and Samantha blur the public and private binary as they are taking time out of their private life and bridging it with their professional, public life.

Though neither of these teachers thought that they personally embodied, or took on, the traumas of their students, they reported traumas that their students had experienced and expressed that they thought about particular students and the students’ lives and circumstances outside of work. Ben felt the stressors both of students and of the job so much so that he was prescribed medicine to help him retain a sound mind and body. He had taken these stressors on to the point that it made him emotionally ill. Samantha similarly maintained that a lot of her stressors were not caused by students’ traumas, but rather her perception of how students viewed schooling, and her class and her teaching in particular. She felt these stressors physically and emotionally as she described feeling so overcome with despair that she “burst into tears” (Samantha, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 129).

Both Ben and Samantha engaged with the public private binary. For example, they chose things in their lives to focus on that would remain private and those same things remained private for the students they worked for as well. They managed this by not engaging with students about their personal lives. This mental separation was a way that Ben chose to survive his work. Samantha, on the other hand, had experienced such a visceral reaction to teaching and the stressors of teaching that she inevitably ended up exiting the profession.

**Rosario.** Rosario is a Latina, who was born in Guatemala and immigrated to the United States when she was 3 years old. She is in her 13th year working for the school district but began her career with the district over 25 years ago as a paraprofessional. She worked in pre-
kindergarten through 3rd grade, but after 7 years of teaching decided to become a school counselor. She counseled students in K-6 for 4 years and then high school students for 5 years. Feeling burnout at the high school counseling position, she decided to move back into the classroom as a 5th-grade Dual Language teacher and is most recently in a 3rd-grade Dual Language classroom.

**Voicing STS.** Though she has had a dynamic career in the district, she never really felt like something drove her out of the classroom to become a counselor, rather she felt that she wanted a change. She said that she “just wanted a change. […] [she] needed a breather, [she] needed a recharge” (Rosario, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 58). Through this recharge, she was able to serve students in a different capacity, but also learn strategies that helped her deal with the stressors of the job. Though she has coping strategies, she mentioned worrying about her students. Her worries were both about their situations at home and academically. Below is an excerpt that indicates a specific problem she worried about regarding a student:

One particular one I know the parents are getting outside help, but on the student end, what I see, it just doesn’t add up with what I’ve heard. So, I don’t know, and I don’t know if it’s because I have the counseling background, but it’s like, “Okay…is it really a situation of the student’s creation, or is it a situation where the mom is using the student as a cry for help?” So, it’s just really unclear.

(Rosario, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 164)

Though she was vague about the situations that she worries about, they revolved around family concerns, as well as, making sure that students were cared for at school. From something as simple as giving them peppermints for stomach aches, or sending them to the nurse if they hadn’t eaten for a quick snack, she expressed a real need to help meet these students’ needs at school to
the best of her ability. Rosario also expressed a concern about the organization of schools that
don’t allow her to comfort students in a way that she feels appropriate, such as giving students
hugs.

Though she thinks about students’ lives and considers their lives in her teaching, Rosario
talked about ways in which she has coped with the stressors of the job in a way that has allowed
her to not let these issues consume her outside of work. In her job as a school counselor, she
learned techniques that showed her how to compartmentalize her life. She explained this by
discussing how she only thinks about work in her work setting and she ascribes the same
mentality to her home life.

**Analysis.** In the excerpt, Rosario talked about using physical boundaries, the doors, to also
create mental boundaries. Though she uses this strategy as a form of resilience, this wasn’t
always a coping strategy that she had, and she expressed that prior to her counseling experience,
she did more worrying about her students and how they were outside of school. Rosario
indicated that though she wouldn’t say that she was “pushed out” of the classroom by the
stressors, she indicated that she needed a change of pace. As with many of the teachers, their
specialization in teaching only allows them only to seek other opportunities within education.
Interestingly enough, her leaving the classroom to pursue school counseling was a form of
teacher attrition. Though she eventually returned, she temporarily counted towards teacher
attrition data.

Rosario did not believe that she took students’ traumas home. This disconfirming evidence of
(lack of) embodiment is important to identify because it allowed me to consider what Rosario
considered as trauma and “taking home.” She did not consider insidious trauma as a type of
trauma. When she talked about the things that she did “take home,” she talked about worrying
about the well-being of students while at home. She described well-being to include a stable life, nutritious meals (or meals in general), among other healthy habits. She considered these traumas as occurrences in students’ lives that she had no control over and modified her classroom to meet their needs, i.e. providing an early morning snack for students who may have missed breakfast, or registering students to receive weekend food support, among other ways in which she provided resources for families.

Her worry and concern regarded both what students did at home and how students did academically. She blurred the public/private binary by concerning herself with the personal lives of her students. Though she thinks about students’ lives and considers this in her teaching, Rosario talked about ways in which she has coped with the stressors of the job in a way that has allowed her to not let them consume her outside of work. One of her main coping mechanisms was the physical and mental boundary that she practiced when leaving the school. This symbolic shift in physical and mental spaces creates a divide that gives her the space necessary from school to cope with her emotions about work, students, and the well-being of her students.

Fortunately for Rosario, and unfortunately for the many other teachers, Rosario learned these coping strategies in her time as a counselor. She maintained a strict separation, per her words, between her personal and professional life. However, in her interview, it was evident that the binary was blurred. As the examples above indicate, she still thought and worried about her students’ well-being outside of school.

**Mayline.** Mayline is a 3rd-year teacher, in her 30’s, who is currently teaching in a Dual Language elementary school as the second-grade Spanish teacher. She was born and raised in this community and was a product of Franklin School District. Prior to teaching Mayline was a nursing assistant in the community for 10 years.
Voicing STS. The community of her school feels isolated between teachers of different grade levels because the classrooms are physically situated into wings. Yet, she indicated that she felt extremely supported by her administration. There have been some challenges that she has faced that concern her regarding the perceptions that teachers have of students, as described in the following excerpt:

[...] the dual language kids ... they have lots of support, lots of parent involvement, so ... I don't know if I'm naïve in some instances, but I feel ... these kids come from the mobile home parks, for example [Happy Land3], or even [The Vagabond3]. Me, I've been a student from there. You just hear lots of, "Well, they're from there, so that's why it's going on, or that's why the problem." Not that anybody is blaming them or anything, but I stop and think, I used to be a Happy Land kid and I never pictured myself, or I never experienced any of the things that those kids are going through. I don't think that they were purposely trying to ... there was a safety plan4 that had to be put in place ... for a kid that was from Happy Land. The teacher had made a comment, "Oh, well that's where the majority of our kids that have safety plans come from." It just struck me as ... I didn't say anything ... I was like, well I was a Happy Land kid.

(Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 96)

3 Pseudonyms

4 A safety plan, as explained by Mayline, is a specific plan put in place for specific students that ensures the student and other students will be safe in particular situations. In the case that she explained following the excerpt above, a student who had been sexually abused had been inappropriately touching students in the restrooms. In an effort to ensure the safety of other students in the school a safety plan was implemented. This plan was specific to restroom usage by the student on the plan. A teacher or administrator had to accompany this child to the restroom and ensure that there were no other students in the restroom before he entered. The teachers then waited outside of the restroom door to ensure no other children entered until the student was finished.
Mayline reflects on both her experience having grown up in a similar, if not the same, neighborhood as her students and was concerned by the tone that teachers took regarding conversations about “these” kids. When asked about if she thinks about her students’ backgrounds outside of school Mayline responded that she did not. She had an understanding of what parents did and how students lived and did not think it was necessary to worry about their backgrounds.

Mayline still felt a sense of responsibility for her students that required her to think about the students’ lives outside of the classroom. As a mandated reporter of the state, all teachers are required to report to child protective services if they feel students are being neglected or are in danger. Likewise, Mayline felt a responsibility for her students, both in and outside of school, highlighting the complexity involved in the experiences teachers face. Even though she expressed not taking her work home, she later reflected on her previous two years of teaching and indicated that she used to take these stressors home and that these stressors took a toll on her personal life as can be read in the excerpt below:

> When I went into teaching, I will have to say that my marriage was strained that first year because it was just staying late working, trying to catch up. Then taking everything home. Do I still take everything home? Yes, I do. Do I still have lots of things to do on the weekends? Yes, I do.

(Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 138)

On top of the stress that comes with the duties required of a teacher, such as preparing lesson plans, student paperwork, etc., Mayline described that she saw many other stressors that her students faced as follows:
Stress or traumas. Again, I've had students that have had some sort of either sexual abuse or something that I've been made aware of. I think even having a broken home would definitely be another one. Social economic, definitely.

(Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 218)

Though she began the interview by saying that she didn’t think about students’ backgrounds outside of work, she later expressed that she did, in fact, think about their life circumstances outside of work as mentioned above. She also considered the academic well-being of previous students and made it a point to check up on them when possible. She then expressed that when she thinks about the students’ stressors and traumas that she becomes stressed as well, but then expressed that only “to a certain point and you know, I feel I have to go on to the next thing. […] It'll stress me as I'm thinking about it and if I could talk to the teacher I do, and just get an update of where that student is” (Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 224). Mayline further described that thinking about your students outside of work is a necessary part of the job and she felt that “it would be cold hearted if [teachers] didn’t” think about students outside of work (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 232). She followed it with expressing the following:

I just mean, if you authentically care for these kids, it's something that you're going to carry every time that you see them. I wonder if that's still happening, I wonder if this kid is finally on his ADHD medication, or is the mom trying to do anything to help him, or is the split between the parents, or is the mom not taking care of her kid anymore and having everybody else ...

(Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 232)

**Analysis.** This narrative reinforced how difficult it is for teachers to actually divide their personal and professional life, though not for lack of trying. Mayline, was in her 3rd year of
teaching had discussed the ways in which she had changed her habits drastically from her initial year. Much like Ben and Samantha, she expressed the difficulty that first-year teachers endure. She largely attributed that difficulty with juggling both the requirements of learning the curriculum and implementing it, while also negotiating her role with students. Her reflection of her first year elucidated how she embodied the job. The emotional load of the work was present in her home and took a toll on her personal life, specifically her marriage. Notably, during her interview, Mayline talked about her personal experience as a student and how she felt as other teachers talked about students that reflected her personal lived experiences. As a woman of color, the theorizing of embodiment, as it relates to the raced and gendered body was drastically apparent in her narrative about students from the neighborhood where she grew up. Her perception of those children was not framed through a deficit lens. Further, she was saddened and appalled that other teachers would think about these students in such a manner. However, she made excuses for these teachers, she softened their blows by saying that they probably weren’t intentionally being hurtful. Her lived experiences of the oppression that her students faced, allowed her to take a perspective of her students that honored their lives. Further, unlike some of the other participants, she never once pitied her students or their experiences, rather she gave the families the rightfully deserved benefit that they were doing their best for their children. Effectively, she created a community, involving her life, the lives of her students, and their families into the classroom.

There was no public private divide for Mayline in the first years of teaching. Yet as she continued to navigate the field she found that she had to create some sort of boundary between her personal and professional life to survive. Mayline witnessed many types of traumas, and she embodied this through worrying. She worried about students in various capacities. Her worries
ranged, not only focusing on significant traumatic events, but also on the insidious types of trauma that students face on a daily basis.

**Esmeralda.** My interview with Esmeralda was one of the shortest interviews I collected. It was roughly 20 minutes. Esmeralda is a first-year teacher in 3rd grade. She is a Latina and in her 20’s. She has a two-year commitment to the district. She grew up in the community and went through Franklin Public School District. In her first few months of teaching, Esmeralda expressed being concerned about preparing content and making sure that students are learning.

**Voicing STS.** Esmeralda’s classroom is comprised of mostly Hispanic students, and she talked about them being from middle-class backgrounds. She then spoke of the students’ academic achievement and said that most of the students were below grade level. When considering her students’ academic achievement, she made the following comment:

> I think if they have a bad background—you know, not a bad…but if they aren’t taking school seriously at home, they’re not going to take school seriously here. Or if their parents are working two jobs […] help them? Or if their parents don’t know English, who’s gonna help them? Or if they are moving from home to home like it’s not stable to do anything or get anything done.

*(Esmeralda, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 66)*

While this has a lot of content, part of what Esmeralda mentioned revolved around worrying about students and how their background impacts their learning. She had been particularly worried about her students who are homeless. Esmeralda expressed discomfort about her students’ lives in comparison to hers. She thought about students’ life circumstances and how these impacted students. Though she didn’t say much more about it, Esmeralda expressed that
this particular situation has made her sad. Speaking about the students in her class that lived in abusive homes, Esmeralda reflected on the lifetime implications of this kind of trauma.

The experiences that students have gone through have given Esmeralda a greater sense of empathy for students. She discussed that she felt that it was far more beneficial not to take it personally when students seem aloof. Instead, she insisted that those are the times that students need to know they are cared about, which she said they might not be familiar with somebody treating them that way. Though she said she thought about her students outside of work she said, “I don’t think it would consume me, but I think I do worry like…what did they do? What are they doing? I try not to think about it, but it’s hard” (Esmeralda, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 116).

As we ended the interview and as she walked me to the door, I wished her the best of luck as she finished the first year. She expressed being stressed and burst into tears and revealed how stressed out she has been. She further explained that “no one ever prepared [her] for child homelessness” (Esmeralda, Personal Communication, January 2017). I gave her a tight embrace and told her she could contact me if she needed any support and pointed her to the consent form for some resources in the community.

**Analysis.** Esmeralda was the only traditional first-year teacher that I interviewed, unlike Ben and Samantha who were in their first year of their second professions. When asked if she had stress, Esmeralda indicated that she strove to minimize the stress she felt both in her personal and professional life. Esmeralda normalized the stress that she did encounter and considered it as typical to the nature of life and work. She also didn’t believe that she took any of her students’ traumas home, but she discussed her reactions and emotions with regards to how she perceived her students in the classroom.
She expressed that her understanding of her students’ backgrounds impacted what she did in the classroom and how she treated her students. She wanted to ensure that students felt cared for when they were in the classroom. Further, she expressed an attempt to empathize with students. And though she specifically said that she would not think about students’ traumas to the point where it would “consume” her, she did worry about her students. This again supports the pattern that teachers attempt to create a boundary between the public and the private, but this boundary is never quite as clear as they intend. She embodied the traumas that she witnessed through worry. Her concerns spanned from child homelessness to worrying if students were able to get their homework completed because of their family situations. Again, her concern for her students was never specifically related to the public sphere, even her worry about school work was with regards to how their family backgrounds and home situations impacted their ability to complete their assignments. Though she denied that she embodied the emotional load of work, Esmeralda broke into tears at the end of the session about her stress level, but more specifically at the realization that nobody had prepared her to deal with student trauma, specifically child homelessness. This realization had shocked her, and she mentioned in her interview, that she went home to a “normal” life and her students often did not. This realization created a dichotomy of what she considered normal and abnormal; reinforcing firmly held beliefs of what is normal. These ideas of normalcy place certain students and certain life circumstances at odds with what those in the public sector of education expect from students.

With regards to intersectionality, as a Spanish-speaking Latina herself, her connection to her students ended with those two distinctions. Esmeralda had grown up as a middle-class to the upper-middle class family background. Though she grew up in the same city as her students, she had been largely unaware of the rampant poverty that was present in the community, which as a
person who grew up in that community as well with a poor, working class background, my reality and realization was very different from hers. This finding made me reconsider my perception of the within group diversity of Hispanic people in this community and how important it is to consider the whole person and the varying backgrounds when thinking about these issues.

**Kiley.** Kiley is in her 5th year of teaching. She is a white, woman in her 30s and lives roughly an hour away from Franklin School District. She teaches high school English. It is her 2nd year teaching at Franklin School District and is a high school English teacher.

**Voicing STS.** One of the things that Kiley mentioned was the difficulty she has had building relationship with students’ parents because communicating with parents is difficult due to the language barrier. Kiley recognized that the students in Franklin School District had precarious circumstances at home and expressed that some of these conditions can impact students learning in the following:

And that’s the dark side of trying to treat each child with needs, but you want to do everything you can to help them where they’re at personally. The dark side of that is you end up making excuses for people, like, “Oh, well, … yeah, he can’t do his work because he’s living in a foster home and he doesn’t get enough to eat, and he doesn’t have a winter coat, and nobody is taking him to school, so he has to walk a mile every day and a mile at home.” So, you wanna make exceptions for that, and you wanna help that student be successful…but the flip side of that is then you end up letting someone getting away with things that they shouldn’t. Because I do think a lot of kids here have learned the art of giving a sob story. But I think that’s true everywhere, so… (Kiley, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 78).
While Kiley was thinking about how and when to make exceptions for students, she expressed uncertainty on how to navigate students’ experiences in the classroom. There was a sense of pity that she voiced feeling when she found out about students’ issues. She said that some students act “perfectly fine and happy and everything, and then you hear something about their home life, and you’re like, “You poor thing” (Kiley, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 84). She then expressed feeling guilt for how she had treated students by saying, “It’s like, “Oh, I spoke sharply to you because you were talking to your friends yesterday, and then I found out this horrible thing is going on at home!” And you feel terrible, like, “Oh, I should have been so much nicer, so much more patient” (Kiley, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 84).

Though Kiley expressed that being from a different town helped separate her school and home life, she did mention that some students’ circumstances stick to you. Some of the students’ stressors that she worried about were students who did not have heat at home and students confiding in her about a possible teen pregnancy dilemma. Though when asked if she took this stress and trauma on she said, “I wouldn’t say take on the stress and the trauma; it was just more of a worry than anything. […] Sometimes things stick in your head and you just…you worry about them. (Kiley, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 102). While she didn’t think that she embodied or took on that stress, she still thought about these issues. Her primary stressor in her work, as she stated, was students not making progress on academic work.

Analysis. Kiley was an interesting case to consider. I believe that she took on a lot of her stress from work home as it related to how students were doing in the classroom. Many of her frustrations were voiced around student apathy, and Kiley expressed that she was not prepared for the amount of teen pregnancy that she witnessed in the school. Though she thought a lot about her students, she framed it around how she would possibly change her behavior towards
the students, pending their home lives, within the classroom. However, she feared that any shifts in the curriculum or her expectations of them based on their backgrounds or home lives could have a “dark side.” This dark side that she mentioned helped reinforce her desire to keep a separation between school and home for her students. Her fear that students may be lying to her by “giving [her] a sob story” creates an interesting dynamic. It is as if she wants to use this fear as a valid excuse to remain vigilant of narratives that students tell about their lives and be able to judge which may or may not be true.

Kiley expresses what many teachers express, when you have information about the traumas that students go through at home, what is your duty as a teacher to the students and does this obligation include making exceptions for students academically. This may occur because of the binaries that schools encourage. Teachers are not able, even though they are encouraged systemically, to separate their work and life. In essence, this means that teachers are expected to maintain that students will abide by this same “agreement.” Even in this narrative as with the previous ones, Kiley can tell you about her students that have life experiences that would be deemed traumatic by some. These traumas come into the classroom time and time again and teachers, often blindsided by these realities, are left to navigate not only the binary that exists in the system but also what to do about the shared moments of vulnerability in their classrooms.

Her way of coping with these events was to put space between her and the students, both physically and emotionally. Physically, Kiley enjoys living an hour away from the community in which she teaches. She believes that there is a calmness to not having to worry about bumping into students while shopping for groceries and other, day-to-day, life experiences. Further, she creates a mental buffer by allowing herself to judge whether students have a legitimate excuse for not completing work. Her approach, to potentially delegitimizing students’ lived experiences,
skirts the acknowledgment that students experience traumas. This approach allows her to avoid the perceived problem altogether. Avoidance, both physically and mentally, is symptomatic of STS. Though these traumas are traversing Kiley’s mind and body, she has effectively created ways to avoid any emotion that acknowledging students’ wounds may trigger.

**Raegan.** Raegan is a white elementary school teacher in her 30’s. She currently teaches 2nd grade. Raegan is a certified K-6 classroom teacher, but she also holds a certification in math and science for grade levels 5th – 9th grade.

**Voicing STS.** Raegan is a new mother, and her husband is also a teacher in the district. Both of them coach after school hours. Her students at the elementary school are mostly Hispanic, and most qualify for free and reduced lunch. Raegan stated that many of the families in the school work traveling jobs. These types of jobs created a situation in which it created a type of single parent household. The realization of the family circumstances of her students was a “culture shock.”

Raegan reported that she thinks about her students outside of school hours. Often these thoughts are driven by homework that students failed to turn in and the many reasons on why students may have failed to do their homework. The reasons included students having to babysit younger sibling until parents arrived from work late in the evening. Though she was aware that families did their best, she worried about what students went home to:

> I’ve been to houses and done porch visits, so I know what I go home to. I know what I go home to; like, I don’t have a great house, but it’s a good house and I know I have food in my place, and I know that when I go home, I can eat a snack if I need to. I know that some of the kids don’t have that (Raegan, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 116).
She expressed her sadness about their situations and her desire to help all of her students. She believes that students’ home situations often hindered them with homework, both because they had no support from family because of language or ability.

Circumstances that Raegan had experienced with students included whether they had eaten and the stability in students and how these things spill into the classroom. She expressed that the job is “hard [and that] it’s hard to separate what’s officially asked and what you’re supposed [to] do. Because as a teacher, [she’s] required to teach them the standards, [but] […] you have to build [relationships]” (Raegan, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 148).

Raegan expressed that these relationships that one must foster help to assess and meet students’ needs. She expressed that students have stressors from home such as lack of sleep and nutrition. While she worried about the everyday lives of her students, there were also significant traumatic events that her students have experience. The following is one that she still thinks about, “One of the biggest ones I can remember is I had a student who his older brother went to prison; it was him and three other kids, and they had shot somebody” (Raegan, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 176). Raegan expressed feeling “helpless” dealing with this situation and learning how to navigate this with her student. She understood that her student’s parents would take care of him, but that it was something that was always in the back of her mind. She expressed that the students “really do become like your own kids” (Raegan, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 178). Raegan said she does many things to cope but mostly tries to disengage and leave her work at work. She stated that the separation between work and home has been much easier since she has had her child.

**Analysis.** There were some trends when talking to Raegan that were similar with a few of the other teachers. One of the things that continued to come up was “homework.” With regards to
how Reagan thought about homework, she talked about the students’ home situations as a deciding factor for whether she should either send homework or expect students to return homework. She situated this based on the “porch visits” that she had gone on as a part of the school requirements. Homework itself breaks the public/private binary for students. Students are expected to go home and think, talk, and work on their school work. It is anticipated that it consumes some of their after-school hours. From the viewpoint of the teacher, this binary is also broken, at least by Raegan, as she considers the hurdles that some students may encounter when they go home. But within her narrative, and the first excerpt specifically, she talked specifically about a practice that some schools make, as an effort to “get to know” their students and students’ families, porch visits or home visits. These porch visits allowed her a small insight into the lives of her students. Through these visits, she framed her students’ homes in ways that focused on what they do not have, i.e. food, snacks, a “good house.” The practice of porch visits inherently blurs the public and the private. Moreover, if not considered critically, it places teachers in a position to judge families for what they don’t have as opposed to focusing on the funds of knowledge that they have to offer. Her perception of what students lack also reinforced what Esmeralda talked about as well: normality. Because their lives look different than the lives that they lead as teachers, deficient framing continues to normalize certain ways of living while marginalizing those that don’t meet these “normal” standards.

Though Reagan more recently has made a point to think less about her students at home, with the birth of her child, she talked about how she did feel helpless when confronted with a particularly traumatic student event. She discussed the imprisonment of one of her student’s family members and how difficult this situation had been on her as she witnessed her student navigate the absence of his brother and the uncertainty and lack of communication he had with
his family. This helpless feeling aligns with STS and is something that she embodied. But even when thinking about this particular student, Raegan made note that she is well aware that his family has the capacity to care for this kid, but it is “always [on] the back of her mind.” Through the embodiment of her student’s trauma, she continued to blur the public private binary. Blurring this binary was also visible through Kiley’s reference of her students as her “own kids.” Bridging her work with her students into a familial setting in which she was a parent figure in her eyes for her students. It is not uncommon to hear this sentiment from teachers; I too considered my students my family. This example continues to reinforce not only how limiting a public/private binary can be, but also how difficult this divide is for teachers to actually adhere. By expecting this divide from teachers, it causes a disconnect between what schools expect and what actually occurs.

**Margaret.** Margaret is a white teacher in her 20’s. She received her teaching licensure through an alternative program. She is currently in her 3rd year in the classroom and teaches 2nd grade. Though she had a shaky start as a 6th-grade teacher in a different state, she left that job and found herself teaching 1st grade at Franklin School District.

**Voicing STS.** When asked about students’ experiences that have affected her, she talked about finding out about a student through a parent teacher conference. The child’s “[grandmother] […] shared some things that made [her] need to call Child Protective Services, but this young child had been molested, and she was still living with her abuser” (Margaret, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 38). Though she made a reference that it was an extreme case, she also mentioned a personal experience that she connected to this child’s experience. While Margaret remembers these stories and thinks about her students, she said that she attempted to leave her work at work. She was aware that circumstances like this would happen
and said, “I knew going into teaching that I was going to run into some of these sad stories, you know? It doesn’t matter whether you’re teaching in Franklin or you’re teaching somewhere else; there’s going to be stories like this” (Margaret, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 24).

Though Margaret did her best to separate her school and personal life for the sake of being mentally and physically healthy, she said: “that [her] priority for the students is less academic and more, “You’re safe, and you’re loved” (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 50).

**Analysis.** One of the largest stressors that Margaret reported experiencing, not considering the traumatic events of students, was being isolated from her family. Like many of the teachers that I spoke to, Margaret was not from the general area of this small rural city. Isolation from family was an interesting dynamic that impacted many of the teachers as a source of strain, yet the need for a job led them to an isolated town. One of the most prominent quotes about Margaret experiencing STS was when she talked about a child that had suffered sexual abuse and was still living with her abuser. She heard about this situation when casually talking to the child’s grandmother at a parent-teacher conference. The parent-teacher conference was intended to discuss how students are doing in the classroom. Often, the focus of these meetings are to discuss academics, but the concerns are never solely rooted in academics. In this case, the grandmother confided personal information about the child to the teacher without being prompted to do so. Telling a teacher, the very personal details about a child and their family is not something that is seen as out of place, at least not in my experience. Furthermore, it is often personal lived realities outside of the classroom that impact students in the classroom and should be considered when thinking about how to approach student learning in the classroom.

Margaret was able to make a personal connection to this personal detail that she found out about the child. She went on to talk about all of the parallels that she had seen in the child to that
of her adopted sister. In doing so, Margaret was becoming vulnerable in sharing her own experience of the trauma impacting her family. She acknowledged she didn’t necessarily share her experiences with students but was aware of students’ circumstances because of her connection to them.

Rarely did she let worries about her students consume her. She had explained that in college she had been the person in whom everyone would confide. Being her friend's confidant, led her to a major bout of depression as she let other peoples’ worries, traumas, and stressors “consume” her. As she learned to cope with these concerns, she began to establish tools to help her manage her emotional exhaustion. She told me that these tools had helped her from falling into a similar situation in her teachings. The emotional load, as she called it, would be too heavy to deal with if not for the tools she had learned of before starting her career. Much like Rosario, she learned the coping skills in dealing with trauma and others’ emotions outside of the field of education. Both of these women have learned ways to cope with the embodiment of the job, while also understanding that emotions and students’ private lives will collide with their public lives in the classroom. Margaret ended with a sentiment that many of the teachers had mentioned, “safety,” yet as she continued to blur the public private binary unknowingly, she said that love was also a priority when thinking about children. She acknowledged that there should be a genuine connection with your students to be an effective educator. This statement can be tied directly back to Figure 1 in Chapter 1, the teacher with the enlarged heart. Margaret prioritizes her love for children as central to her education, much like the teacher in the doctor’s office, a continued example of a need to discuss emotions in the classroom and their impact on teaching staff.

**Sally.** Sally was one of the only interview participants that were not a practicing classroom teacher. She is a mid-career, white woman, in her 40s who had a middle-class upbringing in a
nearby community. In her twenty years at the district, she has taught middle school, headed an intermediate school as principal, and is now a district administrator who leads that data department. Her interview was unique in that she was able to discuss student traumatic experiences that she remembers experiencing and later as an administrator can explain how her role in helping teachers cope with students’ traumas developed as she drew from personal experience.

Voicing STS. When asked if she remembers students that had gone through huge life stressors or traumatic events, even though years have passed, she was able to think of few examples without hesitation. She talked in depth about a student how had experienced homelessness, precarious living situations, had a father in and out of jail, a mother who abused drugs, and the many things that he witnessed. She kept track of him, and years later he died in a car wreck before graduating high school. Reflecting on this experience, she talked about how much of his situations she took home:

I think I did take a lot of that home. I don’t know how many times I would say, “If we could just bring this kid home, if I could just let him live here for 2 years and show him what a real life – what the real world is really like and how people are consistent and are there for you, what a difference this would make.” You just hope that if you can be that...just be there, I think is the only thing I felt like I could do without taking them all home with me (Sally, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 74).

Her reflection included an understanding that she only saw these children 165 days of the year and because she was at a middle school she only saw them one hour each of those days. After having her first child, she said she reflected on her priorities and began to put some distance between herself and her students.
As an administrator, she encouraged teachers to get to know their students personally in the first weeks of class. She felt that teachers were able to do their jobs best when students felt genuinely cared about, and this came from teachers taking an interest in their lives. Though she encouraged deep connections with students, she also had opportunities for teachers to unwind out of the school setting as a group. Teachers often took this time to recharge, but usually ended up discussing their students.

**Analysis.** Sally’s varied experience in the district gave insight to how various educational roles perceive student and teacher dynamics. Roughly 20 years after her first year of teaching, Sally still remembers the traumas of some of the students that she taught. As she reflected on her days as a teacher, she talked about her desire to want to bring individual students home with her. Wanting to provide students with a safe and “normal” environment was not an unusual response to the witnessing of students’ traumas. Raegan and Esmeralda had also reported talking about students’ lives in stark comparison to their own “normal” lives. These sentiments are in direct contrast to a public/private binary and speak to a continued need to reconsider this false binary and promotion of work and life separation. As she reflected on these desires to provide stability for children, she realized that she was projecting her values and norms on her students. As an administrator, she later acknowledged her embodiment and encouraged teachers to get to know their students on a personal level, but also be selfish with your time and not let the job consume you. The sharp divide between the two continues this binary even while underlining that it is not possible to have a strict separation of work and life. The most striking part of her interview was how those traumas are as vivid 20 years later as they were the day you witnessed them.

**Roger.** Roger is a white, middle school computer science teacher in his mid-50’s. Roger had a variety of careers throughout his life. After finishing his Master’s degree in his 40s, he took a
teaching job in China. After eight years there, he decided to move back stateside and took employment in a district that allowed him to interview via phone: Franklin School District. Though the interview was an hour-long conversation, the experiences of his teaching in Franklin School District were minimal but intriguing.

**Voicing STS.** Roger mentioned that there was a population that he felt wasn’t being served: Vietnamese families. He said that while there are a lot of resources for Hispanic households, the students that he worked with in the after-school robotics program he leads didn’t have the same amount of support.

> [S]tudents who are coming from poverty houses have other problems on their minds…even if their parents are trying to protect them from it, they have […] other problems on their minds […] Because really, this is simply somewhere they have to sit for ‘x’ number of hours a day and then go back to the problems of life (Roger, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 98).

Roger situated the problems in systemic inequities and not the students or families. Though he didn’t express thinking about the students’ problems outside of work on his own time in this segment, he did acknowledge that students have problems even if parents try to shield them. Roger also mentions students who had “real problems” and thought of a student who had his jacket stolen, and he knew that the family was short on funds. He mentioned that it was painful to watch a student go through this panic over a physical item, but he understood that the situation for this student was different.

Roger talked about riding his bike around town and seeing his students’ living situations, but he mentioned that students had better chances of succeeding in school than when he was going through school. Though he didn’t want to say he felt hopeless about seeing students’ life
circumstances, he did express a sense of relief that people were aware of the systemic problems that children in the school system face. A lot of his stressors were job-related and he mentioned that a teacher in the school who had felt isolated ended up leaving after the holidays without informing anyone. Roger said that this isolation is considered by many of the teachers who are not from the area.

The final student stressor that Roger talked about that was striking was him mentioning the political climate and how it had impacted his students.

[…] it’s clear [that students are] trying to relieve stress of the fear [of deportation] – and I don’t mean to blame our new administration – but that’s causing stress in the people here. You know, even though they’re not going to be deported, it was a message of hate (Roger, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 268).

Though he expressed sympathy, he said, “There’s not a whole lot I can do for – there’s not a whole lot I can do for them except remind them that, first off, they are not at risk of anything. […] They just realized that all of these people were saying this stuff about Mexicans that never would have been said last year (Roger, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 270). He felt that students had confided in him because they must have sensed in some way that he would not condone that type of behavior towards them.

**Analysis.** Having grown up in poor, Roger’s insight into many of his students’ realities was grounded in his own experience. Roger made it clear that he spends a lot of his time reading about systemic inequalities that are inherent in educational settings. His understanding based on his reality let him situate the problem external of the agents in his classroom: himself and his students. Roger acknowledged thinking about students outside of work and said that these thoughts are more prominent when he rides his bike around town because he gets glimpses of
their realities. Roger had embedded himself socially into the community and even his private
time where he rode around town, being a part of the community made it impossible to separate
his personal and professional life, though he did not say that he did nor that he wanted to.
Roger’s sense of humor allowed him to poke fun at himself and often at the questions I asked, as
he responded sarcastically with a smile on his face when asked about his embodiment of student
traumas. “Noooo,” (sarcastically said) after being asked if he thought about his students and their
lives outside of work.

In his assessment of students’ problems, he acknowledged that the students all worry about
very different things and all of their problems are real, real to them. He legitimized their
problems, while also understanding that losing a physical item had material and real
consequences for some students based on their family’s financial situation. Roger said that he did
not know his students’ parents, yet even though he did not talk to them, he was well aware of
their private situations, such as finances. This personal information made itself into the
classroom. This personal information about students and the visual representation he witnessed
on his daily rides through the community gave him a sense of hopelessness, though he didn’t
want to call it that, and then added that it was different from when he was growing up, that
people were more aware of the systemic problems. This sense of hopelessness (though he
stressed he didn’t want to use that word but failed to find a replacement) is directly associated
with the feelings that other teachers mentioned about their students’ lives. The feeling is one that
is brought on by people having to witness peoples’ lives, but not being able to do anything about
their circumstances. Embodying others traumas and stress can engender a sense of hopelessness
and guilt. Though Roger did not mention feeling guilty, other teachers navigated this guilt by
talking about how their students’ lives differed from what they viewed as “normal.”
The final stressor that Roger discussed was the fears that students were facing in the current political climate. He had created an environment in which students confided their fears in him even though as a white, male educator, he did not face the same racially motivated attacks. He was firm in his reassurance that he would not condone these types of behaviors in his classroom in an effort to provide a safe environment for students. This teacher was the only one who not only situated academic issues within the systemic inequities in our society but also discussed the impact of the sociopolitical climate on students’ well-being in schools. Roger articulated that there is no divide between a private and professional life when one works in schools through his incorporations of examples of how students’ lives spill into the classroom. Moreover, his examples not only blurred the private/public binary but showed how integrated the sociopolitical context is in schools.

**Question Three: How do they embody this type of stress?**

The second qualitative question, or question three overall, asked how teachers embodied the stressors and traumas that they witnessed. Embodiment was captured in various ways. While the narrative shows some dramatic examples of teachers embodying their stress, like Samantha who chose to quit and Roger’s mention of the teacher who left during a break, most of the embodiment was seen in the ways teachers talked about their students and the traumas that they witnessed their students experience. In looking for this response, six themes arose all closely related to embodying and reactions to stress: Emotion, Stress, Safety, Normal, Competent, and Resilience. These themes all demonstrated teachers expressing how they chose to approach and react to students’ precarious lives, but also how they took care of themselves and their students in ways that didn’t align with the public/private binary often visible in educational settings. Table 16 below shows the number of times each of those seven themes appeared in all of the
documents, specific to the respondent. Though the themes can be looked individually, there is some overlap between them. The table was organized by capturing the overarching codes that arose from the data and are arranged by participant.

Table 16: Themes Related to Teacher Embodiment of STS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Esmeralda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raegan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosario</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiley</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayline</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben and Samantha</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 1: Emotion

When identifying emotion as a theme, I considered how participants elicited some emotional expression as well as respondents explaining feelings that they experienced with regards to work or students. I analyzed emotion in ways that are aligned with my theoretical framework. I drew from critical theories of affect and emotion because it helped me capture how emotions are enacted in public spaces that often assert a private/public binary, in this situation schools. Emotions in my work took many different perspectives. Items were coded under “emotion” if teachers talked about their personal feelings towards students and situations, for example, Ben stated:

And so we just…I think being a teacher…even though it’s not stated in our contract, what is absolutely necessary is that we have to be able to shift gears and change hats when we need to; and recognize that, you know what…we all have bad days, we all have
emotional issues going on, we all have stuff that’s going on outside of the classroom, and we need to make room for those (Ben, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 183).

His sentiment on emotional issues and other occurrences that happen outside of the classroom was that there was a need to “make room for” these concerns. Emotion is an important aspect of teaching. He asserted this with the acknowledgment that this particular necessity was something that was unaccounted for in his contract, yet that it should be considered as a job requirement: a need to consider emotion.

Other examples of how emotion was coded included how teachers felt towards students’ experiences. For example, Katie talked about feeling terrible about how she spoke to a student after finding out about individual home circumstances. She communicating that hearing about students’ home lives made her emotionally engage with herself and how she felt about the student’s situation. Moreover, had she known about this student’s situation, she indicated that she would have approached how she treated this student differently. She also expressed getting mad about students’ circumstances.

Other teachers expressed pity towards students’ situations, exclaiming that they felt bad or sadness towards students and students’ circumstances. As can be seen above in Table 16, emotion was coded a total of 32 times between all of the participants, with Margaret and Kiley discussing emotions that they felt at higher instances than the other nine participants. Suggesting that every teacher that was interviewed expressed feeling emotions related to their work with students.

The public/private binary discussed by (Ahmed, 2015) emphasizes that often times, teachers and those who work in the public sphere, have to abide by narratives that exclude emotion. Emotion is treated as something that is only acceptable in the private spaces of peoples’ lives. In
this study, teachers talk about emotion in various ways, and they express how they feel as they reflect on the perception of their students’ lives. These expressions of emotion are ways in which teachers are embodying their students’ lives and experiences. Embodiment, as is discussed by Cruz (2006) and Anzaldua (1987), often relates to how the gendered, brown body should be centered in research, especially educational research. Though the participants I worked with varied in race and gender, a significant percentage of them (80%) were women. Though there are males that are a part of this study, the real consequences of studying a profession that has historically been gendered without considering the body (through the conceptualizations of embodiment) leaves a gaping hole in the theories, methodologies, analysis, and concepts that we assert as reason and knowledge. The public/private binary that is practiced in school settings asserts a dichotomy that if not blurred neglects emotions, even though as Dutro and Bien (2014) state traumas make their way into the lived experiences of students and teachers.

**Theme 2: Stress**

Since I spent the beginning of the analysis focused on STS and traumas that teachers faced, I chose to not re-analyze those specific types of stressors and traumas within the themes that arose in this section. Though I was primarily focused on STS in this study, the inductive coding procedure proved to incorporate stressors outside of STS and informed me on the stressors that teachers experienced first-hand. This was different than the STS theme because it was a deductive code that was derived from the research questions and how it was spoken about through the survey and interview items. Stress arose as an inductive code as teachers mentioned the word stress. It was a word that teachers seemed to have a better grasp on, one that they could tie experiences around many facets of their lives. Teachers discussed stress in various ways, some of the coding surrounding stress was coded simultaneous as STS, these specific coded
segments were not used for this section. There were thirty coded segments that were descriptive of teachers experiencing, discussing, or defining stress. Many, like Mayline, connected the impact of stress on their lives.

I think again, the whole teaching thing, just going back to my first year of teaching definitely stressed me as a first-year teacher, stressing both [personal and profession]. Maybe even have a bad day at home, and I would say this could be generalized to any type of work, but you go home, you have a bad day, and who do you take it out on? You take it out on your family. So, I say as far as that, yes.

(Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 163)

Mayline discussed the impact that the stress of her first year had on her marriage in the earlier narrative but articulated that, like many professions, stress makes its way into your home, whether it’s stress that you take on from work or life events. Others, like Ben, ranked the most stressful parts of their job. Ben initially ranked the isolation from his family as one of the most stressful issues about his profession. He then backtracked and reassigned his top stressor to his perception of student apathy. He believed that student apathy was truly the most stressful part of his job and went on to define stress as follows:

Okay, so…stress obviously is a chemical reaction in the body that is related to the events that are happening that are surrounding that person, and it can be transposed from home and come into the classroom. It doesn’t have to be that immediate instance, so stress is something that can build up, and even chemically it can build up and display itself through physical ways through blood pressure and those kind of things; but it can also introduce itself into a scenario through emotions and acting out a mental state…those kinds of things. So, stress is a real situation, a real issue when it comes to teaching.
There were two things that Ben did in his definition that many other teachers did as well, they acknowledged the physical stressors that come from stressful situations and they discussed the impact of stress on their lives, work, performance, etc. Though nine of the ten teachers described having some form of personal and professional stress, Esmeralda said the following with regards to the question eliciting information about the stressors in her life:

Personally, not really. I mean, just getting my work done, getting everything done in time. Professionally it’s the same thing, like getting my work done, getting everything ready

This tactic of responding negatively to a question, yet discussing the issue asked, in this case, stressors, was also done by other interview participants on other matters. Though Esmeralda said that she did not have stressors or did not feel that she had personal or professional stress, she continued the statement with “just” the everyday tasks that she had to prepare for and perform. Responding to questions in this manner begins to normalize certain levels of stress. She did not perceive herself to have stress because it was normal for her to do specific tasks.

Stress was an interesting theme to consider in relation to the public/private binaries of schools. This theme gave insight into the stressors that were situated in educators’ private lives. Many of the teachers described the impact that stress had on every aspect of their life; both their public and private lives. Again, these examples continue to blur the public/private binary, not only in education but as Mayline said that “this could be generalized to any type of work.” Specifically, in education, this analysis continues to highlight that regardless of the attempts to create a distinct barrier between work and life or the private and public spheres, a distinction is
not only not possible, but may not be desirable as it would be a tremendous amount of work to “shut off” the emotional and private part of your life from the public part of your life. It is much like disconnect that Anzaldua (1987) discusses in her work in *Borderlands*, asking one to live between two worlds knowing that these two worlds are always at odds with each other and can never actually be separated. Much like emotion and the aspects of internalizing, stress is also theme that cannot be separated into the private world. Stress not only makes an appearance in the public world, it is often caused by concerns that are public (i.e., schooling, perceptions of norms, etc.). This theme arose in eight of the ten teachers involved in the interviews.

**Theme 3: Safety**

As you can see in Table 16 above, Safety was discussed by teachers a total of 18 times. Seven of the ten interviewees considered it. The code derived from an item on the interview protocol that asked teachers what they believed their responsibility was as a teacher. It was my attempt to understand how teachers felt they had been prepared when taking the position and things that may have been left out or were a part of a hidden curriculum and expectations for teachers to also complete. From this question, many of the teachers responded that their primary responsibility was for students to be safe inside and outside of the classroom. Mayline stated the following about her belief about her responsibility to students, “I think number one responsibility is to make sure they're safe. I think both safety inside the classroom and even outside the classroom” (Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 127).

She was not the only person that phrased it as her primary responsibility. Roger discussed safety as his first step saying, “I know it sounds very basic, but -- a safe and orderly environment in which to learn […] that’s the first responsibility (Roger, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 216).
Unlike Mayline and Roger, Margaret emphasized safety more broadly and tied it to love. She did this by saying that a particular event “reminded [her] that [her] priority for the students is less academic and more that “[students are] safe, and loved” (Margaret, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 50). This connection of safety to love is a critical distinction in defining that safety is not only physical, but also mental and emotional. When considering the responsibility that teachers have for security of students, Rosario took what should be an exciting event in a school and for teachers, a new school building, and brought to light things that she worried about regarding child safety.

There’s no light. So, going from that to, like, windows it’s like, “Yay!!” But then you remember Sandy Hook, and you remember all these other school shootings…then it’s like, “Oh, … so many windows.”

(Rosario, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 124)

This particular comment made by Rosario positioned what we believe as safety and our responsibility as educators to our students within the historical contexts of all of the tragic school shootings. These traumas that have happened to others in our profession and students, much like the students we teach, remain engraved in our minds as we navigate the social context of education.

The sentiments made by the teachers regarding student safety and well-being were varied. Some talked about it directly relating to students in their classroom settings and some broadly discussed safety with consideration to students’ lives outside of school and also their emotional well-being. More importantly, how teachers are positioned in the community and school context plays a significant role in obfuscating the private/public binary. In this particular state, like many around the nation, teachers are required by law to be “mandated reporters.” Seemingly this
makes sense that someone who sees your child on a regular basis would be able to notice patterns that a teacher may suspect is caused by some form of physical, mental or emotional abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse. Though teachers have the responsibility of mandatory reporting to child protective services, there is no practical training that teachers go through, that would help a teacher differentiate between normal behavior and the less visible forms of abuse.

Mandated reporting instantly positions teachers in a way that makes them feel responsible for the safety of their students, not only in schools (from mass shootings) but also at home from the potential threats of physical, mental or emotional abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse. When considering the private/public binary, this particular law instantly blurs this line because it no longer allows a boundary, part of the job is, in fact, to be vigilant of the child in every aspect of their lives. A continuous form of observing and anticipating that something bad may happen.

**Theme 4: Normal**

The theme framed around normality originated when teachers juxtaposed their personal lived experiences with that of their students. While all of the participants talked about students not having “normal” lives, or having “different” lives than they expected, not all of the participants talked about this with regards to their perceptions. For example, Mayline talked about students’ lives not fitting the norm for the teachers that she worked alongside. She reflected on instances when her coworkers blame and broadly speculate that all children from particular places are a certain way. She then related her own experience growing up in these spaces and provided a counter narrative, by saying that those teachers were inaccurate in their assessment of “these” students.

Unlike Mayline, many of the other teachers talked about how they grew up in extremely different contexts and that this created a culture shock for them. Ben and Samantha spoke of
their upbringing and discussed how different it was and how their values differed in that they were “pushed to succeed on [their] own” (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 102).

Esmeralda similarly talked about this difference between her life and that of her students, and while she began by categorizing their backgrounds as “bad”, she corrected herself and instead talked about their lives as different. These differences stemmed from what she believed to be a lack of stability in the home and a different level of caring about education that her students’ families held (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 66). She particularly reflected on this perspective while considering the students in her class that were homeless. Kylie, on the other hand, did not shy away from categorizing students’ home lives as difficult. She explained how different students’ family structures were than her own. Raegan also had a similar sentiment in comparing her upbringing to that of her students. She made sure to acknowledge that while it was extremely different, she loves that difference. Robert had many similarities to the students whom he teaches, one of which is that he grew up in a poverty-stricken area and he identifies as someone who grew up in a poor, working-class family. Even with this similarity, Robert expressed that students culturally all come with different expectations surrounding schooling.

These perspectives around normality or the “normal” reflect a substantial disconnect between students and teachers. Much of the research shows that the majority of teachers in this country are white, middle-class women, while a majority of the students are working class, students of color. The disconnect is important to note because teachers expressed throughout the interview their perceptions of how students and families should behave within schools, mostly this expectation aligned with their personal lived experiences, which vary drastically from that of their students.
Theme 5: Competent

Of the ten participants, nine of them talked to some extent about how they felt about their competence as teachers. Often, their thoughts were filled with insecurities questioning their capacity and skill to do the job and do it well. These insecurities sometimes led teachers to talk about ways that they internalize their job. Competency was a code that arose when teachers discussed how they felt they were doing, at times in comparison to others, but often about what their students were learning.

Samantha expressed that she “never felt like [she] was good at [teaching]” (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 124). This reflection was prompted when asked about why she left the profession. Her doubts about her capacity were phrased around ways in which she could better herself for the sake of student learning. This competency was placed internally. By this I mean, if students were not doing well, she put the blame on her abilities to teach. Ben used this opportunity to reframe his beliefs about competency, which were similar to Samantha’s, and situate it on students. Both of them expressed a feeling of internalizing saying, “we think we’re failing, and so we internalize that whole concept of “It’s me, it’s me, it’s me” (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 154)

Much like Ben and Samantha, Kylie believed that her most pressing stressor was the following:

“Kids who aren’t making progress for whatever reason…whether it’s because they don’t care and they don’t try, which is the biggest reason; but it’s worse when it’s – when you’re doing everything you’re supposed to be doing, and you’re really trying as hard as you can, and you just are not seeing progress being made.

(Kylie, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 154)
Again, much like many of the teachers, Kylie was worried about if students were learning the material they needed to know. This stress was something that they embodied in many ways. Some of the ways were worrying about how much of their achievement was caused by their teaching. Robert was not only concerned if he was “doing well enough,” but also with his previous experiences of being laid off, he said “there’s always an ax; even if it’s not really there. So…no, those are pressures” (Robert, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 222). Though he worried, he understood the nature of the job, and perceived it as follows:

“Am I doing enough for the kids? Am I preparing them?” And the answer is always no. You always miss somewhere. And of course, that very opinion tells you a little bit…because some people will say, “Well, sure, sure.” But you know, the answer’s always no. There will always be something you didn’t hit. (Robert, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 226)

This sentiment was echoed by other teachers as well. Mayline talked about this specifically asking of herself if she was “doing enough.” (Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 60)

Margaret expressed being overwhelmed by the amount of resources and materials that first-year teachers in the district needed to learn. Though she mentioned a lot of these tools were helpful, the pressure of learning and implementing all of them, while also being new and ensuring students were learning was a stressor that was extremely present in her daily life. It was such a pressing issue that she expressed that “last year, in some ways [she thought she] was kind of drowning” (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 64). This overwhelming feeling of being a competent employee and teacher had given her a visceral feeling of drowning. Raegan expressed
similar stressor regarding her early years of teaching and competency in teaching all the materials required of elementary school teachers.

Internalizing was embedded with the code of competency. In a few cases, teachers discussed how they internalized both their failures in the classroom and that of their students. They also talked about internalizing the job itself, as well as, students’ traumas and life circumstances. In work done in behavioral psychology, those who internalize their problem, or keep them to themselves, can be diagnosed with a disorder. As with every disorder through the view of psychology, some symptoms can help diagnose them: “Behaviors that are apparent in those with internalizing disorders include depression, withdrawal, anxiety, and loneliness” (Smith, n.d.). One of the main ways that I observed how internalizing could be situated in my theoretical framework is when I considered the theories around the public/private binary and embodiment. There were instances where teachers discussed “carry[ing]” or “tak[ing] a lot” of the stressors and students’ traumas home. The following excerpt exemplifies what Sally considered internalizing:

You carry a lot of that with you. […] you start to question, you know, what can I do? What can I do more of? But that burnout part…if you carry all that home with you, you have to have the ability not to put it back on other people in your family too

(Sally, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 150)

Sally made it a point to share with me how she situated herself in the lives of her students. She wanted to leave an impact on children. Some of the instances that she described led her to believe that she would be able to provide for students what she felt they needed as seen in the following excerpt:
I think I did take a lot of that home. My husband would probably tell you that, I think. I don’t know how many times I would say, “If we could just bring this kid home, if I could just let him live here for 2 years and show him what a real life – what the real world is really like and how people are consistent and are there for you, what a difference this would make.”

(Sally, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 74)

Sally had a desire to be the “fixer” of her students’ lives. Primarily, she wanted to provide opportunities for them that may otherwise not be offered to them outside of her home. When Sally provides the descriptions in both of her excerpts of “carry” and “take […] home,” I imagine the famous depiction of the man carrying the world. This visualization was influential in creating my understanding around how teachers often feel about their work as it relates to their students. While some would want to take students home, others discuss the narrative about how home and school can work in conjunction with the same aim of students’ health and well-being as a priority. Raegan describes considering her students as her “kids.” In her discussion about internalizing, Raegan made it clear that she tied emotion heavily to her students’ well-being and safety both inside and outside of schools.

By situating themselves as what I will call “fixers,” these teachers put the onus of fixing perceived student problems and student traumas on themselves. In this way, internalization differs significantly from embodiment. While there is a burden to act and “do something,” it disembodies the problem from its historical contexts and instead provides a type of savior mentality. Through their work and by internalizing, teachers continue to observe traumas but are not critical of their positionality and their role in perpetuating the prevailing narrative that poor, brown children need to be saved, and white women are the ones who can do the saving.
One coping strategy to combat internalizing was discussed by Ben in the following way, “Because we think we’re failing, and so we internalize that whole concept of “It’s me, it’s me, it’s me,” and once we figure out hey, maybe it’s not all me we start looking out” (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 154) created a binary of externalizing and internalizing. This dichotomy implicitly argues that there is only one way to fix the issues that are present when one internalizes: in Ben’s words, “we can externalize that issue and minimize the damage within our own minds” (Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 154). Ben’s description of both internalizing and externalizing gives the same visual that teachers presented in the narratives regarding hypothetical and literal boundaries. This particular boundary is one that takes place in the brain, and on the body. In order to fix the perceived problem, one would have to disemboby the problem and place it on an external being or thing. This notion also makes an argument that internalizing or any form of allowing us to feel in our bodies are a detriment to our healthy minds and bodies.

Theme 6: Resilience

“I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self-indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival.” -Audre Lorde

I begin this theme with a quote from Audre Lorde about self-care. I believe that in this particular study, when considering teaching and teachers, self-care plays a significant role in teachers being able to do their work. Some participants called themselves selfish for not thinking about their students or missing school events, yet as Audre Lorde said caring for oneself is “an act of survival.” The way in which each participant talked about coping strategies differed greatly. Overall, there were 93 instances in which teachers either discussed a coping strategy, or simply followed the discussion of stress by casually mentioning something they did to take their
mind off of the situation, teachers all used various forms of coping strategies as a way to survive their profession, or as I saw it forms of resilience. All interviewees reported having strategies for resilience.

The coding of resilience came primarily from the larger code of “coping with stress and STS.” Within these two overarching codes, smaller codes arose that defined different ways in which teachers coped with stress and more specifically STS. One way in which teachers reported dealing with these stressors was to create a balance between trying to “save” every kid and understanding that the work you do matters in some way:

But I just had to have a mind shift to realize that I’m not gonna save every kid.

First of all, there’s just an exhaustion level [laughs] that shuts your mind down, but second of all, being able to connect with the students who are there and being able to say, “You know what…I am making a difference in some way.” Yeah.

(Ben, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 150)

At some point, Ben had to whittle down what he believed to be his job, “saving” kids, to a more manageable task of having students understand the material. Creating this balance allowed him to refocus his energy on creating content for student consumption. While others relied on physical activities, hobbies, family support, and strove to fight against isolation, some provided the very support they believe would help them:

Generally, over the course of my life I came to realize that isolating one’s self…like for instance, my coworker Sandy⁵; she just looked at me with this…I could just see that she was

---

⁵ Pseudonym
drowning, she was exhausted, and she couldn’t think straight. And I said, “Why don’t we have a girl’s night?” And I’m really excited; we’re gonna do something this weekend.

(Margaret, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 86)

Margaret had experienced her own forms of isolation and reached out to a co-worker to provide the support she needed at the time to refocus her friend. Others took a spiritual approach and placing the burden on the higher being they believe in, they relieved themselves of the stress.

I would have to say that I pray for them at night, definitely. I try to make sure that, just pray for them in that aspect.

(Mayline, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 230)

Most, however, expressed a sense of being overwhelmed, this exhaustion pushed them to think about things that they had control over. They were always moving to the next thing they had to accomplish; their next worry. And overall, while many relied on others to provide some kind of emotional support, the answer was often resituated back on the individual, as the following excerpt indicates:

You know, unfortunately, the mental health of adults is not the business of education…which sucks. I mean, it honestly does, but when it comes down to just like what we just said, if you don’t take care of yourself and you don’t manage your own things, then how can you help someone else manage all the things that we ask them to do…but it just doesn’t…it’s hard to make that a priority when there’s so many other priorities that are placed on our staff and our teachers.

(Sally, Interview Excerpt, January 2017, Line 122)

Sally made some observations about how the system of education does not consider mental health as a priority, especially the mental health of the adults that make up its workforce. Even
within Sally’s statement, there is an outside factor (the structure of schools) that places priorities on teachers. This continued reinforcement that while there is a public/private binary the structure of education will continue to burden teachers with more than it is willing to equip them to handle.

Through the theme of resilience, teachers shared ways in which they can cope with their job in the public sphere: often relying on people from their private lives. Though some found support in other staff, resources from the school with regards to materials for curriculum, all teachers relied on their family and friends to divert their attention from the stress and trauma that they see and face in public education. Teachers, in essence, use their forms of resilience as a protective buffer within their bodies so that the shock of the traumas they witness will give a softer blow as it traverses their bodies. The very reality that teachers expressed a multitude of coping strategies as a form of resilience indicates the need for them to consider these coping strategies as a way of survival. The STS they face at work is only compounded by the stressors they ascribe to home, but they never get completely separated.

**Summary**

The narratives in this chapter intended to capture what types of student trauma teachers reported witnessing and experiencing; the analysis was done in a way that reflected on teachers’ clear descriptions of ways they perceived embodying (or not) student traumas. The analysis then tied these accounts of STS to how these teachers were situated in a sector that enforces public/private binary and how this impacts how teachers can and do engage with students’ traumas, as well as how these traumas are felt in their bodies (embodiment).

In these findings, there is a thread that tied most of them together: separation. This separation was noticeable and reinforced the public/private binary. Most teachers reported needing to
separate their personal lives from their work lives. This may well have a role in the broader concept of professionalism in many fields, in which a “work/life” balance is touted as an ideal. However, unlike other professions, the very nature of teaching engages its actors to participate in an erasure or a blurring of this binary. Though many reported creating a physical boundary, using the doors of their schools as metaphorical and literal ways in which they create a boundary between their life at school and their life at home, these boundaries often only applied to the physical work of teaching (i.e. grading, lesson planning, etc.). Teachers often carried the worry they held for certain students as they went home. These intrusive memories of their students arose in their home lives as they went about what they considered their “normal” lives, wondering about their students whose lives looked different.

The blurring of this public/private binary was seen with every teacher in this study, both in considering the survey, which captured embodiment and the interviews. No teacher on the survey had a score of zero which would have indicated no embodiment, and no teacher (though some said they didn’t embody or take on their students’ traumas) had been successful in completely shutting their professional, or public, life from their personal life. Though this is not surprising to those who have taught, it is surprising that more empirical research does not take up a critical approach to explaining student-teacher dynamics.

Teachers witness student trauma on a daily basis. This trauma takes various forms. All teachers in this study were able to divulge the story that had not left them. Much like my story of STS in Chapter 1, these teachers each had their own Hailey and Joey that stuck with them, some even twenty years later. When considering all of the teachers who participated in the survey, their students had all experienced trauma in a psychological view and an insidious view, though this binary should be blurred as well. Teachers mentioned homelessness, divorces and
separations, safety plans, abuse, neglect, molestation, lack of sleep and nutrition, the impact of poverty (i.e. no heat, precarious living conditions, etc.), teen pregnancies, racism, and systemic inequities as traumas their students had endured. This glimpse into what teachers often witness in their classrooms, with their students is a reminder that teachers should be equipped to think critically about students’ trauma.

The quantitative approach to the qualitative findings was intended to provide a visual summary of themes that arose in the data. To answer how teachers embody STS and stress, I analyzed the data thematically. Six themes emerged that gave an insight into teacher reactions to their stressors. Throughout the six themes one thing became very apparent, at every turn, there was a challenge to the public/private binary that is implemented in schools widely. This binary serves to place the onus on the individual, much like STS, as typically defined, places the sole responsibility of people taking care of their own problems. Teachers throughout the study used and talked about emotion in ways that were meaningful to teaching and learning in a classroom. They became vulnerable in sharing their sorties of how they had come to internalize their work, their students’ work, and their students’ lives. They discussed the stress that comes from many aspects of their lives as well as the pressure that originates from the responsibility that teachers have to their students both academically and personally. Teachers expressed concern for the safety of their students and talked about their responsibility to keep students safe as the most important thing they did as educators. Finally, teachers shared ways in which they have been or plan on being resilient.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the study findings. Next, I connect these results to the theoretical underpinnings and the review of literature. Then, I identify the possible implications of this study for policy at various levels. Moreover, I explain the limitations of this study and recommend ideas for future research. I end this chapter with closing remarks reflecting on my learning throughout this research study.

Research Question One: What level of STS do Teachers Report Experiencing?

The findings of this study show that teachers experience secondary traumatic stress in a normal curve, indicating that teachers experience STS at many levels. This is to say that some teachers experience high levels of STS and some experience low levels of STS, but the bulk of the respondents fall in the middle of the curve, which means that most teachers experience moderate levels of STS. This study had similar findings to that of Dworkin, Haney, and Teleschow (1988) which showed that teachers experienced stress related to extrinsic factors, which they described as unrelated to the function of teaching, but rather from social interactions that arise from occupying the role. The external factor that I intended to capture was the interaction that teachers had with students and their students’ personal lives. Though most of the teachers in the study reported feeling moderate levels of STS, none reported feeling none. Therefore, this phenomenon is necessary to consider as present in the field of education and coping techniques should be continued to be refined specifically for the field of education as research continues to evolve in this particular area.

Borntrager and colleagues were one of the first to study secondary traumatic stress in the field of education. In their study of STS, Borntrager, Caringi, van den Pol, Crosby, O’Connell,
Trautman, and McDonald (2012) made a case that those studying STS should consider teachers in their work. They made the argument that researchers should regard teaching as a helping profession and therefore studies surrounding this field should take into consideration themes that arise in other helping professions as points of interest. Much like Borntrager and colleagues found in their study, my study revealed that this phenomenon is present in the teaching population. Unlike their findings, however, fewer of my respondents reported high rates of STS. Borntrager et. al. (2012) found that a large percentage (over 50%) of school personnel showed signs of higher levels of primary and secondary trauma. Their methods and population sample, which primarily focused on First Nation People and school staff who worked on schools located on reservations, were different than those of this study and those differences may account for the difference in STS levels.

Nevertheless, my study did reassert that STS should be a phenomenon that is considered exploring as a stress that teachers experience. Unlike Borntrager and colleagues, the population of this study focused on a more generalizable population as it concentrated on an entire school district and the methods of collection ensured that the sample was representative of the larger district population.

Further, when considering the political climate, which has effectively pushed marginalized communities further into the margins and these populations have seen an increase of racist, hateful rhetoric, it is important to re-conceptualize what trauma means, and consider insidious trauma when defining trauma that students face. As was discussed in the types of trauma that teachers reported that their students experienced, a vast majority of the teachers interviewed reported witnessing both psychological and insidious trauma. The majority of the cases of trauma discussed in this study focused around what I defined as insidious trauma through my
framework. Though it is important to note that this is not to reinforce a binary on these types of traumas, rather be inclusive about how trauma is defined in the field of education as it relates to teachers, students, and schools.

Theoretically, I argue that STS, and the positivist tools used to measure this phenomenon, can be aligned with critical theories of affect and trauma and used as a way to measure how teachers embody their students’ traumas. While this section shows, based on psychological groundwork, that teachers experience the phenomenon of STS as is conceptualized in psychology, I choose to extend this with theory as a way to capture feelings, emotions and affect as teachers respond to the students’ trauma that they serve. Though there is further work in theorizing this concept, I believe that it is an important distinction to make between how I perceived STS in my analysis and how other researchers in STS situate themselves.

Sub-Question 1.A Does STS vary by school demographics?

In answering the first sub-question it is important to note that there were many school demographics that I anticipated to receive through the survey, but unfortunately, the population lacked some substantial variance in specific areas that are typical in other education research. For example, I had anticipated being able to analyze between schools that were identified as Title I schools and those that weren’t. Unfortunately, this particular district only had one school that was not designated as a Title I school. Of the 30% of teachers that responded to the survey, only one of the respondents identified themselves as working for a Non-Title I school. This led me only to analyze school demographics based on the grade levels that each respondent taught. More specifically, I looked at whether teachers were teaching at an elementary, middle, or high school level.
The findings of this study showed that while teachers at all types of schools experienced STS, there was a moderately statistical significant finding that teachers who worked at elementary schools are likely to experience higher levels of STS than high school teachers. These studies were similar to Dworkin’s (1985) findings in his work on teacher burnout and stress that showed that elementary school teachers suffered burnout and stress at higher rates than teachers who worked at other types of schools. This finding makes sense when considering that in the field of psychology the primary cause of STS is prolonged exposure to their “clients’” traumas (Figley, 1995), in this case, students, produces higher levels of STS. Elementary school teachers spend the most amount of time with the same students, day in and day out. Conversely, secondary school teachers, see a significant number of students for shorter time spans. Unfortunately, there was not enough data to consider other types of schools (i.e., charter, Bilingual, Special Education, etc.).

Though there is a higher level of STS in elementary school teachers, I believe that the adverse effects of trauma are intensified by the institutional constraints of emphasizing a false binary that emotions should be left in the private sphere and not brought into the school or classroom. Teachers, especially those interviewed at the elementary level, talked about a deep sense of caring they felt towards their students, and all of the teachers spoke of a sense of responsibility for students’ safety inside and outside of school. These findings contradict the public/private binary that is reinforced in schools but impossible for teachers to embrace. This effectively puts teachers in contradiction to the structure within which they work.

**Sub-Question 1.B Does STS vary by teacher demographics?**

This question focused on seeing if there were differences in the levels of STS that teachers experienced based on their demographics. Though the focus on this area only took into
consideration ethnicity, class, and teacher experience, it is not to say that other variables weren’t collected. In an attempt to research specific demographics that investigations in the area of teacher turnover consider, I also collected information about whether or not teachers planned to remain at their current school. Though this would have been an ideal way to identify how likely a teacher would be to turnover, the district has recently gone through many changes. The changes include new school buildings and moving away from an intermediate system (where they had 4th-6th-grade schools called intermediate schools) back to a more traditional system in which they have elementary, middle, and high schools. These changes have caused a massive shift in where teachers will be working the following year. In light of this, the information gathered about their intention to leave or stay in the same school was not a valid one to consider.

In this study, I found that STS did vary by teacher demographics. Specifically, white teachers and teachers who reported growing up in working and middle-class families experienced higher levels of STS than the teachers of color and those who reported growing up in upper middle-class families. When considering class, teachers who reported growing up in working-class families showed higher levels of STS at a statistically significant level than both their middle-class and upper-middle-class peers. While teachers who reported growing up with a middle-class upbringing had statistically significant levels of STS, those levels were still lower than their working-class counterparts, but higher than their upper middle-class peers.

The finding that white teachers experience higher levels of STS than their non-white counterparts was congruent with the work of Dworkin, Haney, and Telschow (1988). This work found that white teachers in urban settings were more likely to feel that they have experienced victimization (this ranged from feeling scared in the environment/community, to threats from students) and therefore reported higher levels of stress. The added stressor that teachers had due
to the feeling of victimization, then exacerbated their day-to-day stressors. Though white teachers are more likely to feel higher levels of stress, they leave the profession at lower rates than their peers of color (Watson, Bristo, & White, 2015; Ingersoll and May, 2011). Again, while Dworkin, Hanley, and Telechow’s work focused victimization and stress, this work was specific to secondary traumatic stress as opposed to stress in general. Though there is a distinct difference between stress (as discussed broadly) and STS, as was made evident in the literature on STS in helping professions (Figley, 1995; Tehrani, 2007; Boscarino, Figley, & Adams, 2004), the findings in this study are able to add to the literature on specific types of stress and stressors that land on the bodies of teachers.

In the review of literature, when considering teacher turnover, there was work that focused on how class impacted whether teachers left the field or not. Though this study did not focus on turnover, I found a parallel between which teachers were affected most by stressors to the work of Dworkin (1988) regarding turnover. Dworkin concluded that though teachers from working-class backgrounds may experience higher levels of job dissatisfaction, unlike their middle-class counterparts they are trapped in their situations because of lack of options. Based on his findings, he suggested that white, working-class teachers felt these high levels of entrapment because they had no opportunity to leave the profession if they wanted to. Though my research did not identify if teachers were leaving the profession, I did find that teachers with working-class backgrounds were likely to experience higher levels of STS. While this finding is not indicative of whether they leave the profession, it is a population that is impacted by a factor that may push them out of their healthy minds, bodies, and eventually the field.

The finding that teachers of color experienced STS at lower rates than their white counterparts was surprising, but also can be explained by my feminist frameworks that discuss
how women of color have the imprints of historical traumas on their bodies (Cruz, 2001; Anzaldúa, 1987). I believe that understanding the traumas that students are experiencing, situates teachers of color differently in classrooms. Rather than seeing students as a problem to fix and students’ backgrounds and narratives in deficit frameworks, perspectives of teachers of color focus on their shared lived experiences with students. This belief was reinforced in the words of a Latina that was a part of the interview: Mayline. Specifically, she discussed her feelings about other teachers talking poorly about the students who had grown up in the same mobile home park as she had. She was angry that they had labeled all students from those neighborhoods as students who needed extra attention because they may hurt other children. She situated this through her knowledge and experience of that particular community. Reiterating that she was from that neighborhood, and it made her sad to think that teachers may have thought less of her based on geographical setting. She made it a point to say that she never wanted for anything as a child, even in reflecting that she had grown up as what many would consider a poor, working-class household.

This was in stark contrast to other teachers, whom in reflecting what they had learned about their students during home visits, normalized their own lives and situated students in deficit narratives. These conversations were reiterated in the teachers discussing their sense of pity upon hearing students’ traumatic events or living situations (Kiley, Interview Excerpt, 2017). As well as some participants, feeling personally helpless and hopeless because they were not personally able to help students out of their lives that were in stark contrast to their own lives (Raegan and Roger, Interview Excerpt, 2017). These narratives were produced mostly by white teachers, but also by a Latina, Esmeralda, who had grown up in a middle-class to upper-middle-class family (Interview Excerpt, 2017).
Research Question Two: What types of STS do teachers report experiencing?

I want to begin by reinforcing the sentiment mentioned above about making a distinction between psychological and insidious trauma. I make the distinction as an effort to be inclusive of the insidious types of traumas that are often not incorporated into standard work on trauma because most of that work is situated in the field of psychology. That being said, to argue that trauma should broadly capture a spectrum of traumas and expand on how trauma is defined, I made the distinction between the two. In making this distinction, I wanted to ensure that traumas, as defined by critical theories of trauma and affect, were also considered in my perception of STS.

The findings in this study regarding the types of traumas that teachers reported their students experiencing touched on many areas that I found in the literature regarding hard to serve schools. Teachers in this study reported witnessing both psychological and insidious types of traumas that their students had faced. Teachers had narratives about experiencing the deaths of students and their family members along with students dealing with the incarceration of a close family member and family dynamics that included divorce and separations. Some teachers expressed that they have had extreme cases of students who have been molested and sexually assaulted. Though these stories of psychological types of trauma were expressed by teachers as the “most memorable” experiences that “tend to stick with you,” there were also many experiences of insidious trauma that teachers discussed.

These experiences of insidious trauma were often discussed by teachers using the term “worry.” Teachers worried about the health and well-being of students. They talked about students coming to school hungry. Some talked about kids not having warm clothing in the winter and then discussed the resources towards which they guided the family. They worried
about students who were considered “homeless” in various capacities, whether couch surfing or sleeping in their parents’ vehicles. Moreover, they were concerned about students’ lives and how their circumstances impacted their school performance.

In summary, teachers reported that students do experience many types of situations, which fell within the scope of both psychological and insidious traumas. These experiences were noticed by teachers to the capacity that they were able to reflect on how they felt as a result of thinking about and witnessing the precarious lives of their students. Though the findings may not be shocking to teachers or those in the field of education, it is important to note that this study aimed to identify what types of traumas teachers reported witnessing in an effort to be more inclusive of different types of traumas when considering STS in schools.

**Research Question Three: How do they embody this type of stress?**

Research question three was aimed at seeing if teachers embodied student trauma, or, how this trauma was measured quantitatively, showed moderate to high levels of STS. Embodiment, as was defined in my theoretical framework, uses the theoretical underpinnings of feminist scholars who consider the body as a location of theory production (Cruz, 2001, 2006; Anzaldúa 1987). These theorists argue that the body is a source of theory production and because one can theorize in the body, the body should be incorporated into research. This particular question seeks to do just that, incorporate teachers’ bodies, not only as sources of knowledge and knowledge production but also as a location in which we can theorize STS. Particularly with this research, I aimed to discover if students’ traumas traversed their teachers’ bodies through their witnessing. That is to say, when teachers considered their students’ lives, did this consideration impact them and if so, was the impact felt in their bodies. This assertion, along with the findings of the study, also supported the idea of Dworkin, Haney, Rosalind, & Dworkin (1990) put forth
regarding teachers experiencing stress in schools and that this stress was directly related to illnesses that teachers experienced. This was shown through the number of sick days and mental health days that teachers reported taking through the survey that they had administered. In other words, teachers were becoming physically ill because of the stress that Dworkin and colleagues (1990) were researching. While the stress that I examined differed, to that which was observed in their study, it too seeks to understand how stress is felt in the bodies of teachers.

Through the quantitative methods, I argue that a positivistic tool, which I had created and adapted to measure the construct of STS in teachers can be re-framed to consider STS as teachers embodying student trauma. Through this reframing, I made the argument that the levels of STS are directly connected to the levels of which teachers embody student trauma. The quantitative findings indicated that all teachers showed some level of STS. Again, while most teachers showed moderate levels of STS, there were no teachers that showed a level of zero or no STS. This reiterated the initial finding of question one that encourages this phenomenon to be considered when doing research in schools regarding stress. The second part of the quantitative analysis was to inform how teachers reported embodying this stress. This was done by analyzing how participants responded to each item and categorizing each item to the STS symptom as compared to the construct map.

The findings indicated that teachers’ embodiment of STS ranged from positive to negative physical and mental impacts. Though some of the findings could be broadly spoken of to be inclusive of feelings that people in other professions endure, these questions were specifically asked to elicit how teachers embodied student traumas. While teachers responded that they worried about students, their lives, and were unable to separate their work life from their home life, they also expressed a desire to create trusting relationships with students and
their families, as well as, encourage students to be open to them about their lives. Though this shows that teachers inevitably will blur the public/private divide, the line is blurred for both beneficial and adverse effects of witnessing trauma.

The qualitative chapter in this study also attempted to answer the question of teacher embodiment of student trauma. This was intended to explore any other ways, aside from the established symptoms of STS, that teachers embodied student trauma. The findings showed six themes that came out of the data: emotion, stress, safety, normal, competent, and resilience. Though these themes vary in their attempt to capture embodiment, each provides a solid reasoning to consider embodiment of students’ traumas in education.

Every teacher in the study mentioned some kind of emotion that they felt when thinking about their students and their lives and traumas. The emotions ranged from happy to sad, helpless to loving. Emotion was used as a vehicle for teachers to talk about how much they cared and loved their students, and express how they thought about them both in school settings and outside of school settings. Emotions are things that we feel in our minds and bodies. These interactions that teachers have with students are not devoid of emotion. Therefore, by the very nature of teaching, teachers inevitably show some form of embodiment whether it is positive or negative.

Stress was the second theme that I found to be an explanation of teacher embodiment. Teachers within this theme made mention of other stressors that they carried with them or embodied. Stress was an interesting theme to consider with regards to the public/private binaries of schools. This theme brought about stressors that were situated in educators’ private lives. However, many of the teachers described the impact that stress has on every aspect of their life. Again, these examples continue to blur the public/private binary, not only in education but as
Mayline said that “this could be generalized to any type of work.” Specifically, in education, the analysis continues to bring instances, in which regardless of attempts to make a distinction between work and life or private and public, that reinforce that a distinction is not only improbable but may not be desirable as it would be a tremendous amount of work to “shut off” the emotional and private part of your life. Asking teachers to have a separation between the public and private is reflective of Anzaldúa’s (1987) work in *Borderlands*, which discusses how asking one to live between two worlds creates a disconnect, because these two worlds, while always at odds with each other, can never truly be separated. Stress, much like emotion and the aspects of internalizing, is also not a theme that can be separated into the private world. Stress not only makes an appearance in the public world but is often caused by concerns that are public (i.e., schooling, perceptions of norms, etc.).

Though safety may seem like an odd thing to consider as a code for embodiment, the analysis indicated that teachers worried a lot about their students’ safety. The embodiment of this particular theme lies on the worry that teachers express. Though teachers worried about other things, safety was a preoccupation that they experienced because of their emotional ties to their students and also because of the structural ways in which teachers are positioned in schools. Both the emotional investment and the positionality of the job are in direct opposition to the belief that there is a public/private binary by which teachers should abide.

Normal was a theme that arose from many of the teachers in the study. It was framed around students’ background and lives and how it differed from their own. This theme aligned with the some of the teachers’ beliefs that it was their responsibility to care for their students within and outside of their school duties. Though this particular theme was not a form of teacher embodiment, it was insightful in how teachers situated themselves in the classroom and how they
viewed their responsibility towards students whose lives were starkly different from their own. There was no public, private binary in these cases because teachers were engaging with knowledge of students’ personal lives alongside their own life in understanding their differences. As teachers were considering student lives, some of them indicated that they internalized the lives of their students both negatively and positively; through worrying and guilt as negative perceptions that consume them and a sense of community with students and families as a positive outcome of this internalization.

In addition to internalizing students’ lived experiences, teachers also internalized “the job.” Meaning that they heavily considered their competence in teaching as they discussed student academic achievement, leading to a theme of competent. This competency led some teachers to reconsider their value in the classroom deeply and through this, they worried that students were failing because of their ability to teach. This heavy burden that teachers placed in their minds and bodies did not arise on their own. Research has shown that with increased teacher accountability, student ability has been placed squarely on teachers and their ability to convey the material to students (Harvey, 2014). Along with regarding accountability as one sided, teachers have been placed as both the problem and solution to educational problems. Because of this hyper focus on teachers, this theme shows the negative impact that this framing around accountability has on the emotional well-being of teachers.

The final theme that was discussed regarding teacher embodiment was resilience. This theme was aimed at capturing the positive things that teachers embody in order to cope with the traumas that they witness. Through the theme of resilience, teachers shared ways in which they are able to cope with their job in the public sphere: often relying on people from their private lives. Though some found support in other staff, resources from the school with regards to
materials for curriculum, all teachers relied on their family and friends to divert their attention from the stress and trauma that they witnessed and faced in public education. Teachers, in essence, use their forms of resilience as a protective buffer within their bodies, so that the shock of the traumas they witness will give a softer blow as it traverses their bodies. The very reality that teachers expressed a multitude of coping strategies as a form of resilience indicates the need for them to consider these coping strategies as a form of survival. The STS they face at work is only compounded by the stressors they ascribe to home, but they never get completely separated.

The study showed many ways in which teachers embody student trauma. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings showed compelling examples showing how teachers embodied this type of stress.

Implications

Relying on the results of this study, literature in these areas, and theory I propose four implications that can be taken up using this work.

Implication 1. Explore, expose, and address STS in schools.

This investigation was able to add to the limited research on STS in the field of education. The study aimed to explore STS in one school district and found that all teachers experience STS with most teachers experiencing moderate levels of STS. Though the survey showed that most of the teachers in the district experienced this phenomenon, very few who were interviewed considered the types of trauma that I defined in my framework as trauma. To this end, there is a need to both refine the tool and to expose the role of trauma and affect/emotion in schools.

Though the tool would not be diagnostic, there is a need to continue to refine the survey so that teachers will have access to a tool that will help them gauge their embodiment of students’
traumas. The findings showed that teachers experienced this phenomenon and one of the most useful things suggested in the field of psychology is that knowing that you are experiencing the phenomenon allows someone to acknowledge it and make shifts. Though the recommendations for ameliorating some of the negative symptoms of STS would look drastically different in the field of education, this tool is a beginning step towards understanding the role it plays in education.

Further, framing this tool and its use away from the field of psychology and its individualizing of the perceived problem to the personal experience is important. Framing the phenomenon as a shared experience between student and teacher is important in identifying ways in which trauma can be included in classrooms that are authentic, yet not detrimental. In doing this, defining trauma would be a crucial step in ensuring that many types of traumas are considered so that this broad range can help ensure that all experiences are validated.

As Dworkin (1985) found in his early work, untended burnout and stress had damaging effects in the classroom. Students who had teachers that had self-reported lower levels of self-efficacy and higher reports of burnout and stress had smaller gains throughout the year than students' whose teachers had reported higher levels of self-efficacy and lower levels of burnout and stress. However, teachers who "owned" everything (had the highest levels of self-efficacy) were more likely to produce lower gains with students and indicated in questionnaires that they were likely to leave the classroom. This previous work, along with the investigation of STS as a particular stressor, is important in exposing the need for this type of work to be central to our work with teachers as they have direct contact with students. It would be beneficial if it took place at the school and district levels with current teachers and embed it into mentor programs and new teacher induction seminars.
Implication 2: Preparing pre-service teachers to cope with student trauma and embrace emotion.

There is a need to embed discussion and teaching of emotions, students’ trauma, and coping and resilience strategies into teacher preparation programs. The majority of U.S. public educators are White, and the findings of this study indicate that this population is the most profoundly impacted by this phenomenon. This would apply to teaching preparation at the university level. This could be taken up much like the first implication, yet focus on teacher preparation programs, rather than at the school and district levels.

Some programs are currently aimed at preparing teacher candidates to use trauma informed studies when working with students. These studies are intended to help teachers work with students who have been impacted by trauma. The focus of these programs is on the students and not on the teachers. Incorporating work that is aimed towards helping professionals in other fields would be an important step in the preparation of teachers as they enter the classroom.

Implication 3: Breaking the public private binary that is prominent in school institutions.

Theorists who work in the fields of critical affect and trauma have long argued that while there are some unpleasant effects of experiencing others’ traumas, the exchange is necessary to building authentic relationships and engagement. This understanding and the work on the power dynamics regarding emotion in schools should be considered when thinking about the organizational factors of schools. This consideration should also lead to challenging the ways in which this binary is enacted in schools (Ahmed, 2015). Breaking this binary begins by changing the narrative of schools.

Teachers, as mandated by states, have long been positioned as responsible for their students in many capacities, some of which are academic and some that are not. The responsibility of
teachers to report to Child Protective Services if they believe a child may be in physical or emotional danger is called being a mandated reporter. Further, teachers also position themselves, as was seen in the findings where teachers referred to the students as “their kids,” and the positioning by society as care givers to their students, as being responsible for students beyond an academic position. This positioning is in contradiction to the norms of schools that indicated that teachers could only care about students on a professional or academic level (i.e. no hugging) stating that there is a strict binary on how teachers should emotionally respond to students. This dynamic should be embraced as many teachers have reported that their job is not only to teach kids but also to ensure that their students feel cared for and loved. Changing this binary would be a way to empower teachers and allow them to connect to students in a way that creates authentic relationships.

Implication 4: Social services in high needs schools.

Our understanding of trauma and its differential impact on students in high need schools should encourage administrators and other stakeholders to ensure that high needs schools have the necessary funding to maintain the social service resources that students who have been traumatized require. In the era of high stakes testing, schools that are likely to be impacted by higher levels of trauma are often the first to lose funding. The funding cuts often make it impossible for schools to maintain their social workers, nurses, and psychologist as full-time staff. They are often left to share these resources with equally understaffed schools. If schools were more cognizant of the whole child and not just academics, some of the systemic inequities that caused some of the STS in teachers in this study, would be eliminated.
Limitations

In this study, there were five limitations that I was able to identify. The first limitation is regarding the scale of both the survey and interview samples. Due in large part to the lack of resources allocated to this project, I was unable to survey and interview as many respondents as I could have if the project had been funded to some degree. Though the sample of the total population surveyed was 30%, which is quite good, this type of work would benefit from a large-scale type of survey sampling. Further, having more interview participants would have given a better in-depth description of the phenomenon.

The second limitation is that those who participated in the interviews self-selected into the study. While every participant had been recruited through the survey and all had access, those that decided to participate self-selected none-the-less. This lack of randomization in the interview participants is mainly due to the small scale of the study. While I had other recruitment tools for the interviews, if there had not been some variety in the respondents, I still believe that a randomized sample would be a better approach to this type of work.

Third, although I chose a district that I felt was representative of other districts of similar size and demographics, it was still a rural district in an isolated town. This unique population makes it nearly impossible to generalize findings to districts that are not similar to this particular setting, even if their demographics are similar. The setting also lacked schools that were not considered Title I. This lack of differentiation between types of schools seen across the district left a gap in being able to compare the levels of STS across schools more broadly.

The fourth limitation is regarding the interview items in comparison to the survey items. Unlike the survey items, which were pilot tested and validated, the interview items were not developed similarly. In future work, a pilot study with cognitive interviews would be beneficial
to ensure that the items are worded in ways that make sense to participants (Weiss, 1995). Though the interview questions were intended to be used as a guide, after a few participants some of the words that had been used in previous interviews were changed because of respondent feedback. Doing this form of pilot study would help ensure validity with the interview questions.

The final limitation was in the coding of the interview analysis. I was the only person who analyzed the interview data for this study. The coding analysis relied on the conceptual framework and themes related to the questions. It would have been ideal to have coded it in conjunction with other researchers and establish inter-rater reliability. To compensate for this limitation, I did explain in detail my coding procedures in the methods section.

**Future Research**

This study hoped to explore the phenomenon of Secondary Traumatic Stress in Teachers. Specifically, I wanted to identify the levels of STS that teachers experienced and if this experience varied by school and teacher demographics. This was followed by an attempt to capture an in-depth exploration of the types of STS that teachers discuss experiencing. While arguing that insidious trauma should be considered when we talk and think about traumatic experiences that students experience, a binary between insidious and psychological trauma should not exist. It would be constructive to teachers for researchers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the role of STS in schools.

Future research should take into consideration the limitations of this study to better explore this phenomenon. Taking a large-scale approach would benefit from a team of researchers to refine the framework that was used for coding and ensure inter-rater reliability. In order to make this study more generalizable to the population, future studies should be done in a school district
that is more reflective of larger urban settings. These different settings would give a more varied look at various types of schools from charter, bilingual, Title I, non-Title schools to schools that incorporate trauma informed learning and socio-emotional practices in schools. Adding a district, or many districts, that have a greater variety of types of school would give researchers a better ability to compare how the phenomenon manifests itself in various kinds of settings.

If findings from future work can be generalized to the larger population of public school teachers, a study focused on finding appropriate ways both to disseminate the information and to develop practical tools to assuage the negative impacts of STS, while maintaining authentic relationships with students, would be beneficial. This type of work would benefit from direct input from teachers as they are those indirectly and directly impacted. This training would emphasize the importance of acknowledging and inviting trauma into the classrooms while maintaining tools for self-preservation. Further, advocating for structural change that would invite not only trauma into the classrooms but also emotion as a way to break down the public/private binary would be beneficial at the structural level.

**Conclusion**

I began this dissertation thinking about the mental and emotional health of both colleagues and myself that I witnessed when teaching. My intention was to open a dialogue that allowed educators to talk about the authentic emotions and traumas that are experienced by teachers. I also wrote with the intention of elucidating the structural barriers that often make mental and emotional health worse for educators. I had initially thought that the population that would be most impacted by STS would have been elementary, Teachers of Color, who worked in schools designated as Title I. I was only able to capture that elementary teachers did experience STS at higher levels and that White teachers experienced STS at higher levels. However, I was not able
to explore my initial thoughts about Title I versus Non-Title schools because the data did not include many participants from Non-Title schools.

After sitting with the data while considering my theoretical framework for an extended amount of time, I realize that my initial thoughts that Teachers of Color experience higher levels of STS was in contradiction to my theory regarding embodiment and how things are taken on by Teachers of Color might be different from how white teachers embody them. This difference should be further explored through theory and in practice.

I had anticipated that STS would look very different for all teachers, but the reality is that some groups of the population experienced STS at similar levels, and all teachers discussed both insidious and psychological trauma as traumas that their students endure. This reminded me of the need for intersectional work to be considered when thinking about teachers so that we are able to recognize and capture this phenomenon in various capacities. Though STS has some negative components, I would not change the level of care that I showed toward my students. However, I believe that being informed about this phenomenon would have been beneficial to my career as a teacher. My hope is that teachers have access to the language of what they are feeling so that they can share with others their resilience, but also express their emotions in a way that allows them to share in what is the teaching experience.
REFERENCES


Bacall, A. (n.d.). *Your heart is slightly bigger than the average human heart, but that’s because you’re a teacher*. [Cartoon]. Retrieved March 05, 2016. https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/13/a5/bd/13a5bd8c615bb65e02e0b746f0194ef8.jpg


Escamilla, K. (2011). Forward to Guidebook on Designing Research and Evaluation Services to English Language Learners. Denver; Colorado Department of Education.


# Appendix A: Project Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I     | Early Spring 2017 | Distribution of Survey | -Distribute survey using Qualtrics to all teacher in X district through district e-mail addresses  
        |                |                       | -Informed Consent obtained through the Qualtrics survey  
        |                |                       | -Interviewees can opt in during the survey |
| I     | Early Spring 2017 | Survey Reminder       | -Redistribution to all e-mail addresses as a reminder to take the survey  
        |                |                       | -Informed Consent obtained through the Qualtrics survey  
        |                |                       | -Interviewees can opt in during the survey |
| II    | Early Spring 2017 | Interviews            | -Set informal                                                             |
| II    | Early Spring 2017 | Close Survey          | -Analyze surveys                                                           |
| III   | Mid Spring 2017  | Analysis and Synthesis | -Coding and recoding  
        |                |                       | -Data displays  
        |                |                       | -Analytic memos  
        |                |                       | -Draft Findings  
        |                |                       | -Committee feedback  
        |                |                       | -Revisions                                                          |
APPENDIX B: TEACHER SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS SURVEY

Q1
Consent for Participation in Survey Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Ofelia Schepers from the University of Colorado, Boulder. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about secondary traumatic stress of teachers in the district. I will be one of approximately 400 people who will have access to taking the survey for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.

2. I understand that most respondents will find the survey interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the survey session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the survey.

3. Participation involves anonymously taking the survey distributed by a researcher from University of Colorado, Boulder through Qualtrics. The survey will last approximately 5-15 minutes. Once completed participants will have no other obligations.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this survey, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of this data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

5. Faculty and administrators from my district will neither be present for the survey nor have access to any of the data with identifying demographics. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: Behavioral Sciences Committee at the University of Colorado, Boulder. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Ofelia Schepers 620-655-5235 or ofelia.schepers@colorado.edu
This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (303) 735-3702 or irbadmin@colorado.edu if:
Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the researcher.
You cannot reach the researcher.
You want to talk to someone besides the researcher.
You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
You want to get information or provide input about this research.

7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I can have a copy of this consent form through the online survey by clicking here or ask the researcher for one and one will be provided.

Q2 What is your current age?

Q3 What is your gender?
Male (1)
Female (2)
Trans-gender (3)
I prefer not to disclose (4)

Q4 How do you identify racially/ethnically? Please select ALL that apply.
Latino/a or Hispanic (1)
Black or African American (2)
Asian or Pacific Islander (3)
American Indian or Native American (4)
Bi-racial (5)
White (6)
Other (7)

Q5 What is your class background?
Working Class (1)
Middle Class (2)
Upper Middle Class (3)
Upper Class (4)
Q6 How long have you been working in schools?

Q7 What is your current employment?
   Elementary Classroom Teacher (1)
   Middle School Classroom Teacher (2)
   High School Classroom Teacher (3)
   Title I Teacher (4)
   Special Education Teacher (5)
   ESL/Linguistically Diverse/CLD Teacher (6)
   Other, please specify in question below. (7)

Q8 Please specify the grade level that you teach OR if you chose other please respond to your position below.

Q9 What type of school are you employed at?
   Title I School (1)
   Non-Title School (2)
   Charter School (3)
   Magnet School (4)
   Other, please specify below. (5)

Q10 If the type of school you are employed at was not listed above, please specify below.

Q11 Do you plan to teach in your current school next year?
   Definitely yes (1)
   Probably yes (2)
   Maybe (3)
   Probably not (4)
   Definitely not (5)
Q12 The following is a list of statements made by persons who have been impacted by their work with traumatized persons. As you read each statement consider students you work closely with who have had traumatic experiences. Read each statement then indicate how frequently the statement was true for you in the past thirty (30) days by clicking the circle that corresponds with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never (1)</th>
<th>Occasionally (2)</th>
<th>Very Often (3)</th>
<th>Always (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am preoccupied thinking of more than one student I teach.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about the well-being of my students when they are not at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I think about my students outside of work hours I feel satisfaction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I think about my students outside of work hours I feel ineffective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have become more emotionally invested in students and their families.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had little interest in being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
around others for fear that it may bring up students’ experiences. (7)
I have become more active than usual… (8)
I avoided people, places, or things that reminded me of my work with students. (9)
When I think about my students outside of work hours I feel successful. (10)

Q15 Continued* The following is a list of statements made by persons who have been impacted by their work with traumatized persons. As you read each statement consider students you work closely with who have had traumatic experiences. Read each statement then indicate how frequently the statement was true for you in the past thirty (30) days by clicking the circle that corresponds with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never (1)</th>
<th>Occasionally (2)</th>
<th>Very Often (3)</th>
<th>Always (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It seemed as if I was reliving the trauma(s) experienced by some of my students. (11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I purposefully avoid finding out all the details of my students’ lives. (12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find joy in supporting students in all aspects of their lives. (13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I felt discouraged about teaching.  
(14) |  |  |  |
| When I think about my students outside of work hours I feel anxious.  
(15) |  |  |  |
| I encourage children to be open about their lives in my classroom. (16) |  |  |  |
| I have lost interest in aspects of teaching I once enjoyed. (17) |  |  |  |
| I felt guilty about my current circumstances when thinking about my students’ lives outside of school. (18) |  |  |  |
| My goal is to connect my curriculum to my students’ lives. (19) |  |  |  |
| I have considered leaving the profession. (20) |  |  |  |

Q16 Continued * The following is a list of statements made by persons who have been impacted by their work with traumatized persons. As you read each statement consider students you work closely with who have had traumatic experiences. Read each statement then indicate how frequently the statement was true for you in the past thirty (30) days by clicking the circle that corresponds with the statement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never (1)</th>
<th>Occasionally (2)</th>
<th>Very Often (3)</th>
<th>Always (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My heart started pounding when I thought about the lives and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences of some of my students. (21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel students and their families trust me with information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about their life experiences. (22)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had trouble sleeping as a result of hearing traumatic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences from students… (23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mind drifts off and I begin thinking about students’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traumatic experiences. (24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fear something bad might happen to some/one of my students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt emotionally numb. (26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students I teach. (27)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had negative feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q17 If you would like to participate in a 30-45-minute interview, please leave your name and the best way to reach you (email, phone, etc.)

Q13 If you have further questions or comments regarding this survey please feel free to respond below.
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM: TEACHER SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS SURVEY

Consent for Participation in Survey Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Ofelia Schepers from the University of Colorado, Boulder. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about secondary traumatic stress of teachers in the district. I will be one of approximately 400 people who will have access to taking the survey for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.

2. I understand that most respondents will find the survey interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the survey session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the survey.

3. Participation involves anonymously taking the survey distributed by a researcher from University of Colorado, Boulder through Qualtrics. The survey will last approximately 5-15 minutes. Once completed participants will have no other obligations.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this survey, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of this data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

5. Faculty and administrators from my district will neither be present for the survey nor have access to any of the data with identifying demographics. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: Behavioral Sciences Committee at the University of Colorado, Boulder. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the researcher at Ofelia Schepers 620-655-5235 or ofelia.schepers@colorado.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (303) 735-3702 or irbadmin@colorado.edu if:
Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the researcher.
You cannot reach the researcher.
You want to talk to someone besides the researcher.
You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
You want to get information or provide input about this research.

7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I can have a copy of this consent form through the online survey by clicking here or ask the researcher for one and one will be provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Printed Name</td>
<td>Signature of the Investigator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For further information, please contact: Ofelia Schepers at Ofelia.schepers@colorado.edu or Dr. Kathy Escamilla, Principal Investigator, at Kathy.escamilla@colorado.edu
APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM: SEMI-STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Consent for Participation in Interview Research I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Ofelia Schepers from the University of Colorado, Boulder. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about secondary traumatic stress of teachers in the district. I will be one of approximately 20 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.

2. I understand that most interviewees in will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher from University of Colorado, Boulder. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be make.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

5. Faculty and administrators from my district will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: Behavioral Sciences Committee at the University of Colorado, Boulder. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through (303) 735-3702 or irbadmin@colorado.edu.

7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature ____________________ Date ____________________

My Printed Name ____________________ Signature of the Investigator ____________________

For further information, please contact: Ofelia Schepers at Ofelia.schepers@colorado.edu or Dr. Kathy Escamilla, Principal Investigator, at Kathy.escamilla@colorado.edu
APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

BACKGROUND
Tell me about yourself and your teaching history.
Where are you from originally? How did you come to this area?
Tell me about your time in the district.
Tell me about your immigration and language experience [if applicable].
Are you happy here?

MOTIVATIONS FOR WORKING IN THIS CITY/DISTRICT
Why did you choose to work at this particular school and district?
What was the most important reason for picking them?
What do you like best about working here? Least?

ATTITUDES ABOUT [SCHOOL]
What kinds of relationships do you have with the parents at [school]?
What do you like about the parents at [school]? What don’t you like?
How often do you interact with parents who are not (Latino/White)?
Tell me about the other teachers at [school].
Tell me about the administrators at [school].
What’s the best thing about [school]? Worst?

ATTITUDES ABOUT STUDENTS
Tell me about the student population that you work with.
How do you think that their background impacts their learning?
Do you think about your students’ backgrounds and learning outside of “work hours”?
What drives those thoughts?

ATTITUDES ABOUT FAMILIES
Tell me about the families of your students.
What can you tell me about their efforts at home towards educating their child?
Do you believe they care about education?
What do you know about their personal situations?
Do you think these situations help/hinder their ability to assist their child in any capacity?

BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENTS’ HOME LIVES
Do you know the home life of your students?
How do you think this helps/hinders students from learning?
How often do you check in with students about their home lives?
Do you see the students’ home lives spilling into the classroom?

BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS
Tell me what you think your responsibility is to your students inside and outside of the classroom.
How do you feel this compares to what is officially asked of you in a job description?
Do you feel that you are able to meet the needs of students? If so, to what capacity? If not, what is hindering this from happening?

ATTITUDES ABOUT PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL STRESS
Do you experience a lot of stress personally and professionally?
Can you tell me more about this?
What do you do to cope with this stress?
Do you believe that others are experiencing similar stress levels at your school? At the district?
What would help alleviate your stress levels at the school or district level?

BELIEFS ABOUT TRAUMA AND STRESS
How would you define stress? Trauma?
Do you believe that either of these are present in your life? In your students’ lives?
What can you tell me about poverty? Would you consider this something that causes stress or trauma? If so, how? If not, what would cause stress or trauma in your opinion?

STUDENT STRESS AND TRAUMAS
Tell me about the stressors and traumas that your students experience.
Do you think about their stressors and traumas often? How often?
How does the stress and trauma of your students make you feel?
Do you think that you take on their stress and trauma?
What are some ways that you try to cope with student stress and trauma?
Do you see other teachers experiencing this?