THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP IN REDUCING STRESS AND INCREASING APTITUDE FOR SOCIAL CAPITAL

Alexander Jones
B.A., California State University, Sacramento, 2008

Mauricio Esteban Verduzco
B.A., California State University, Sacramento, 2007

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP IN REDUCING STRESS AND INCREASING APTITUDE FOR SOCIAL CAPITAL

A Project

by

Alexander Jones

Mauricio Esteban Verduzco

Approved by:

__________________________________, Committee Chair
Jude Antonyappan, Ph.D. MSW

_____________________
Date
Student: Alexander Jones
   Mauricio Esteban Verduzco

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Teiahsha Bankhead, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.       Date

Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP IN REDUCING STRESS AND INCREASING APTITUDE FOR SOCIAL CAPITAL

By

Alexander Jones

Mauricio Esteban Verduzco

This study explored the effectiveness of a short term stress management and relaxation workshop in reducing stress levels and in increasing the aptitude for the building of social capital capacity. The researchers used secondary data from the pre and post stress checklist that the participants in a stress reduction workshop had completed. The correlation between the stress levels of the participants and the perceived helpfulness of the stress management workshop as rated by the participants was calculated. The two tailed Pearson’s correlation \[ r = -0.472, p > 0.05 \] was statistically significant. This project is a collaboration between Alexander Jones and Mauricio E. Verduzco, graduate students of the Division of Social Work at Sacramento State University. Both researchers obtained permission to conduct this study and they equally collaborated on formulating the problem, literature review, data analysis and writing the report of the
findings. The findings determined that a short term stress workshop can be effective in reducing stress.

__________________________________, Committee Chair
Jude Antonyappan, Ph.D.

_________________________
Date
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Alexander would like to thank his parents Ron and Alice Jones for supporting him in all of his endeavors. I would like to thank my friends for being there for me in my time of need, and for being my friends. I would like to thank Angeli Bueno for supporting me and loving me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of collaboration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the research problem</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of terms</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital defined</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of social network</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital benefits</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is stress?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress and the body</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with stress</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital and stress</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vii
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Table Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Table 1 Average participant scores</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Table 2 Stress scores and helpfulness correlation</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the United States alone about 200 million working days are lost because of mental health related issues such as depression and anxiety (Stressfacts, 2010). Stress is a phenomenon that many individuals experience on a daily basis. Stress is present in every facet of everyday life. However, people at times have failed to explore the possible repercussions that unresolved stress can have on the body, mind and social life. It is often stated that many individuals at one point or another are overwhelmed by the stress that their job, family and relationships may create. In addition, many individuals although aware that they may be feeling the effects of stress fail to investigate how their inability to manage their stress level has impacted them physically, mentally and socially. It is not difficult to imagine that an individual who is feeling overwhelmed by the expectations of a job may find themselves unable to function to his or her full capacity. Therefore, it is important to be aware that when stress becomes overbearing on an individual they lack the capacity to increase their social capital. Since stress has the potential to manifest itself in multiple aspects of an individual’s life the individual becomes incapable to access coping skills they have or acquire new ones. As a result, the stress continues to accrue causing a number of physical and mental disparities. This study explored whether a short term stress
management workshop will have an impact on an individual’s ability to increase their social capital.

Statement of collaboration

This project is collaboration between Alexander Jones and Mauricio E. Verduzco, graduate students of the Division of Social Work at Sacramento State University. Both researchers obtained permission to conduct this study and they equally collaborated on formulating the problem, literature review, data analysis and writing the report containing the findings.

Hans Seyle has been recognized to be the pioneer who began to study stress. In the 1956 Seyle had proposed his idea that stress in itself was not a bad thing. Seyle further believed that although stress caused biochemical changes in an individual, that the way an individual would react to a stressor would strictly depend on whether or not the situation was positive or negative. Seyle’s idea was accepted by some and rejected by others for Seyle definition of stress simply relied on an individual’s ability to identify if whether or not the situation was negative or positive thus resulting in a positive or negative reaction.

Eventually it would be a professor of Psychology named Richard S. Lazarus who in 1984 created a definition of stress that has since been accepted. While Seyle focused on stress reaction being situational and varying from person to person, Lazarus focused his definition on the ability for the individual to function when put under increasing amounts of stress and its ability to access his or her resources.
Lazarus’s definition of stress is as follows “Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In addition Lazarus was able to identify two different types of stress which he defined as Distress (Negative stress) and Eustress (Positive Stress), it is worth mentioning here that many people have come to the conclusion that stress is all bad when in reality their exist positive levels of stress (Mills, Reiss, & Dombeck, 2008).

Both eustress and distress have separate characteristics that pertain to their respective type of stress. For example, eustress has been identified to be a short term, motivating stress that allows individuals to feel good about themselves as well as improving their performance (Mills, Reiss, & Dombeck, 2008). In contrast Distress, has been characterized as having a short or long term effect, feels unpleasant, causes anxiety and/or concerns, decreases performance and can lead to metal and physical deteriorations (Mills, Reiss, & Dombeck, 2008). Some examples of Eustress can be receiving a new promotion at work, taking a vacation, taking on a new hobby. On the other hand some examples of Distress include excessive job demands, job insecurity, unproductive job performance and commuting to work. These are only a few examples of the two types of stress that exist, however it is worth mentioning due to the nature of human beings being so diverse, not everyone deals with stress in the same matter. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that some individuals naturally handle stress better than others.
Physically, stress can lead to the deterioration of an individual and thus limit his level of functioning and/or lead to death. It is important to keep in mind, that although stress by itself does not have the capacity to literally kill an individual, the consequences of unmanaged stress can lead to physiological responses to stress which can manifest itself biologically. Consider the following statistics, about 90% of all visits that Americans make to their primary care physicians are for stress related complaints (Stressfacts, 2010). Stress has also been found to be the leading cause of death, including heart disease cancer, lung diseases and suicide (Stressfacts, 2010). Considering that stress has been known to manifest itself biologically and thus lead an individual to develop a medical condition. The notion that stress is something that can easily be avoided has some truth to it however, stress is upon us on a daily basis. Thus, it becomes imperative that in order to reach our full potential in all aspects of our lives we must truly learn how to manage stress so that we minimize the probability that our unmanaged stress to present itself as a medical condition. Although it is important to note that some individuals due to hereditary factors are still at a higher risk of developing certain medical conditions that have been associated with unmanaged stress such as heart disease.

Stress can lead an individual to develop mental illness. Two of the leading mental illness diagnoses that have been attributed to stress are depression and anxiety. When it comes to anxiety it can be viewed as an over activation of the fight or flight reaction that humans posses. For example, when an individual is placed in a situation
in which they have to decide to flee or flight certain biological responses occur. Such responses are an increase in breathing, dilated pupils, the shutting down of digestive organs, production of more insulin to offer energy and increased blood pressure to allow quicker blood flow to muscles. These biological responses are normal when faced with a situation in which we feel threatened. However, in the case of anxiety an individual feels similar biological responses which may include sweating, rapid breathing, and increased blood pressure and this is because they have perceived a threat and their body is unable to self regulate itself and so they are constantly exhibiting these responses regardless of how minimal a trigger may be. Stress can also have a detrimental effect when it comes to an individual’s social circumstances. When a person has a difficult time managing stress it can lead to the inability to function to its full potential at work. According to a study conducted in the United States it cost $300 Billion dollars annually to the United States industry to cover the cost of employee absenteeism, lack of productivity and employee turnover (Stressfacts, 2010). Annually it is said that overall there are about 555,000,000 lost work days annually in the United States, and about half of those lost work days are the due to stress (Stressfacts, 2010). It becomes more clear of how much of an impact stress when left unmanaged can lead to problems physically, mentally and socially. Stress has such a strong hold on some individuals that it impedes their ability to function at the highest capacity in their place of employment. However, the effects of stress cannot simply be contained within those three mentioned areas, it also crosses into personal
relationships with family and loved ones. When individuals get so stressed out and our unable to find a way to resolve their stress, they sometimes vent their stress to those around them whom care for them. At times this has lead to the termination of a relationship, divorce and sometimes resulting in leaving an individual to fend for himself.

Stress in itself is a complex part of daily life, yet we have been able to see how when left unmanaged it can cause many problems for an individual ranging from heart disease to depression, to getting divorced. Thus, it becomes important that individuals are able to manage stress better in order for them to develop the skills to be able to reach their full capacity. Social capital is a term that is defined as the ability for a person to be able to make connections with other human beings through different methods in order to better reach his or her potential. As an individual begins to gather his or her social capital they then are able to establish social networks, which then become important aspects of their lives. These social networks assist an individual in expanding their knowledge about life and many disciplines, it may instill in them leadership skills and values, it allows an individual to continue to develop and group in various areas. It has been documented that those individuals who have social capital are barely bothered by the effects of stress for they have a network of family, friends, coworkers, community on who they rely on for support to assist them.

Reflecting back on Lazarus’ definition about stress, we can take from it the idea that when an individual is unable to access the resources they have acquired
because the demands on them are far greater, they experience stress. This same idea can be placed when it comes to stress management and an individual’s capacity to increase their social capital. If an individual is unable to manage the stress that it is experiencing then they will be less likely to tap into the resources that may be available to assist them in better coping with their stress. Thus, it becomes imperative that individuals are able to find ways to better manage their stress level so that they can maintain a higher level of functioning and are able to access the resources that can be beneficial in assisting them to reach their full potential.

**Statement of the research problem**

The research problem is that individuals lack the awareness of dealing with stress in a more productive way. Consequently, these researchers analyzed the data on the levels of stress prior and after a brief stress management workshop additionally managing stress increases the capacity for individuals, it increases the capacity for individuals to become more productive in their abilities to increase their social capacity. Thus, leading to the development of more resources for themselves by ways of social networks among friends, family, colleagues and other institutions to better prepare them for opportunities in the future should a stressful situation present itself.
**Purpose of the study**

This study explored the effectiveness of a stress management workshop in reducing stress and increasing the capacity to increase social capital. The researchers hope to examine whether an individual’s ability to increase their social capital capacity is limited if they are unable to manage their stress level. Furthermore, this study may bring awareness to individuals to the benefit of stress management techniques and how these techniques can increase their social capital.

**Theoretical framework**

The two theoretical frameworks used to explore this research study, will be the systems perspective and cognitive behavior theory. It is worth mentioning that both frameworks foundation lies on the interactions between two systems. While the systems perspective main focus is the individual and its environment, the cognitive behavior approach is focused on how stimuli can have an impact on our thinking and thus influence our behaviors.

The main premise behind the systems perspective is that an individual has as much impact on its environment as the environment does on the individual. In implementing the systems perspective approach it allows to explore the many levels that may be present for any one individual. This approach postulates that within each individual they are comprised of three areas that influence that individual and vice versa. The first level is called the micro level which consists of the individual. The next level would then be the mezzo level which consists of family, school, and friends.
The last level is called macro, and it contains the highest system which is comprised of the community, a country and policies that may have an effect on an individual. The systems approach believes that an individual has an effect on its environment and vice versa through interactions with the three aforementioned levels.

In applying the systems theory to stress, it can be noted that as an individual feels that outer pressure of perhaps family and friends expectation and or demands it can have an impact on an individual. It is possible for that individual to for example, stop all communication with loved one for he feels overwhelmed. Furthermore, if an individual feels that work expectations are set to high his work performance and productivity can begin to diminish. Thus, as the interactions of family and work expectation become too much the individual is faced with finding a solution to this overwhelming feeling. It is at this point that he is unable to reach out for the resources that he may need in order to lessen the weight of the expectation left on him and thus succumbs to the intense levels of stress. On the opposite side of the spectrum, if an individual is able to create interactions on the different levels and thus establish strong social networks. When this individual is faced with stress, he is able to reach out and use the resources that he has attained, and instead of letting the stress overpower him, he is able to overcome the stress. In addition, his ability to increase his resources makes him more aware and has allowed him to develop more characteristics and knowledge that perhaps may become important farther down the road.
Cognitive Behavior theory has its foundation that our thinking can influence the behavior that we exhibit. It has its roots in learning theory, thus the idea is that if individuals learn a certain way of thinking it will lead to a particular behavior to the thought, however, the behavior will be different for each individual. With this said if applied to stress, an individual may begin to for example have a thought that “they are not good enough” and as a result they are always unable to perform or reach their full potential for they believe this thought to be true. If this same individual was to be at work and giving a responsibility and he was unable to make the deadline, he would begin to blame it on the fact that he knows that he is not good enough. Thus, this particular individual may continue to place themselves in situations that would only further justify the idea that they are not good enough. Therefore, through the use of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) an individual is able to look at the thoughts they are having and thus change their thinking. The ability to do this would take some time, however in the end the individual will be able to consider the thought that he is having and then eventually change their behavior appropriately.

Implementing the concepts that make up the Cognitive-Behavior theory to this study an individual who has not been able to manage their stress begins to develop certain thoughts that they attribute to be true. Therefore, when they have internalized such thoughts about themselves, they lack the capacity to increase their social capital. As it has been described earlier, when stress presents itself, and imposes its hold on an individual it becomes difficult for that individual to seek out the resources that may
assist him in managing his stress. Furthermore, if an individual has internalized such thoughts as “I am not good enough” it is no surprise that an individual would lack the ability to seek out social networks that can assist him when faced with a stressful situation. As a result his thought has impaired him from being able to execute the process of building his social capital.

Definition of terms

Stress- a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Eustress- also referred to positive stress, is a type of stress which is viewed as being short term, energy increasing, focus producing and performance improving stress (Mills, Reiss, & Dombeck, 2008).

Distress- also referred to as negative stress, is a type of stress which is viewed as being short or long term, anxiety or depression producing, which decreases performance (Mills, Reiss, & Dombeck, 2008).

Social Capital- a resource that actors derive from specific social structures and then use to pursue their interests; it is created by changes in the relationship among actors' (Baker, 1990).

Assumptions

It is assumed that the stress management workshop will reduce stress and increase their aptitude for social capital. Considering the impact that high stress level
can have on an individual, we believe that the use of a short term stress management workshop will reduce an individual’s stress level and thus increase their capacity to increase their social capital.

**Limitations**

The findings of the study are applicable only to the population from which the secondary data was collected from. Hence the study findings cannot be generalized to other populations. The study used a one group pre test post test design which does not address the threats to internal validity such as testing, statistical regression and history. Therefore, the external validity of the study is limited.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from the literature review. The principal themes discussed are: social capital, the importance and benefits of social capital, stress, stress and the body, coping with stress, and the relationship of stress and social capital. The authors referenced in this section describe how social capital is present in every interaction taking place. Furthermore, the authors clearly demonstrate how social capital is inherently a component of social life and the impact of stress, and how their symptoms can affect life expectancy and social capital aptitude.

Social capital defined

Social capital has been defined many different ways depending on the scholars’ background analyzing social capital. Social capital and communication are always intertwined. Social capital’s main element is that it exists inside of a social network. A social network can be understood as an interaction between one focal actor and the actor’s direct contact (Hanneman, 2005). Larger social networks are usually formed around a group of people who have a similar principle or ideology. For example, a teacher’s union such as the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is a social network which was formed with the ideology of bringing together all members to assist and support one another; and to promote democracy (AFT.Com, 2008). As a result of this union, teachers or members of this union are able to receive proper support and expenditures from their employers.
The purpose of these proactive attempts by individuals is to develop and maintain personal and professional relationships with others for the purpose of mutual benefit in their work, life or career (Forrett, 2008). Although a connection may not always last, the person is able to gather key information for themselves, and others with their limited contact. An individual would want to continue to increase their social network so that they may have a stronger chance to learn, and meet new people who can provide them opportunities for information and advancement in their life. Whether through face-to-face, phone, written, or electronic means, individual attempts to “connect” with others who can provide needed information and opportunities are the purpose for social networks (Forret, 2008).

Importance of social network

The importance of social capital is evident in every bureaucracy, government, and organizational structure in modern day society. Without social capital and the networks associated, there would be no chain of command, or infrastructure for our government to operate off of. Although the government may not seem to fit into the category of social capital, and social networks, in actuality, its underlying principles directly coincide with the principles of social capital and social networks. A government is built on interactions between two or more people, and information is shared and gained as a result of these interactions just as they are in social networks. For example, in the U.S social networks include the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. In other countries, governments are established through
similar social networks as well. Social networks have been a contributing factor to the declaration of wars, treaties, and peace. Members of these networks are formed because of a common interest. For example, the judicial branch of the U.S government was formed by individuals who had a common interest, and background which was upholding the laws of the U.S. The legislative branch is formed with individuals who gather to create the laws that citizens of the U.S. must follow. Furthermore, government agencies at the county, and state level are formed the same as the federal level. A city’s police forces are formed with the principle of serving and protecting the public. Individuals join the police with this same ideology of protecting people, and the communication amongst other police forces through the use of computers, and file sharing make the police force an extremely large network of resources for its members. Therefore, if social capital and the networks formed have such a strong hold on a country’s way of life, it could be easily understood that for every man, woman and child on this planet, social capital and its networks directly affect them physically and mentally.

Physically, social networks can cause harm, and pain. This can be inflicted by the ideology shared by certain social networks. Many Criminal groups are often organized along ethnic lines; at times, are formed because of strong levels of commitment to racism (Field, 2008). Hate crimes sparked through social networks focusing on racism have and continue to cause pain to other ethnic groups. One example can be the Ku Klux Klan which is a large social network formed with the
same ideology that the members are superior to other ethnic groups. The Ku Klux Klan who throughout the U.S lynched and persecuted African Americans because of their beliefs that African Americans were inferior caused pain to African Americans physically for many years, and still to this day. Furthermore, we can focus on how the prison system has multiple formations of social networks that are formed because of ethnicity. These networks or gangs, facilitate the sharing of norms and resources between other gang or “network” members to advance group goals (Horvat, Weeininger, & Lareau, 2003). These networks recruit members, and provide protection, monetary compensation, and respect in exchange for certain job tasks. These job tasks are violent in nature, usually illegal, and most indefinitely cause pain to others. The reasoning behind these acts of violence is for these gangs or “networks” to remain feared in their neighborhoods, or in the prison system. Without that fear, then gang members would be unable to operate successfully in their community, and would not be able to fund their illegal practices. These same rules apply to youth gangs. Youth gangs are organized by the same ideologies that adult gang members abide by. Same rules apply as the prison system where members are recruited, roles are assigned, and job tasks are carried out. The results of these networks are the degradation of neighborhoods, expensive taxes to house these criminals in prison, and increasingly high murder rates in local communities.

Social capital is positively related to higher levels of mental distress (Field, 2008). Mental effects of social capital are evident in U.S history dating back to the Jim
Crow era. The ideology of segregation and Jim Crow laws mentally crippled the African American population, and forced upon them the ideation of African Americans being considered less than equal to their white counterparts. The reasoning behind the years of mental strain put at the hands of the African American community is because of the knowledge passed down by the white southern power and the African American community during slavery. The white southern power which was the power of the government had norms passed down to them by their ancestor’s “network”, and their ideology became the ideology of their children, thus creating the rift between white and African American rights in the southern states.

The end result of the social networks during the era of segregation were the years of oppression, and later riots, and boycotts, that awakened other “networks” to combat the negative beliefs of the U.S at this time. These other networks begin to take form during the civil rights movements of the 1960’s. During the civil rights movements social capital acted as a resource where individuals not only formed ties with others but had shared values, beliefs, and ideologies which allowed groups members to advocate for change in the U.S. (Field, 2008). These beliefs were the beliefs that African Americans were not inferior to White Americans. Furthermore, the injustices they faced at the hands of White Americans was not acceptable, and was no longer being tolerated by African Americans. These beliefs helped African Americans band together in the form of boycotts, rallies, and marches, which motivated other
African American to join in protest; inevitably causing the end of segregation, and governmental racism.

*Social capital benefits*

Social capital, when strategically managed, generates real returns for higher education institutions, including higher levels of academic and graduate success, student recruitment and retention results, more effective fundraising, faculty and staff attraction and retention benefits, reputation and profile advantages, and other desirable outcomes (Swanson, 2008). These social networks allow students and members of these groups the opportunity to gain additional resources that are not provided by the school itself, or its professors. The new members these social networks recruit also provide insight, opinion, and a way of life that may not have been included in the group before. Usually as the network continues to be active, these new members become the veterans, and they begin to instill values, from the past, and the present, and continue to train the new members for future continuation.

Social capital in career advancement allows individuals the ability to network with others who can offer them knowledge, and expertise in areas that individuals are less knowledgeable about. Individuals while in school and after, attempt to join the right social network because they know that it could change their lives for the better. Individuals try to join the most prestigious school, for the name, and the social networks the school has, or can get a person into. After school people try to join the most prestigious jobs or companies because they know that the social network the
company has allow them a lot more, resources, and career sponsorship which highly contribute to each individuals’ advancements in the job market in the form of promotions, salary, and career satisfaction (Siebert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001).

Furthermore, the access to new material from these acquired networks allow groups members the opportunity to complete current job roles in a much timelier manner because of the ulterior insight, and/or methodologies that directly correlate with an individual’s current responsibilities (Siebert et al., 2001).

Besides the benefits of career advancement and satisfaction, there is a strong connection between the increase of social capital and health related symptoms. The importance of a strong social network ties have been associated with the decrease in depressive symptoms in women and men (Maryline, 2008). Furthermore, a strong balanced exchange with extended family, relatives, and children reported lower symptoms associated with depression (Maryline, 2008). As a result of having a larger social network, the individual can find different outlets, and resources that may provide content specific interventions, and/or content rich material that can aid in their recovery. Furthermore, it could be understood, and interpreted that an individual’s ability to properly process their feelings, concerns, and/or emotions can allow that individual the opportunity to alleviate some of their symptoms through their interpersonal interactions.
What is stress?

Stress is used to refer to a state in which the individual perceives a real or anticipated challenge to themselves or way of life, which requires some sort of adaptive response. The stressors being experienced are due to the specific event which induces the stress (De Kloet et al., 2005). Over time, repeated stressful situations put a strain on the body that may contribute to physical and psychological problems. The most well known forms of stress are acute and chronic stress disorders.

Acute Stress Disorder is when the person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present: the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror (DSMIV, 2000). The threat can be any situation that is perceived, even subconsciously or falsely, as a danger. The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in at least one of the following ways: recurrent images, thoughts, dreams, illusions, flashback episodes, or a sense of reliving the experience; or distress on exposure to reminders of the traumatic event (DSMIV, 2000). The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning or impairs the individual's ability to pursue some necessary task, such as obtaining necessary assistance or mobilizing personal resources by telling family members about the
traumatic experience. The disturbance lasts for a minimum of 2 days and a maximum of 4 weeks and occurs within 4 weeks of the traumatic (DMSIV, 2000).

Chronic stress is much more severe than acute stress. Chronic stress can last longer than three months. A common form of chronic stress is posttraumatic stress disorder. The DSM IV states that chronic stress or PTSD occurs when a person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present: the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others (DSMIV, 2000). The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in one (or more) of the following ways: recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. Acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur on awakening or when intoxicated (DSMIV, 2000).

Less severe examples of physical stress could be as simple as hunger and thirst. These elements cause stress to the body because the body is searching for the necessities to function. When a person is hungry, the body may become fatigued, and an individual’s mood may shift because of the lack of its basic needs. Furthermore, less severe examples of psychological stress are, but not limited to fear of work, fear of being fired, and/or constant work overload. These elements can cause an individual to develop psychological symptoms that require immediate attention, and/or
medication. Instances of these elements causing psychological strain can be seen in employees who suffer from burnout, which can later lead to depression and therapeutic treatment to alleviate these symptoms.

*Stress and the body*

Stress exerts a powerful influence on both the cognitive and physiological processes of the central nervous system (Hubbard & Workman, 1998). Both acute and chronic stressors produce a multitude of cardiovascular, neuroendocrine and neurotransmitter consequences. The direct effects of stress include increases in heart rate, sympathomimetic neurotransmitters and hormones, and changes in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (Nikolayev, 2003). The nature of the stressor, physiological make up of the individual and social factors of the stress all impact the intensity of the hormonal releases that cause stress (Hubbard & Workman, 1998). If the body fails to control the stress responses in a timely manner, the adaptive responses may turn maladaptive, thus causing physical and psychological symptoms (Cooper, 1996).

When stress occurs oxygen and nutrients are sent to the central nervous system and the stressed body site where they are needed most (Cooper, 1996). These effects can be felt in the form of a burst of exceptional strength and endurance during the time of the stress. They can also be felt in the form of an accelerated heart rate, and increase in muscle tension as well. Stress can harm the body organs physically and contribute to the development of cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and other visceral pathological
conditions (Brown, 1991). Stress can cause chronic fatigue, digestive upsets, headaches, and back pain. Stress can affect the blood cells that help an individual fight off infection, so an individual is more likely to get colds and other diseases. Constant stress can increase blood pressure and can increase the risk for stroke. Stress can increase the danger of heart attacks; stress can make an asthma attack worse. Stress triggers behaviors that contribute to death and disability, such as smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, and overeating.

Unfortunately, stress is extremely hard to get rid of all together. There is no cure for stress. Stress is a part of every one’s life. Stress can help motivate people to work harder, or be mindful of themselves, and not overexert themselves. Although stress can benefit people, it is only pleasurable when the stress is under control. In order to control stress an individual must learn how to cope with stress, and its negative factors.

*Coping with stress*

While it is impossible for anyone to live their life completely stress-free, it is possible to reduce the harmful effects of certain stressors on the mind and the body. Many different professionals in the field have many different interpretations on how an individual could alleviate stress. It must be understood that no two people are alike, and one tool used for stress management may work with one, but not the other. However, the general themes of stress management to stay consistent a person must
identify what is stressing them out, and research different techniques specific in
dealing with their stressor.

Avoiding minor irritations and certain instances that cause stress is the ideal
way for a person to remain stress free. Through time management, an individual could
learn how to pace themselves so that they do not become overwhelmed, and not have
to face the stressors that accompany their overwhelming lifestyle such as burn out. A
lot of times, individuals attempt to multi task so much that they become stressed out.
A person should use their social network to find ways to complete a project timelier,
or to find someone with more expertise in a particular case in order to complete a
project and reduce their stress. To cope with stress, there are multiple ways to achieve
this goal; however, mind body therapies (MBT)/relaxation techniques seem to be the
most effective.

MBT/relaxation techniques are considered a form of alternate medicine; which
is medicine used besides medication, and without the need for doctor or physician
approval. A large number of psychologists value mind-body therapies for personal use
and that they believe relaxation and mindfulness interventions to be most appropriate
to competent practice (Schwartz, 2009). In a study focusing on the effectiveness
unconventional medicine on medical conditions; it was recorded that more than 50%
of respondents used MBT in conjunction with conventional medical care, and 20%
used MBT for conditions they thought conventional medicine would not help. Overall,
the study indicated that high rates (68–90%) of perceived helpfulness of MBT for
specific medical conditions had occurred. Individuals utilized these methods, and recovery, and overall improvement was evident, and prevalent (Bertisch, 2009). Progressive muscle relaxation, music therapy, and mindful meditation have all been shown to produce significant reductions in measures of stress as well (Weigensberg, 2009).

Deep breathing is exactly what its terminology indicates. An individual takes in a deep breath, filling their abdomen with air. An individual would slowly breathe in a large amount of air into their abdomen, and after a few seconds, that individual would exit the air out of their body just as slowly. All breathing would occur during this technique in a very slow controlled manner, and with each breathe in and out, the person becomes more and more relaxed. Deep breathing is important because when person breaths deeper breaths filled with oxygen, heart rate decreases compared to shallow breaths that are associated with stress which cause heart rate to speed up (Archer, 1991).

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique where through breathing and focusing on an individual’s muscles a person can pin point problem areas in their body, and alleviate their symptoms. A person would follow the same breathing techniques as they did in the deep breathing exercise. They would start with deep controlled breaths for a few minutes. After a few minutes, that individual would mentally scan areas of their body; the purpose of this mental scan is for the individual to pinpoint problematic areas in their body. Problematic areas may be areas that are in pain, sore, or tense.
After this step, the individual would loosen up these problematic areas through stretching, rotation of the problematic areas. The purpose is to release the tension, and allow the person a chance to relax the areas momentarily.

Guided imagery or mental imagery relaxation is another form of relaxation for stress. Guided imagery is the conscious use of the imagination to create positive images in order to bring about healthful changes in both the body and the mind (Kottler, 2008). Guided imagery’s main focus is to coach the user in blocking out potentially harmful images and thoughts, and in the process, replace those negative influences with more positive influences. These positive influences are usually thoughts, and images that are calming, relaxing, and peaceful. All of these images are constructed in the mind, and the main goal of guided imagery is to lower stress levels, and the ailments associated with stress which are represented physically (pain, aches, soreness, etc). Although the title may suggest differently, guided imagery is a form of meditation. In order to use this method, an individual must first visualize a peaceful object, or area, and mentally project themselves there from their current location. Through this process, the user is allowing themselves to escape any painful or stressful experience that they may currently be feeling, and focus on a pleasurable moment/experience instead. The positive image that they are experiencing should transfer positive feelings to the user, and ultimately affect the negative feeling the body has and exchanges them for the positive feelings the mind is remembering. Furthermore, this process could be used to help the user ignore the negative self talk
associated with the illness and/or ailments. For example, a user could be focusing on how excruciating a pain is and allow themselves to stay in that moment. Guided imagery helps the user realize that the pain is painful, but by projecting themselves to an instance when the pain was not occurring, such as the day before, or a special day in their lives, the pain will be minor compared to the overwhelming positive experience they are visualizing in their mind. Although the pain may surface again later for the user, the user can continue to utilize this method each time to help them deal with the pain mentally. The hope is the user will begin to focus on the positives each time something traumatic or painful occurs which would lower stress levels compared to stress levels of those constantly bombarding themselves with the pain, and mental strain the pain causes through over analysis.

Relaxing to music is another simpler form of MBT. Music therapy has been proven to reduce stress and anxiety, and positive changes have been brought about in some people with health or educational problems (Floyd, 2008). When utilizing this method, there are a number of ways an individual can lower their stress levels. Some individuals may use contemporary music that they find relaxing depending of the genre of music they prefer. Others may prefer ominous sounds, and tapes that have sounds of nature. Some prefer to listen to tapes specifically designed for relaxation. Regardless of the music, this technique asks users to pick a type of music or tape that they deem as relaxing, and combine relaxation exercises to help lower stress and physical ailments.
Biofeedback is a more scientific approach compared to all other types of MBT. Biofeedback helps a person learn how to reduce their stress through the use of instruments that record levels of stress in the body. Biofeedback is based on the theory that an individual can learn to control some physiological responses that used to be considered involuntary (Lazarus, 2000). Levels of stress can be captured through the measurements of temperature, heart rate, muscle tension, and other vital signs that can indicate when the body is affected by stress and its stressor. The goal of biofeedback is straightforward and simple. A person records their vital signs, they can keep track of these vital signs, and through this approach, a person can closely pinpoint what stressor is causing their body to react negatively the way it does. A person can measure their body’s stress level in the beginning of the day, and at the end of the day, and through this process, an individual can recognize what routine or procedure is causing them stress, and they can ignore that routine all together or alter it so that the stress will subside, and hopefully leave forever. Furthermore, an individual could pinpoint what part of their body the stress goes to the most. If the stress raises the user’s blood pressure, then they know that they have to find means to lower their blood pressure so that their body will not suffer any unneeded strain or pressure. If the tension is in the muscles, then the user could begin to focus more on muscle relaxation techniques to rid themselves of the stress. Biofeedback is an excellent way for an individual to diagnose their symptoms themselves, and remedy the situation through
exercise, combined with consistent repetitions. The hope is that a person will learn to monitor, and prevent ailments before they become life threatening.

Regardless of the mind body therapy, or alternate medicine used, any user will begin to see a change in the way they handle the pain associated with health problems or stress. Evidence consistently shows that these approaches do work. Although these approaches do work for the user themselves; in order to completely rid themselves of everyday stressors that can lead to major health issues and individual must recognize how to get rid of the problem itself so that these tools do not have to be utilized daily. The main cause of stress as demonstrated through the literature previously stated in this chapter is social capital and its network.

*Social capital and stress*

The interaction that takes place at work is a continuous change of ideas that allow the company to function, thus making it a social network. Stress is commonly caused by interactions with others, the requirements the network may have, and/or their network of associates. As a result of these interactions or subsequent tasks, individuals experience a loss of self-regulatory capacity and are unable to persist in their required field of work (Baumeister, 1996). During the course of work, demands increase, employees have fewer resources to devote to their required performance and shortly after, stress occurs. A stressor in the workforce could be a customer, boss, or fellow employee that the individual is forced to interact with on a daily basis. The personality of the stressor could conflict with the employee’s personal beliefs;
however, because all jobs have their own ideology and beliefs known as their mission statement, and all employees are required to abide by their employers rules, the stressor can never be alleviated because the stressor is a part of the job. Therefore, the stress that the person is facing is due to their social network, or their job. Furthermore, a stressor in the work force may be the tasks that are assigned to the employee who is a part of that social network. In a job a supervisor may ask an employee to perform a task, but the overwhelming demand the task may require could in fact contribute to stress of the employee. The task could also cause stress to individuals who are do not have the expertise to complete their job properly.

Although having stress at work is a common and well known element for some, stress in social networks that are suppose to alleviate stress occur as well. Social networks that are tailored to assist in the eradication of stress occur in the form of self help groups, focus groups, or any type of groups that are used to help an individual overcome stressful applications. However, these groups although helpful, have rules that the individual must follow. For example, groups start at a specific time, some groups require participation, and some group facilitators because of their demeanor may unknowingly affect the members involved in the group. These elements have been shown to cause stress for groups that are suppose to reduce or alleviate stress. Being on time to a group causes stress on a lot of different individuals. A person may have to organize their personal and business life to attend these groups on time. (Osbourne, 2008). Depending on an individual’s role in their group, that person may
have to do some prior preparation for their group which depending on when they started prepping may cause stress depending on how much work is present. If the group is mandatory, then the fear of missing a group and suffering the consequences can cause stress to the individual as well.

Although there are a plethora of instances when social capital can cause stress, there are plenty of examples where social capital has proven to reduce stress. Using the example of self help groups stated above, the social support these types of networks bring are viewed as a stress buffer against harmful health effects (McCabe, 2000). Through social networks, individuals have been able to alleviate a lot of stressors that have plagued their lives. For example, through the use of student academic groups, rape victim groups, and other groups focused around the school, and its campus, a lot of colleges have been successful in helping those victims of crimes on campus. Furthermore, the realm of social networks and their adverse effects to stress can reduce stress through technology, not just face to face communication. More so now then days of the past the internet and other telecommunication devices have been utilized more so then meetings and other forms of face to face communication. Through the use of the internet, information is made more available than days before. Individuals needing to find resources for their physical, psychological, and any other types of ailments can use the internet to find themselves a practitioner to help them with their issues. Furthermore, the internet can help individuals find social networks that can help them with these types of elements. Social networks can include groups
focusing on alcohol, drugs, depression, and/or other personal issues, and these groups can help individuals meet other individuals who have similar problems. The results from these direct positive paths to social interaction and social support have been proven to lower levels of stress and depression (Beaudoin, 2008).

Conclusion

Although there is a lot of informative information about social capital, the benefits of social capital, and stress and its factors, there is a lack of studies that have specifically focused on the relationship of stress, and social capital. The linkage is clear, but no study directly links the two elements together. Studies focus mainly on the subsections indicated earlier in this chapter. There are multiple books and articles focusing on the physiological effects of stress, the psychological effects of stress, and ways of coping with stress. However, there is less information focusing on the successful statistics that demonstrate how social networks such as: self help groups, meditation groups, and other self help groups lower stress levels. Our study hopes to explore the connection between stress and aptitude for social capital while evaluating the effectiveness of stress management workshop. The necessity of social capital, and the information contained in their networks can help an individual alleviate stress induced symptoms from their inability to solve a specific problem by allowing them solutions to their problems.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

**Study design**

The study design used for this study was a pre experimental study design. A single group was studied but no comparison between an equivalent non-treatment group was studied. The study design consisted of a one group pre and post test. This study design is a relevant study design because the study measured the effectiveness of the stress management workshop. Secondary data was used for this study; data was collected from a group of students before and after the stress management workshop.

**Study question**

The study question that served as the guiding principle for this study was whether short term stress management workshop can have an impact in reducing stress and increasing the aptitude for building social capital.

**Data sources**

The data sources for this study came from the study subjects consisting of 22 students from Sacramento State University from within the College of Health and Human Services under the auspices of Dr. Antonyappan and Dr. Eggman, two faculty members of CSUS. The participants were gathered through email notifications as well as verbal recruitment notifications. Subjects were told that they would take part in a stress management workshop that would last about two hours. For their participation
in this study subjects were given a cash stipend of $20.00 each, which was issued to them at the completion of their participation in the study. This study was submitted to Human Subjects Committee of the division of Social Work. The study’s human subject’s protocol was followed and the study was considered to be of minimal risk.

*Data collection tools*

The tools that were used to collect data for this study were the stress checklist, social capital measurement tool and the helpfulness of the workshop effectiveness. Found within the stress checklist, were six questions that were specially aimed to measure the participant’s stress level. These questions covered the following areas: disappointment with minor problems, level of inadequacy and self doubt, level of tiredness, reaction to minor problems with anger, change in sleeping and eating patterns, experience of biological symptoms such as headaches, back pain or chronic pain. A Social Capital measuring tool was used before the workshop and after the workshop.

*Data collection procedures*

The workshop from which the data for this study emerged consisted of the following sections: initial welcome and calming session, brief assessment of stress inducing factors, visualization techniques to reduce stress, insight on factors that cause stress, use of purposeful music and sound to harmonize the person’s environment, use of breathing techniques to calm the internal system, visual guided imagery, brief session importance of proper nutrition, positive interactions.
Data analysis

Data was analyzed using statistical data analysis package called SPSS. The following statistical procedures were done. A paired t-test test was done to calculate the mean differences between pre test and post test scores on the stress checklist; Pearson’s correlation [r] to find the strength and the direction of the correlation between stress score and the score on the helpfulness of the workshop in reducing stress. The mean score on the helpfulness of the workshop was also calculated.

Limitations

The pre experimental one group pre test post test limits the internal and external validity of this data, however this was the most relevant design given the time frame allowed for this project to complete data analysis and report findings.
In this chapter the findings that emerged from the analysis of data are presented. Different statistical analysis were performed on the data collected. The data was analyzed in the following manner: a paired sample t-test between the participant’s pre and post stress checklist scores; the average stress score the participants reported; and Pearson’s [r] correlation that was conducted between the stress scores of participants and the score the participants assigned to the effectiveness of the stress management workshop.

**Findings**

The stress scores for all 22 participants from both the pre test and the post test were entered and analyzed. A paired t-test for pre test and post test scores was conducted. The results are shown in {Table 1). The mean score for the pre test among participants was 52.91, while the post test mean score was 56.95 which resulted in a difference of 4.04 points between the pre test and post test scores. Although there was an increase in the participant’s aptitude for social capital, the increase in score between the pre test and post test was not considered to be statistically significant. The results of the t-test were [ $t = -.793, p = .436]$ . The practical significance was established, however statistical significance was absent and this may be attributed to the small sample and the sampling errors.
The next analysis that was conducted consisted of exploring the stress scores that the participants indicated. The stress score for each participant was calculated by focusing on a set of six questions which specially pertained to stress. The analysis of these specific questions were able to determine if participants were experiencing stress. The findings concluded that participants reported an average stress score of 18.04. The range of stress scores were between a minimum of 11 and a maximum of 24 (Table 1). The data concluded that participants felt some level of stress. Had the participants scored on average a stress score closer to eleven that would demonstrate that the participants were exhibiting high levels of stress. Furthermore, had the participants scored closer to 24 it would demonstrate that the participants were exhibiting little or no stress. Thus, the fact that participants’ scored an average stress score of 18.04, indicates that participants were experiencing mild to moderate levels of stress.

Table 1

Average participants scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stress score</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>18.0455</td>
<td>3.92158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants rated the helpfulness of the stress management workshop. The average score that participants rated the helpfulness of the workshop was 4.18 on a
five point scale, with 1 being not helpful to 5 being very helpful. The participants found the stress management workshop to be more than moderately helpful. Once this data was obtained the next analysis procedure that was conducted was a Pearson’s correlation between the participants stress score and the helpfulness score of the stress management workshop (Table 2). The correlation between these two factors resulted in a correlation at two tailed level to be \[ r = -.472, p>.05 \]. This correlation was found to be statistically significant. The lower the score on the stress checklist the higher the stress and hence the negative correlation. This also indicates the higher the stress level the greater the level of the rating of the helpfulness of the stress management workshop in reducing their stress level.

Table 2

\textit{Stress score and helpfulness correlation}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress score</th>
<th>Stress score</th>
<th>Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress score</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.472*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Stress has been determined to be a contributing factor in having an impact on an individual’s life, stress has been known to implement its effects on the body, mind
and socially. It is no surprise that when an individual is overwhelmed by high levels of stress it limits the capacity for an individual to be able to function to their full potential. For example, stress has been considered to be a factor that has contributed to the high number of employee absenteeism in the workplace. The economic repercussions of lost work cannot be determined, however it has been tallied that annually about 555,000,000 work days are lost in the United States alone. The presence of stress in the workplace has also been known to cause employee’s to work in a less optimal manner, which can eventually lead to job burn out and poor work performance.

In addition, stress has the potential to also manifest itself as a mental illness. Although these cases are most often diagnosed to be general anxiety disorders by psychiatrist, the fact of the matter remains that stress is one of the culprit behind these mental illnesses. In the United States alone it was determined that around 200 million working days were missed by employee’s who were absent from work in order to receive medical treatment for a mental illness. Furthermore, the effects of stress cannot be limited to just the body and mind, socially stress has also been known to prevent and individual from developing social capital and social networks. The development of strong social networks can be seen as part of an individual’s arsenal that could potentially be used to confront stress. However, when stress levels are too high most individuals lack the capacity to access the resources that they have already established such as family, friends and/or stress reducing activities. If an individual
lacks any of the aforementioned resources and are currently attempting to access resources, they will most often than not find themselves being unable to be successful. Therefore, it is imperative that individuals are able to find ways to better manage their stress levels, for it is not surprise that stress is and will always be a part of daily life.

The findings of this study have indicated that if a short term stress management and relaxation workshop is implemented, it is successful at reducing stress. Furthermore, one can only imagine the impact that it would have on an individual’s capacity to increase their social capital. As mentioned earlier, social capital, is a tool that any individual can have that can also become helpful in accessing or seeking resources in their environment. The benefits of reducing stress far outweigh the consequences that unmanaged stress can impose on an individuals’ mind, body and social relationships.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section discusses the overall summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study. The study hoped to find the relationship between the stress management workshop’s ability to reduce stress and the increasing aptitude for social capital. The researchers analyzed the data, and from this analysis derived significant conclusions and recommendations that could be applied with regard to theory, practice, behavior, policy and research at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. The following sections of this chapter provide the concise summary, the conclusion and the recommendations.

Summary and conclusions

The data from the stress management workshop indicated that the participants benefited from the workshop. The average helpfulness of the workshop was rated by the participants to be 4.18 on a scale of 5. Participants indicated that stress was a factor in their lives, and the scores on the stress checklist were moderate to high. Indicative from the study finding was the fact that the higher the stress levels of the participant, the greater the appreciation of the workshop. Based on the study’s findings, people with high stress benefit the most from a brief stress management session. Therefore, the findings indicate that stress management workshops and techniques are needed by individuals in general, and particularly for college students. As a result, recommendations for practice, recommendations for future research, and
recommendations for policy makers are stated below to provide these services to individuals; especially those individuals in the mental health field.

Recommendations for practice

One of the recommendations for practice at the micro level is to reduce stress among families. Communities must provide opportunities for families to get together and find ways to relieve stress. At the macro level families and communities should find ways to increase the use of community space available such as parks and recreation centers and other community avenues to get together, share information and empower each other.

It is a well known fact that social workers and other practitioners in the mental health field face a number of factors that contribute to stress. As indicated in earlier chapters, stress can be caused by negative social capital; for instance, the Ku Klux Klan causing stress to African Americans. As part of a social workers job description, social workers are adapting to their client’s social networks to better serve their clients. These social networks at times are quite unstable. Social workers roles in these social networks are to assist these networks so that they could begin to impact their clients in a positive manner. Therefore, it can be understood that a lot of the maladaptive traits that are associated with these networks can be transferred to a social workers own feelings and emotions. Although social workers do try to avoid these transfers of emotions, it is inevitable that some emotions will transfer in one form or another. This may cause stress to the social worker when they attempt to overcome the emotions
that may begin to surface because of these interactions. Furthermore, stress from the numerous cutbacks the State of California is making in the mental health field contributes to the high stress levels of social workers. If a practitioner loses employment, and the practitioners who are left are forced to assimilate and accomplish their predecessors work load because of the fear of not being able to provide for themselves, then the burn out rate will increase with the stress rate for the practitioners. The end result is the work load not being completed properly because of the unattainable goals that are set forth for that practitioner to keep their job.

With all these factors continuing to occur there is no outlet for practitioners to use to maintain their own personal self care. Social workers and mental health practitioners will begin to view their job as what it is, a job. Unfortunately, when this occurs, social workers begin to provide services without taking into consideration all the factors that their decisions may bring. Social workers will begin to make decisions so that their work load will begin to be reduced, and their stress will be uplifted. Therefore, social workers should have stress workshops on a weekly basis. Social workers need to be able to have a time during their work week where they can take a break from the stressors caused from their workload. It is not uncommon for companies to allow these workshops to occur. For example, AOL media provides yoga classes in the office once a week (Van Dusen, 2007). Although the costs may range from $500- $10,000 a month depending on the services provided (Van Dusen, 2007), the impact of the workshops bring about some level of change in their
employees’ stress. Although it may be ideal for the program to be offered at least
twice a week for optimum results the program can be reduced to once a week,
biweekly, or once a month to save on costs. However, data would need to be analyzed
to see if the program is dependent upon the number of days the program is
implemented each month. The cost the federal government, or state, has to pay for
mental health practitioners to assist clients that already received services may be more
expensive for their annual budget. If a county or state can provide their mental health
practitioners avenues for stress relief; this may help the practitioners assist the clients
much more accurately and efficiently.

Recommendations for future research

Research has been fairly specific when discussing stress. Findings from past
research focus on stress and the physiological effects stress has on an individual.
Furthermore, studies clearly indicate methods to remedy stress, as discussed in earlier
chapters; however, studies focusing on stress and the effects stress have on job
performance are minimal at best. Stress for social workers is as common as the use of
theoretical orientations during practice. The emotions associated with the treatment,
and assistance offered towards clients commonly causes an increase in stress for
mental health practitioners. This can be due in large to the fact that when dealing with
a client, and their particular situations, there are a number of factors that need to be
organized, and ultimately repaired to properly assist a client. For example, when
working with a minor in the CPS system, a practitioner is not simply in charge of the
client’s well being, but they are responsible for other individuals in this child’s ecological system. Individuals such as their parents, the school, their siblings, and other factors that are detrimental to the child’s well being all must be considered. As a result of all these factors, workload begins to increase, and stress, as with any job where the work load increases, quickly follows.

Further research should be done in regards to stress reduction with companies that do have a stress relief program in place on site. There is little to no information regarding the benefits in productivity and employee burnout. These figures are essential to companies beginning to implement programs such as the one AOL media did. If the program is effective and does raise productivity for money making companies, than it can be concluded that productivity for mental health practitioners should increase as well. Although increases in productivity cannot be measured using the same scale of costs and losses as companies and corporations can, increase in productivity can be measured by other means. Increase in productivity can be measured in terms of employee burnout rates declining, number of cases being completed and the duration needed for each case, and overall job satisfaction. These factors can be measured through post and pretest questionnaires from the participating employees. If a relationship between job satisfaction and employee burnout favor the stress management program, then the program can be implemented for another year until the results do not show any positive relationship between the goals and the workshop. Furthermore, using the same goals in mind, it would be wise for the
company to analyze the frequency of the groups as well. If the group is more frequent, the goals (job satisfaction, productivity, and employee burnout rates) may be accomplished in a much more timely fashion. Although the costs for the workshop may increase based on the frequency of the workshop, a cost- benefit analysis should demonstrate the savings for the company in the long run. Mental health practitioners may be able to reduce the recidivism rates, and reopening of cases if the cases are handled properly the first time. The result would be a reduction in mental health practitioner’s stress levels, and the high quality of care for a practitioner’s clients as well.

Lastly, research for the cost of disability for employees who take a leave of absence should be analyzed as well. The reasoning behind this analysis is to compare which factor is more draining on a company’s budget. Companies should run this analysis to compare if paying employees for stress leave is more expensive in comparison to paying an individual or groups to provide a stress management workshop. We feel that the numbers will prove considerably less for companies to provide stress management workshops in comparison to paying their employees while on leave for stress. The end result would be higher productivity rates, and lower rates of delinquency and burnout.

*Recommendations for policy*

Policy makers need to understand that stress does affect job performance. When policy makers and other governmental entities cut back on mental health
practitioners in comparison to other programs, the repercussion affect the clients. They cut back to the extent where the work that the employees who are still employed are not being completed the best way that they could be. As a result, they end up paying more money for the same clients who need the same services because their needs were not met. If attempting to employ the same number of mental health employees is impossible, as is the possibility of reducing their workload then the policy makers need to spend a little money to ensure that the employees who have these high caseloads are being properly cared for.

Polices should be implemented to reflect the realistic job descriptions of social workers. Policy makers should recommend policies that state that a certain number of social workers should be required for particular mental health services. Currently, there is no minimum amount of social workers CPS or APS should have. The maximum amount is obviously reflected in the budget, but the minimum amount of social workers needed to successfully assist clients must be mandated for the clients to properly receive services. A simple method to accomplish this task is to compute all the CPS or APS service calls, with the number of clients these programs already have, with the general increase of clients that have been occurring annually, and the workload should be divided based on realistic standards. CPS and APS workers having 10-15 cases during a period are unrealistic. As a result, the impacts of these decisions end up affecting the quality of care for the clients in these systems.
Lastly, policy makers should implement programs for mental health practitioners focusing on eliminating stress in other aspects of their lives. For example, policy makers could provide free child care to county and state employees. Providing free child care would help to alleviate mental health practitioners’ increasingly busy schedule. The policy makers could help their constituents with this small task, and in the process reduce stress for them, and increase their productivity and level of care for their clients.
APPENDIX A

Social Capital Measurement Tool- Pre test

1. How many resources do you think you can access on campus in an Academic year?

Please check all that apply:

- Writing center
- Financial aid
- Scholarships
- Student health center
- Physical exercise opportunities
- Noon time health activities
- Student organized Spiritual Activities
- Student Organized relaxation activities
- Team Building Activities
- Child Care
- Transportation-Ride Share
- Security Services

2. Please indicate your projected degree of participation in the groups that you are a Member of by using the following schema:

- Leader 1
- Very Active 2
- Somewhat active 3
- Not Active 4

Student Group

Community Group
Neighborhood Group
Parent Group
Spiritual Network/Church Group
Political Advocacy Group

3. How many of the groups that you are a member of do you intend to consider as assets
to you in meeting your challenges in life? Please explain in the space below.

4. How many contacts of yours you actively plan on developing for access to help you
during stressful times in your life?

5. How hopeful are you that at times of emergency, you will have social contacts who
could help you?

6. Are you hopeful that you will be able to develop and maintain resources to help you
manage stress in your life?

7. Is there a change in the frequency of your visits with friends that you intend to have?

8. What is the frequency of your visits with family that you intend to have?

9. How often do you intend to maintain significant telephone contact with friends?
10. How often do you intend to maintain significant telephone contact with extended family members?

11. How often do you intend to maintain significant email contact with friends?

12. How often do you intend to maintain significant email contact with extended family members?

13. Do you plan on having a mentor?

14. Do you intend to develop a mentoring relationship with someone whom you consult for making important decisions?

15. Do you feel confident about developing a circle of persons to rely on for meeting those needs that you cannot meet on your own?
APPENDIX B

Social Capital Measurement Tool- Post test

1. How many resources do you think you can access on campus in an Academic year? Please check all that apply:

- Writing center
- Financial aid
- Scholarships
- Student health center
- Physical exercise opportunities
- Noon time health activities
- Student organized Spiritual Activities
- Student Organized relaxation activities
- Team Building Activities
- Child Care
- Transportation-Ride Share
- Security Services

2. Please indicate your projected degree of participation in the groups that you are a Member of by using the following schema:
   - Leader 1
   - Very Active 2
   - Somewhat active 3
   - Not Active 4

   - Student Group
   - Community Group
   - Neighborhood Group
   - Parent Group
   - Spiritual Network/Church Group
   - Political Advocacy Group

3. How many of the groups that you are a member of do you intend to consider as assets to you in meeting your challenges in life? Please explain in the space below.
4. How many contacts of yours you actively plan on developing for access to help you during stressful times in your life?

5. How hopeful are you that at times of emergency, you will have social contacts who could help you?

6. Are you hopeful that you will be able to develop and maintain resources to help you manage stress in your life?

7. Is there a change in the frequency of your visits with friends that you intend to have?

8. What is the frequency of your visits with family that you intend to have?

9. How often do you intend to maintain significant telephone contact with friends?

10. How often do you intend to maintain significant telephone contact with extended family members?

11. How often do you intend to maintain significant email contact with friends?

12. How often do you intend to maintain significant email contact with extended family member?

13. Do you plan on having a mentor?

14. Do you intend to develop a mentoring relationship with someone whom you consult for making important decisions?

15. Do you feel confident about developing a circle of persons to rely on for meeting those needs that you cannot meet on your own?

16. On a scale of 1-5 how helpful was this workshop in helping you increase your Readiness for increasing your social capital?

   Very Helpful- 1
Moderately Helpful- 2
Neutral- 3
Not Helpful- 4
Not Helpful at all- 5
APPENDIX C

Stress Checklist Questions

2. Minor problems and disappointments upset me excessively.

Strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree

8. I feel inadequate or suffer from self doubt

All the time  frequently  sometimes  rarely  never

34. I feel tired.

All the time  frequently  sometimes  rarely  never

35. I experience flashes of anger over a minor problem.

All the time  frequently  sometimes  rarely  never

36. I notice a change in my sleeping or eating patterns.

All the time  frequently  sometimes  rarely  never

37. I suffer from chronic pain, headaches, or back aches.

Strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
REFERENCES


