

STRESS AND COPING: MEASURING GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT SUCCESS

A Research Grant Proposal

Presented to the faculty of the School of Nursing  
California State University San Marcos

Submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

In

Nursing

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

by

Brett A Longacre, MSN, RN, PHN

SUMMER SEMESTER

2015

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

PROJECT SIGNATURE PAGE

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

NURSING

PROJECT TITLE: Stress and Coping: Measuring Graduate Nursing Student Success

AUTHOR: Brett Longacre

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: 23 April 2013

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN  
PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING.

  
PROJECT COMMITTEE CHAIR

  
SIGNATURE

4.23.2013  
DATE

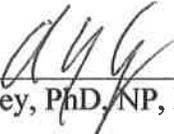
  
PROJECT COMMITTEE MEMBER

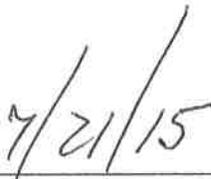
  
SIGNATURE

4-23-2013  
DATE

Student: Brett A Longacre, BSN, RN, PHN

I certify that this student has met the School of Nursing format requirements, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Graduate Coordinator  
Amy Carney, PhD, NP, RN

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

School of Nursing  
College of Education, Health, and Human Services  
California State University San Marcos

Abstract  
of  
STRESS AND COPING: MEASURING GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT SUCCESS

by

Brett A Longacre, MSN, RN, PHN

In this proposed study, the purpose is to explore the relationship between stress, coping, and GPA in a sample of graduate nursing students at a school in southern California. It is expected that students entering a graduate nursing program will experience stress as do many students entering a new educational program. Stress however, can cause adverse reactions, and may result in lowering the student's grade point average (GPA). The key to excelling even with an abundance of stress is the ability to cope. The sample size proposed is n=92 graduate nursing students. The students will be given three separate questionnaires to measure stress, coping ability, and demographics which will include GPA, and the covariates of health status, job status and family status. This research will be based on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Robert Lazarus. Data will be collected and then inputted to SPSS 21. Data will be analyzed using multiple linear regression in a quantitative cross-sectional design to answer the research questions regarding the relationship between stress, coping and GPA as well as how stress may hinder a students' ability to be a successful graduate student. The study will seek to demonstrate that there may be a positive correlation between coping skills, stress, and GPA, and that as unmitigated stress occurs, GPA falls.

 Committee Chair  
Pamela Kohlbry, RN, PhD, CNL

7/21/2015  
Date

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to everyone who has helped me through the process of becoming a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner.

## PREFACE

This project is a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Nursing as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. The chair on this project has been Dr. Pamela Kohlbray. A special thanks to Dr. Linnea Axman who assisted with the methodology section of this paper.

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Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Services  <b>Grant Application</b>  <i>Do not exceed character length restrictions indicated.</i>		<b>LEAVE BLANK—FOR PHS USE ONLY.</b>			
		Type	Activity	Number	
		Review Group		Formerly	
		Council/Board (Month, Year)		Date Received	
1. TITLE OF PROJECT ( <i>Do not exceed 81 characters, including spaces and punctuation.</i> ) <b>Stress and Coping: Measuring Graduate Nursing Student Success</b>					
2. RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS OR PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT OR SOLICITATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES (If "Yes," state number and title) Number: _____ Title: _____					
<b>3. PROGRAM DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>					
3a. NAME (Last, first, middle) Longacre, Brett, Allen		3b. DEGREE(S) BSN RN PHN		3h. eRA Commons User Name	
3c. POSITION TITLE Graduate Student		3d. MAILING ADDRESS ( <i>Street, city, state, zip code</i> ) CSUSM School of Nursing 333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Rd. San Marcos, CA 92096			
3e. DEPARTMENT, SERVICE, LABORATORY, OR EQUIVALENT California State University San Marcos					
3f. MAJOR SUBDIVISION School of Nursing					
3g. TELEPHONE AND FAX ( <i>Area code, number and extension</i> ) TEL: XXX-XXX-XXXX FAX: XXX-XXX-XXXX		E-MAIL ADDRESS: xxxxxxxx@cougars.csusm.edu			
4. HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes		4a. Research Exempt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes		If "Yes," Exemption No.	
4b. Federal-Wide Assurance No.		4c. Clinical Trial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes		4d. NIH-defined Phase III Clinical Trial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
5. VERTEBRATE ANIMALS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes			5a. Animal Welfare Assurance No.		
6. DATES OF PROPOSED PERIOD OF SUPPORT ( <i>month, day, year—MM/DD/YY</i> ) From 01/01/16 Through 12/31/16		7. COSTS REQUESTED FOR INITIAL BUDGET PERIOD 7a. Direct Costs (\$) \$2,715		8. COSTS REQUESTED FOR PROPOSED PERIOD OF SUPPORT 8a. Direct Costs (\$) \$2,715 8b. Total Costs (\$) \$4,127	
9. APPLICANT ORGANIZATION Name CSUSM School of Nursing Address 333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Rd. San Marcos, CA 92096		10. TYPE OF ORGANIZATION Public: → <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local Private: → <input type="checkbox"/> Private Nonprofit For-profit: → <input type="checkbox"/> General <input type="checkbox"/> Small Business <input type="checkbox"/> Woman-owned <input type="checkbox"/> Socially and Economically Disadvantaged			
		11. ENTITY IDENTIFICATION NUMBER DUNS NO. _____ Cong. District _____			
12. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIAL TO BE NOTIFIED IF AWARD IS MADE Name XX XXXX XXXXX Title Sponsored Project Administrator Address CSUSM UARSC 333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Rd. San Marcos, CA 92096 Tel: 760-750-4000 FAX: 760-750-4710 E-Mail: XXXX@csusm.edu		13. OFFICIAL SIGNING FOR APPLICANT ORGANIZATION Name XX XXXX XXXXX Title XX XXXX XXXXX Address CSUSM 333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Rd. San Marcos, CA 92096 Tel: XXX-XXX-XXXX FAX: XXX-XXX-XXXX E-Mail: XXXX@csusm.edu			
14. APPLICANT ORGANIZATION CERTIFICATION AND ACCEPTANCE: I certify that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge, and accept the obligation to comply with Public Health Services terms and conditions if a grant is awarded as a result of this application. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties.		SIGNATURE OF OFFICIAL NAMED IN 13. ( <i>In ink. "Per" signature not acceptable.</i> )		DATE	

Use only if preparing an application with Multiple PDs/PIs. See [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/multi\\_pi/index.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/multi_pi/index.htm) for details.

<b>Contact Program Director/Principal Investigator (Last, First, Middle):</b> Longacre, Brett, Allen		
<b>3. PROGRAM DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>		
3a. NAME (Last, first, middle)	3b. DEGREE(S)	3h. NIH Commons User Name
3c. POSITION TITLE	3d. MAILING ADDRESS ( <i>Street, city, state, zip code</i> )	
3e. DEPARTMENT, SERVICE, LABORATORY, OR EQUIVALENT		
3f. MAJOR SUBDIVISION		
3g. TELEPHONE AND FAX ( <i>Area code, number and extension</i> )	E-MAIL ADDRESS:	
TEL: _____	FAX: _____	
<b>3. PROGRAM DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>		
3a. NAME (Last, first, middle)	3b. DEGREE(S)	3h. NIH Commons User Name
3c. POSITION TITLE	3d. MAILING ADDRESS ( <i>Street, city, state, zip code</i> )	
3e. DEPARTMENT, SERVICE, LABORATORY, OR EQUIVALENT		
3f. MAJOR SUBDIVISION		
3g. TELEPHONE AND FAX ( <i>Area code, number and extension</i> )	E-MAIL ADDRESS:	
TEL: _____	FAX: _____	
<b>3. PROGRAM DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>		
3a. NAME (Last, first, middle)	3b. DEGREE(S)	3h. NIH Commons User Name
3c. POSITION TITLE	3d. MAILING ADDRESS ( <i>Street, city, state, zip code</i> )	
3e. DEPARTMENT, SERVICE, LABORATORY, OR EQUIVALENT		
3f. MAJOR SUBDIVISION		
3g. TELEPHONE AND FAX ( <i>Area code, number and extension</i> )	E-MAIL ADDRESS:	
TEL: _____	FAX: _____	
<b>3. PROGRAM DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>		
3a. NAME (Last, first, middle)	3b. DEGREE(S)	3h. NIH Commons User Name
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3e. DEPARTMENT, SERVICE, LABORATORY, OR EQUIVALENT		
3f. MAJOR SUBDIVISION		
3g. TELEPHONE AND FAX ( <i>Area code, number and extension</i> )	E-MAIL ADDRESS:	
TEL: _____	FAX: _____	

PROJECT SUMMARY (See instructions):

In this proposed study, the purpose is to explore the relationship between stress, coping, and GPA in a sample of graduate nursing students at a school in southern California. It is expected that students entering a graduate nursing program will experience stress as do many students entering a new educational program. Stress however, can cause adverse reactions, and may result in lowering the student's grade point average (GPA). The key to excelling even with an abundance of stress is the ability to cope. The sample size proposed is n=92 graduate nursing students. The students will be given three separate questionnaires to measure stress, coping ability, and demographics which will include GPA, and the covariates of health status, job status and family status. This research will be based on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Robert Lazarus. Data will be collected and then inputted to SPSS 21. Data will be analyzed using multiple linear regression in a quantitative cross-sectional design to answer the research questions regarding the relationship between stress, coping and GPA as well as how stress may hinder a students' ability to be a successful graduate student. The study will seek to demonstrate that there may be a positive correlation between coping skills, stress, and GPA, and that as unmitigated stress occurs, GPA falls.

The research questions of this study are:

1. What is the relationship between stress, coping, and success as measured by GPA among graduate nursing students?
2. How do stress management skills (or lack thereof) explain graduate nursing students' ability to succeed, with success measured by GPA at a school in Southern California, where covariates such as job status, family status, health status, and program enrollment status are considered?

RELEVANCE (See instructions):

Stress among graduate level university students in nursing has been a topic of interest for teachers and researchers for many years; however, even with an interest in this topic, a lack of information and studies exists regarding graduate level nursing student's and their ability to be successful in advanced nursing programs. Researchers have, however, recognized the stressful nature of advanced practice nursing students' roles and expectations.

PROJECT/PERFORMANCE SITE(S) (if additional space is needed, use Project/Performance Site Format Page)

<b>Project/Performance Site Primary Location</b>			
Organizational Name: California State University San Marcos			
DUNS:			
Street 1: 333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Rd.		Street 2:	
City: San Marcos	County: San Diego		State: CA
Province:	Country: United States		Zip/Postal Code: 92096
Project/Performance Site Congressional Districts:			
<b>Additional Project/Performance Site Location</b>			
Organizational Name: N/A			
DUNS:			
Street 1:		Street 2:	
City:	County:		State:
Province:	Country:		Zip/Postal Code:
Project/Performance Site Congressional Districts:			

Program Director/Principal Investigator (Last, First, Middle): Longacre, Brett, Allen

SENIOR/KEY PERSONNEL. See instructions. Use continuation pages as needed to provide the required information in the format shown below. Start with Program Director(s)/Principal Investigator(s). List all other senior/key personnel in alphabetical order, last name first.

Name	eRA Commons User Name	Organization	Role on Project
Brett Longacre, BSN		CSUSM, SON	PI
TBD		CSUSM, SON	RA
Pamela Kohlby, PhD		CSUSM, SON	Mentor

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTORS

Name	Organization	Role on Project
------	--------------	-----------------

Human Embryonic Stem Cells  No  Yes

If the proposed project involves human embryonic stem cells, list below the registration number of the specific cell line(s) from the following list: <http://stemcells.nih.gov/research/registry/eligibilityCriteria.asp>. Use continuation pages as needed.

If a specific line cannot be referenced at this time, include a statement that one from the Registry will be used.

Cell Line

The name of the program director/principal investigator must be provided at the top of each printed page and each continuation page.

**RESEARCH GRANT  
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<b>Budgets Pertaining to Consortium/Contractual Arrangements</b> .....	<u>N/A</u>
<b>Biographical Sketch</b> – Program Director/Principal Investigator ( <i>Not to exceed four pages each</i> ).....	<u>7</u>
<b>Other Biographical Sketches</b> ( <i>Not to exceed four pages each – See instructions</i> ).....	<u>N/A</u>
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1. Introduction to Resubmission Application, if applicable, or Introduction to Revision Application, if applicable * .....	<u>N/A</u>
2. Specific Aims * .....	<u>14</u>
3. Research Strategy * .....	<u>18</u>
4. Inclusion Enrollment Report (Renewal or Revision applications only) .....	<u>N/A</u>
5. Bibliography and References Cited/Progress Report Publication List.....	<u>36</u>
6. Protection of Human Subjects .....	<u>N/A</u>
7. Inclusion of Women and Minorities .....	<u>N/A</u>
8. Targeted/Planned Enrollment Table .....	<u>N/A</u>
9. Inclusion of Children .....	<u>N/A</u>
10. Vertebrate Animals .....	<u>N/A</u>
11. Select Agent Research .....	<u>N/A</u>
12. Multiple PD/PI Leadership Plan .....	<u>N/A</u>
13. Consortium/Contractual Arrangements .....	<u>N/A</u>
14. Letters of Support (e.g., Consultants).....	<u>N/A</u>
15. Resource Sharing Plan (s).....	<u>N/A</u>

**Appendix** (*Five identical CDs.*)



Check if Appendix is Included

\* Follow the page limits for these sections indicated in the application instructions, unless the Funding Opportunity Announcement specifies otherwise.

<b>DETAILED BUDGET FOR INITIAL BUDGET PERIOD DIRECT COSTS ONLY</b>	FROM 01/01/2016	THROUGH 12/31/2016
--	--------------------	-----------------------

List PERSONNEL (*Applicant organization only*)  
 Use Cal, Acad, or Summer to Enter Months Devoted to Project  
 Enter Dollar Amounts Requested (*omit cents*) for Salary Requested and Fringe Benefits

NAME	ROLE ON PROJECT	Cal. Mnths	Acad. Mnths	Summer Mnths	INST.BASE SALARY	SALARY REQUESTED	FRINGE BENEFITS	TOTAL
Brett Longacre	PD/PI							0
TBDt	RA							0
<b>SUBTOTALS</b> →								<b>0</b>

CONSULTANT COSTS Statistician (\$150 x 4 hours); RA 15hrs@10\$/hr	750
--	-----

EQUIPMENT ( <i>Itemize</i> )	0
------------------------------	---

SUPPLIES ( <i>Itemize by category</i> ) Posters for dissemination (\$125), Poster easel (\$25), Flyers (\$50)	200
--	-----

TRAVEL Plane Ontario (\$375), Plane Ohio (\$540), gas (\$250), six nights hotel (\$600)	1765
--	------

INPATIENT CARE COSTS	0
----------------------	---

OUTPATIENT CARE COSTS	0
-----------------------	---

ALTERATIONS AND RENOVATIONS ( <i>Itemize by category</i> )	0
--	---

OTHER EXPENSES ( <i>Itemize by category</i> )	0
---	---

CONSORTIUM/CONTRACTUAL COSTS	DIRECT COSTS	0
------------------------------	--------------	---

<b>SUBTOTAL DIRECT COSTS FOR INITIAL BUDGET PERIOD</b> ( <i>Item 7a, Face Page</i> )	<b>\$ 2,715</b>
--	-----------------

CONSORTIUM/CONTRACTUAL COSTS	FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	0
------------------------------	-------------------------------------	---

<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS FOR INITIAL BUDGET PERIOD</b>	<b>\$ 2,715</b>
---	-----------------

**BUDGET FOR ENTIRE PROPOSED PROJECT PERIOD  
DIRECT COSTS ONLY**

BUDGET CATEGORY TOTALS	INITIAL BUDGET PERIOD <i>(from Form Page 4)</i>	2nd ADDITIONAL YEAR OF SUPPORT REQUESTED	3rd ADDITIONAL YEAR OF SUPPORT REQUESTED	4th ADDITIONAL YEAR OF SUPPORT REQUESTED	5th ADDITIONAL YEAR OF SUPPORT REQUESTED
PERSONNEL: <i>Salary and fringe benefits. Applicant organization only.</i>					
CONSULTANT COSTS	750				
EQUIPMENT					
SUPPLIES	200				
TRAVEL	400				
INPATIENT CARE COSTS					
OUTPATIENT CARE COSTS					
ALTERATIONS AND RENOVATIONS					
OTHER EXPENSES					
DIRECT CONSORTIUM/ CONTRACTUAL COSTS					
<b>SUBTOTAL DIRECT COSTS</b> <i>(Sum = Item 8a, Face Page)</i>					
F&A CONSORTIUM/ CONTRACTUAL COSTS					
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS</b>	1,350				
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS FOR ENTIRE PROPOSED PROJECT PERIOD</b>					<b>\$ 2,715</b>

JUSTIFICATION. Follow the budget justification instructions exactly. Use continuation pages as needed.

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Provide the following information for the Senior/key personnel and other significant contributors in the order listed on Form Page 2.  
Follow this format for each person. **DO NOT EXCEED FOUR PAGES.**

NAME Brett A. Longacre		POSITION TITLE Graduate Nursing Student School of Nursing California State University San Marcos	
eRA COMMONS USER NAME (credential, e.g., agency login)			
EDUCATION/TRAINING <i>(Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable.)</i>			
INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE <i>(if applicable)</i>	MM/YY	FIELD OF STUDY
Mira Costa College, CA	AA	2004-2006	General Education
Calif State University San Bernadino, CA	BSN	2007-2009	Nursing
Calif. State University San Marcos, CA	MSN	2011-	Psych Mental Health

**A. Personal Statement.** The goal of the proposed project is to determine graduate level nursing students' ability to cope with increased stress levels and the relationship stress has on grade point average (GPA). The variables included in this study are the Ways of Coping survey by Robert Lazarus to measure the students' ability to cope; the Student-Life Stress Inventory by Bernadette Gadzella to measure the student's stress levels; and a demographic survey to measure the student's GPA. I am a current graduate level nursing student who is a working RN, and is able to accurately understand the stress levels that graduate students face. During graduate school I have been taught how to use quantitative data completing both Nursing Biostatistics (Nurs 510) and Nursing Research (Nurs 512). These classes taught me to efficiently evaluate the surveys used in measuring coping and stress levels among my fellow classmates and how it could impact their GPA. I graduated with honors with my BSN, while working full-time, I was involved in extra-curricular school activities such as the president of the nursing group at California State University San Bernadino and I volunteered at special events. These experiences make me qualified as a novice researcher to perform the role of principal investigator for this study.

**B. Positions and Honors****Positions and Employment**

2010-2015 Nursing Home Staff and Charge Nurse, Vista Health Care, Vista, CA.

**Honors- Civilian**

2008-2009 Coyote Nurse President of School of Nursing San Bernadino

**Additional Training and Certifications**

Registered Nurse #771286

Public Health Nurse #77951

## **RESOURCES**

---

Follow the 398 application instructions in Part I, 4.7 Resources.

The computer lab used for this study will be at the CSUSM SON to help prevent identification of the students ISP numbers and to protect anonymity. Tools for this project will be posted through survey monkey and then stored on a zip drive in a locked cabinet at the school of nursing to protect privacy.

The library located on campus at CSUSM will have both a hard copy and electronic copies of all information posted including the grant application, biographical sketch, and the paper written in conjunction with this grant application.

**CHECKLIST**

**TYPE OF APPLICATION** (Check all that apply.)

- NEW application. (This application is being submitted to the PHS for the first time.)
- RESUBMISSION of application number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(This application replaces a prior unfunded version of a new, renewal, or revision application.)
- RENEWAL of grant number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(This application is to extend a funded grant beyond its current project period.)
- REVISION to grant number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(This application is for additional funds to supplement a currently funded grant.)
- CHANGE of program director/principal investigator.  
Name of former program director/principal investigator: \_\_\_\_\_
- CHANGE of Grantee Institution. Name of former institution: \_\_\_\_\_
- FOREIGN application     Domestic Grant with foreign involvement    List Country(ies) Involved: \_\_\_\_\_

INVENTIONS AND PATENTS (Renewal appl. only)     No     Yes  
 If "Yes,"  Previously reported     Not previously reported

**1. PROGRAM INCOME (See instructions.)**

All applications must indicate whether program income is anticipated during the period(s) for which grant support is request. If program income is anticipated, use the format below to reflect the amount and source(s).

Budget Period	Anticipated Amount	Source(s)
1/1/2016	\$4,127.00	
12/31/2016		

**2. ASSURANCES/CERTIFICATIONS (See instructions.)**

In signing the application Face Page, the authorized organizational representative agrees to comply with the policies, assurances and/or certifications listed in the application instructions when applicable. Descriptions of individual assurances/certifications are provided in Part III and listed in Part I, 4.1 under Item 14. If unable to certify compliance, where applicable, provide an explanation and place it after this page.

**3. FACILITIES AND ADMINSTRATIVE COSTS (F&A)/ INDIRECT COSTS.** See specific instructions.

- DHHS Agreement dated: \_\_\_\_\_  No Facilities And Administrative Costs Requested.
- DHHS Agreement being negotiated with \_\_\_\_\_ Regional Office.
- No DHHS Agreement, but rate established with \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

CALCULATION\* (The entire grant application, including the Checklist, will be reproduced and provided to peer reviewers as confidential information.)

a. Initial budget period:	Amount of base \$	2,715	x Rate applied	0.52	% = F&A costs	\$	1,412
b. 02 year	Amount of base \$	_____	x Rate applied	_____	% = F&A costs	\$	_____
c. 03 year	Amount of base \$	_____	x Rate applied	_____	% = F&A costs	\$	_____
d. 04 year	Amount of base \$	_____	x Rate applied	_____	% = F&A costs	\$	_____
e. 05 year	Amount of base \$	_____	x Rate applied	_____	% = F&A costs	\$	_____
						TOTAL F&A Costs	\$ <b>1,412</b>

\*Check appropriate box(es):

- Salary and wages base     Modified total direct cost base     Other base (Explain)
- Off-site, other special rate, or more than one rate involved (Explain)

Explanation (Attach separate sheet, if necessary.):

**4. DISCLOSURE PERMISSION STATEMENT:** If this application does not result in an award, is the Government permitted to disclose the title of your proposed project, and the name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the official signing for the applicant organization, to organizations that may be interested in contacting you for further information (e.g., possible collaborations, investment)?     Yes     No

## Targeted/Planned Enrollment Table

**This report format should NOT be used for data collection from study participants.**

**Study Title:** Stress and Coping: Measuring Graduate Student Success

**Total Planned Enrollment:** 92

<b>TARGETED/PLANNED ENROLLMENT: Number of Subjects</b>			
<b>Ethnic Category</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Total</b>
Hispanic or Latino			
Not Hispanic or Latino			
<b>Ethnic Category: Total of All Subjects *</b>			9
<b>Racial Categories</b>			
American Indian/Alaska Native			0
Asian			12
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			0
Black or African American			4
White			16
<b>Racial Categories: Total of All Subjects *</b>			41

\* The "Ethnic Category: Total of All Subjects" must be equal to the "Racial Categories: Total of All Subjects."

## Inclusion Enrollment Report

**This report format should NOT be used for data collection from study participants.**

**Study Title:** Stress and Coping: Measuring Graduate Student Success

**Total Enrollment:** 92 **Protocol Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grant Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>PART A. TOTAL ENROLLMENT REPORT: Number of Subjects Enrolled to Date (Cumulative) by Ethnicity and Race</b>				
Ethnic Category	Females	Males	Sex/Gender Unknown or Not Reported	Total
Hispanic or Latino			9	9 **
Not Hispanic or Latino			32	32
Unknown (individuals not reporting ethnicity)			0	0
<b>Ethnic Category: Total of All Subjects*</b>			41	41 *
<b>Racial Categories</b>				
American Indian/Alaska Native			0	0
Asian			12	12
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			0	0
Black or African American			4	4
White			16	16
More Than One Race			0	0
Unknown or Not Reported			<b>0</b>	0
<b>Racial Categories: Total of All Subjects*</b>			32	32 *
<b>PART B. HISPANIC ENROLLMENT REPORT: Number of Hispanics or Latinos Enrolled to Date (Cumulative)</b>				
Racial Categories	Females	Males	Sex/Gender Unknown or Not Reported	Total
American Indian or Alaska Native			0	0
Asian			12	12
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			0	<b>0</b>
Black or African American			4	4
White			16	16
More Than One Race			0	0
Unknown or Not Reported			0	0
<b>Racial Categories: Total of Hispanics or Latinos**</b>			32	32 **

\* These totals must agree.

\*\* These totals must agree.

**DO NOT SUBMIT UNLESS REQUESTED**  
**Renewal Applications Only**  
**ALL PERSONNEL REPORT**

**Always list the PD/PI(s). In addition, list all other personnel who participated in the project during the current budget period for at least one person month or more, regardless of the source of compensation (a person month equals approximately 160 hours or 8.3% of annualized effort). Use Cal, Acad, or Summer to Enter Months Devoted to Project.**

Commons ID	Name	Degree(s)	SSN (last 4 digits)	Role on Project (e.g. PD/PI, Res. Assoc.)	DoB (MM /YY)	Cal	Acad	Summer

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**Research Grant Proposal**

Stress and Coping: Measuring Graduate Nursing Student Success

**Specific Aims**

Stress is a common experience for individuals regardless of culture, geographic location or age. When a student applies for admission to a graduate program, an addition to the stressors of everyday life is anticipated. In that regard, students in a Registered Nurse (RN) to Masters in Science and Nursing (MSN) program at a school in southern California are no different from other students. According to Beauvais, Stewart, DeNisco, & Beauvais (2014), research has demonstrated that managing emotions positively correlated with academic success. When in a graduate program, the student is under immense stress due to the requirements of the program, desire to succeed and knowledge development. When stress becomes a hindrance and graduate nursing students cannot cope with the amount of stress they are experiencing, their grade point average (GPA) may be adversely affected. The expectations of graduate level nursing students are to cope with and to handle stressors due to their understanding and experiences as nurses. According to Watson et al, (2008) the stressors that nurses cope with are related to a highly demanding job with poor support, rapidly changing circumstances, a lack of staff and other resources, and dealing with death and dying. In this proposed research study, the relationship between GPA levels, stress levels, and ability to cope is evaluated in a sample of graduate nursing students at a school in southern California.

**The Problem**

Stress is in a person's everyday life, however, "college students have been shown to possess a unique set of stressors which can affect their daily experiences" (Garret, 2001, p. 422). Other types of health care students such as medical, dental and physician assistants have shown that as stressors accumulate, an individual's ability to cope or readjust can be overtaxed (Canales-Gonzales, Kranz, Granberry, & Tanguma, 2008; Chipas, et al., 2012; Gibbons, 2010). According to Galbraith and Brown (2010), requests have been made to health care employers to implement stress management interventions for both student and qualified nurses. Stress

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management interventions can help decrease stress levels and increase coping skills. Knowing there is an increase in stress for students in advanced practice settings such as medical, dental and physician assistants, it is essential to discover if the inability to cope with outside stressors reduces a graduate nursing students GPA and that students' ability to succeed.

To date, most college student stress research has concentrated on undergraduates, and data on graduate health is disjointed and scarce in comparison to that available for undergraduate college students (Kernan, Bogart, & Wheat, 2011). One study conducted by (Chipas, et al.; 2012) on nursing student anesthetists demonstrated that women and especially minority women suffered increased levels of stress that adversely affected their GPA. Few studies exist on graduate nursing students stress along with a student's ability to cope in an advanced practice program, and how this stress may adversely affect their GPA the proposed research study is important.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to explore how stress and coping affect a graduate nursing student's ability to succeed with a GPA of 3.0 and above. Findings from this study will contribute to the understanding of how outside stressors could be contributing factors to a graduate nursing students' inability to be successful in an advanced nursing program as measured by GPA. Research by Bilali and Bilali (2013), suggests that students are exposed to different kinds of stressors, such as an uncertain future, difficulties of integrating into a system and pressure of academic accomplishments with an obligation to prosper. With these increases in stressors, it is important for both prospective students and faculty to determine the proper number of classes or appropriate number of credits to enroll in to take at a given time for the student to be successful in his or her program. According to studies by (Canales-Gonzales, Kranz, Granberry, & Tanguma 2008; Chipas, et al., 2012; and Gibbons, 2009), determining the causes of increases in stress and decreases in coping ability is beneficial in the students' ability to succeed, and could ultimately determine whether the student is ready or not for the undertaking of graduate level work. Employment status will be one of the covariates measured on

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the demographic study. This important covariate has been included as Rudman and Gustavsson (2010)

explains that stressful work conditions can contribute to stress in both graduate nursing students and newly graduated advanced practice nurses.

### **Research Questions**

What is the relationship between stress, coping and success as measured by GPA among graduate nursing students?

How do stress management skills (or lack thereof) explain graduate nursing students' ability to succeed, with success measured by GPA at a school in southern California, where covariates such as job status, family status, health status, and program enrollment status are considered?

### **Background and Significance**

According to Gadzella (1994), stress can be regarded as positive or negative experience. In this proposed study, stressors are events or conditions (stimuli) that demand adjustments beyond the normal difficulties of daily living. Without positive coping skills, whether the stress is positive or negative it can be overwhelming and adversely affect the student's GPA. Researchers have recognized the stressful nature of graduate level nursing students' roles and expectations, stress can be the result of too much or too little arousal resulting in harm to body and mind, which may affect memory, concentration, and problem-solving ability (Gibbons, Dempster, & Moutray, 2007; Goff, 2011; El-Ghoroury, Galper, Sawaqdeh, & Bufka, 2012). Students experience many stressors in their academic lives and from a variety of sources. Previous research findings demonstrates, that mild stress levels can motivate students to accomplish goals and increase ingenuity, while higher levels of stress accompanied by unproductive coping can cause feelings of tension and defeat among students (Clark, Faan, Nguyen, & Barbosa-Leiker, 2014; Canales-Gonzales, Kranz, Granberry, & Tanguma, 2008; Chipas et al., 2012; and Gibbons, 2010). If students want to be successful in advanced practice nursing programs they must be able to cope with the stressors they face because "coping strategies and skills play an important role in the way an individual both responds to and adapts to stressful situations" (Parker, Endler, & Bagby, 1993, p. 361).

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Findings will inform current and future graduate students, faculty, and administrators about graduate nursing students' ability to cope with stress, and how that plays a part in the success of the nurse who has chosen to continue their education in advanced practice nursing. To be successful, the students' GPA must remain at an average of 3.0 or better. High stress levels are associated with low self-esteem, poor adjustment to graduate level education, lack of social interaction, and depression that all can affect academic performance (Goff, 2011; Gibbons, Dempster, & Moutray, 2011; Chan, So, & Fong, 2009). By addressing these stressors, graduate nursing programs could have a higher graduate level completion rates with fewer students falling to academic probation, or failing out of the program altogether.

### **Conceptual Model**

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus, 1966), is the theoretical framework for this proposed study. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping focuses on variations of how individuals respond to their environment and is a framework for appraising the progressions of coping to stressful events. Stressful experiences are seen as person-environment transactions (Lazarus, 1966). These transactions depend on the influence of the stressors and the coping skills available. The person must first make an appraisal of the stressor and second on the social and cultural resources at the person's disposal (Lazarus, 1966). Although many models of stress and coping are available, the person-environment model (Transactional Model of Stress and Coping) seems particularly relevant to students at a university level (Whitman, Spendlove, & Clark, 1984). The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping is appropriate to illustrate the impact of academic stressors, professional stressors, personal stressors, and learned resourcefulness among nursing students and their ability to be successful. Stressors are regarded as a manageable imbalance between demands and resources, occurring when pressure surpasses the perceived capability to cope.

### **Assumptions**

An assumption of this proposed study is that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables will have a linear relationship. All variables will be multivariate normal, and there will be little to no multicollinearity. It is also assumed that all students in this study will be able to comprehend information at a

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minimum of a college education, that all students will already be Registered Nurses, and that each of these students will be enrolled at a school in southern California at the time this study is conducted.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Stress:** interchangeable with stressor, can be both a positive stress (eustress), and a negative stress (distress).

These outside conditions cause both physiological and physical responses in the body (Gibbons, Dempster, & Moutray, 2007).

**Coping:** those behaviors an individual employs to deal with problems, responsibilities, or difficulties that can occur while remaining in a state of mind that supports rational thought and problem-solving behavior to continue (Ben-Zur, 2009).

**Covariates:** is a variable outside the independent and dependent realm, which possibly can predict the outcome of the study such as health status, family status and job status (Medical-Dictionary, 2015).

### **Importance of the Research**

This proposed study is important because it gives insight to both current and future students, faculty, and other administrators regarding the major causes of stress for the graduate level nursing student as well as the student's ability to cope with the stress of graduate school. According to Robotham & Julian (2006); Wichianson et al., (2009); Canales-Gonzales, Kranz, Granberry, & Tanguma, (2008), for many graduate and undergraduate students perhaps the most significant response to stress is a reduction in their academic performance. By determining the outside causes of the increase in stress levels for the graduate student; future students, faculty, and administrators alike would be informed on a student's potential ability to succeed in the graduate program, as well as recommend a full or part time program. According to Happell et al., (2013) it is essential to determine factors which contribute to stressors before postulating interventions that target stressors.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review will examine research on the variables of stress, coping, GPA, and the conceptual model. To be admitted into a graduate nursing program the student must successfully have completed an

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undergraduate nursing degree, accumulated a minimum of one year work experience as a Registered Nurse, and the student must provide letters of reference commenting on his or her potential for success at the graduate level. Accomplishing these criteria takes time, and because these criteria take time, the minimum age these students will be is in their 20's. This information is supported by the demographic information supplied by a school in southern California. At this age, people have many outside stressors. Some of the stressors that occur for a graduate student include frustrations from work, conflicts with family or loved ones, pressures to succeed, changes in one's lifestyle, and self-imposed stressors. According to Gadzella (1994), the author of the Stress Inventory Survey (SIS), there are four separate measurable responses to stressors which are physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. People are unique; they come from different backgrounds, have different types of support groups, and reside in different types of environments. Because of the uniqueness of each individual, people will handle or cope with the stressors they face differently.

Gibbons, Dempster and, Moutray (2011), used the Transaction Model of Stress and Coping to examine stress, coping, and satisfaction in undergraduate nursing students. In this study the effect of eustress not distress was measured. Results of the test revealed that age, coping ability, teaching techniques, and learning ability had a direct effect on a student's ability to cope. The researchers concluded that coping and self-efficacy were reliable predictors to well-being and satisfaction with a strong correlation found between positive coping and a feeling of fulfillment. Negative coping such as drug, and alcohol use and avoidance of coping strategies were associated with lower scores on course and career satisfaction.

### **Major Variables**

The first variable for consideration in this study is stress. Gibbons (2010) demonstrated the relationship between stress, burn-out, coping and well-being among both graduate and undergraduate nursing students. Gibbons (2010) found that sources of stress such as placement, working with dying patients, conflicts with other staff, student insecurity, and student clinical competence were associated with psychological distress and lower levels of satisfaction. Gibbons (2010) hypothesized that a "significant correlation between the sources of stress, as a potential for eustress and distress, and burn-out in nursing students. Self-efficacy, control support and

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coping style will have a significant moderating and mediating effect between perceptions of stress and burn-out” (p. 1301). Findings demonstrated that factors, such as age affected outcomes. As students aged they were less likely to experience burn-out from emotional stress. This result indicates that greater life experience improves a person’s coping ability.

Stress can be positive or negative; however, the determining factor for a student is their ability to cope with said stress, and to determine how their ability to cope with the stress affects a student’s GPA. According to Maville, Kranz, and Tucker (2004), in regard to education, stress can consume students to the point of generating anxiety that may weaken their capability to think and make sound decisions and graduate nursing students have a wide range of stressors. Stress whether it is eustress or distress can affect the student’s ability to be successful and is measurable using Gadzella’s Student-Life Stress Inventory which was created in 1991.

According to Gadzella (1994), stressors cause numerous responses or reactions, and may include physiological, emotional, or behavioral problems for some individuals who are unable to cope. The reactions to stressors can also be viewed as appraisals (cognitive approach), that is, evaluating whether the stressors are relevant or irrelevant and whether someone has the strategies to cope with them or not. The literature review by Tully (2004), stipulated that to date there is an inadequate amount of research published in nursing literature relating to the stress experienced by diploma or graduate degree students in nursing. Upon investigation this finding holds to be true. There is a lack of research on the ability of advanced nursing students to succeed and because of this lack of research, it is important to examine the impact of stress on graduate nursing students and how the increases in stress levels and decrease in ability to cope impacts the students GPA. According to Goff (2011), learned resourcefulness, which promotes internal control, can be important in lessening stress and changing position of control, in order to encourage healthy behaviors, improve learning, and improve academic outcomes of coping.

The second independent variable is coping, and this directly relates to how a graduate nursing student handles stress. Research studies on coping have proven that coping strategies affect an individual’s thought processes and behaviors. A study by Ben-Zur (2009) describes that positive coping skills result in positive

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emotional states of happiness and self-efficacy, while negative emotional states are associated with increases in stress. The aim of Ben-Zur (2009) was to study coping style and outcomes. Ben-Zur (2009), states three primary hypotheses for his study on problem-focused coping, emotional/support and avoidance coping strategies. Findings by Ben-Zur (2009), demonstrate that problem-focused coping is associated with positive and negative consequences. Emotional/support coping is important because it helps provide positive outcomes, while avoidance coping results in negative outcomes. Ben-Zur (2009) concluded that regardless of the coping technique, as long as it was a positive coping strategy it would help result in a positive outcome. Ben-Zur (2009) used three groups, adolescents, college students, and people in the community. Problem-focused coping and emotional/support coping correlate with better outcomes while avoidance coping results in negative effect across all three groups regardless of age or gender.

Coping is measurable by the Ways of Coping survey produced by Folkman and Lazarus (1985). The questionnaire focuses on coping processes in a particularly stressful encounter and not on coping styles or traits. Coping itself has different approaches. These coping strategies are broken down into the steps that a person takes in order to lessen his or her stress. "Coping has two widely recognized major functions: regulating stressful emotions (emotion-focused coping) and altering the troubled person-environment relation causing the distress (problem-focused coping) (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986, p. 993). According to Tyler and Cushway (1995), the way in which people cope with common stressors is through a variety of coping strategies which include problem-solving or preparation, talking to supports or engaging in other activities, or denying that there is a problem or circumventing it by various means. This proposed study is not going to examine the steps that people take in order to cope. This proposed study will measure a student's ability to cope with the stressors and how it affects the students GPA. In a study by Jones (1988), wellness behaviors, like coping can be nurtured in the nursing student through education about expected stressors, and an augmented awareness among nursing faculty of just what stressful experiences can be altered and/or removed. Chipas et al. (2012), demonstrates a relationship between a student's academic performance and stress levels. In this study Chipas et al. (2012), believe that stress is an important part of the learning environment. Possessing

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some stress can be construed as a motivational tool while, too much stress can be detrimental to academic performance. Chipas et al. (2012) states, that “studies have suggested significant negative correlations between anxiety, academic performance, and grades” (p. 49). Chipas et al. (2012) performed a study of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA) students where they examined the effects of stress caused by environment, the appraisal and evaluation of the environment, and the reaction to the given environment. Chipas et al. (2012) concludes that high levels of stress in CRNA students are a significant factor in the learning process because it can influence the students’ outcomes as measured by GPA. According to research by Stewart, Lam, Betson, Wong, and Wong (1999), there is concern about stress in medical training; in addition to philanthropic reasons for this concern, increases of stress may have a negative effect on mastery of the academic curriculum.

### **Covariates**

In a study conducted by Maville et al. (2004), demands of education on students such as managing time, examinations, long hours of study and lack of free time contributed to a student’s inability to succeed. Students also found it difficult to juggle responsibilities related to family and work. The theme of health status was found to be a prevalent factor in academic success in a study by Symons, Cinelli, James, and Goff (2009). Like health status, age was also found to have a significant effect on GPA or student success. Studies by Watson et al. (2008); Wichianson, et al., (2009); and Gibbons, Dempster, and Moutray (2007), all demonstrated that age was a significant factor that effects stress levels for students. Family status, which includes both a significant other and number of children is another covariate found in current studies. A study by Canales-Gonzales, Kranz, Granberry, and Tanguma (2008), demonstrated that family life can cause both eustress and distress in students.

Job status or the weekly amount of hours a graduate nursing student works is the first covariate. In a study by Pena and Rels (1997), stress at work is prevalent and is an accepted part of the essential frustration of daily living. This is no different for students in this age group and is only amplified because of the students’ enrollment in a graduate nursing program. According to Ross, Niebling, and Heckert (1999), jobs outside of the university setting include their own foundations of stress, such as appraisal by superiors and striving for goals.

The constant evaluations that college students are exposed to, such as weekly tests and papers adds additional

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stress above and beyond that of work and are stressors which are not often seen by people who are not attending school. These older studies demonstrate the lack of current studies available on this topic.

Family status is the second covariate. Family plays an important role in a person's life, whether it is a significant other, or children. It is important to have a strong family bond. According to Dunkel-Schetter and Lobel (1990), poorer ability to handle stressors are found when social support or other resources are not accessible to cushion the effects of stressful life events.

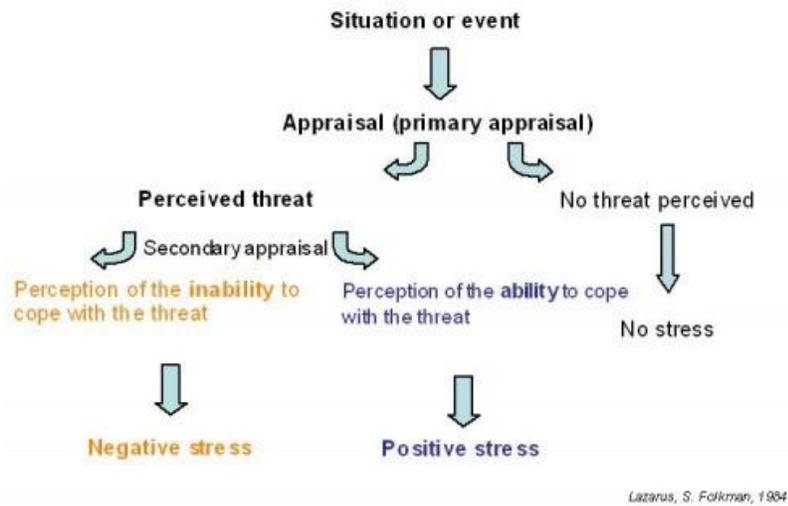
Health is the third covariate. Studies have shown that health affects a student's ability to succeed in school. According to Maville, Kranz, and Tucker (2004), students reporting higher levels of stress display more unhealthy behaviors which include poor diet, lack of exercise and disorganized sleep patterns. In a study by Kernan, Bogart, and Wheat (2011), it has long been alleged by educators that learning and health are intricately linked and an increasing body of literature clearly demonstrates the strong shared nature of the connection. Research studies have consistently demonstrated a relationship between stress and disease over the past several decades. Lazarus and Folkman (1966) were on the forefront of researchers who identified a relationship between stressful life experiences and the onset of disease. Disease in this case does not always have to be physical. According to Maville et al., (2004) and Wichianson et al., (2009), high stress levels are also associated with: depression, low self-esteem, poor adjustment to college and lack of support are more accurate.

### **Theoretical Frameworks and Conceptual Model**

According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, "what makes an event stressful is the extent to which it is perceived by the individual and as being threatening or challenging" (Lazarus, 1966, p. 17). Events perceived as difficult or challenging lead to positive coping responses such as studying harder, whereas events perceived as threatening may cause a poor coping response like dropping out, or failing a class. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping includes a set of affective, emotional, cognitive, and adaptive responses that arise from a person- environment transaction. According to Lazarus (1966), the person and the environment are inseparable: each one affects the other.

### **Figure 1**

**Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**



When an event arises the individual must evaluate the situation, (primary appraisal). Next the individual must validate whether the stressor is truly stressful and significant or not. After the decision, the secondary appraisal is initiated. The secondary appraisal or phase occurs when an assessment of one’s coping ability and options are determined. The third phase is adaptive coping, and at this time, the student enters the reaction phase. Once in the reaction phase, the student will have determined whether this is threatening stressor that initiates a negative response or a positive stressor that can be overcome.

Different stressors can affect students in dissimilar ways. Failure to cope efficiently with stressors may have detrimental professional and personal consequences. Identifying which stressors have more impact on students and the reactions the students have to these stressors will help identify how graduate nursing students cope with their stressors early, thus decreasing the negative consequences or negative outcomes.

In this proposed study, the data collected from the instruments and the analysis of data will identify stress factors and whether coping of given stressors are occurring or not. If the student believes there is no stress, they will feel no threat and can move directly into a reaction phase. In this case, the reaction phase is a 3.0 or better GPA for the student. However, if the student senses stress, the student moves into the secondary

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phase which is dependent on the type of emotion the student is feeling, and the coping abilities that are available to the student to decrease the perceived stress. If the student can cope with the stress surrounding the program, life, and work, and has determined the stress to be challenging and not threatening, the student will move into the reaction phase. In this case, the students' GPA may not be adversely affected. If the student cannot cope, and the stress is seen as a threat, the students GPA will decrease. The decrease in GPA may cause a whole new stressor. In this case the student will have to reappraise the situation he or she is in and try to identify the stressors that are impacting the GPA and modify those stressors whether they are health, family, or professional. This will require the student to acquire a new emotional coping ability and problem solving skill to more effectively decrease their stressors.

### Summary

There are numerous coping and stress questionnaires available. Two surveys' were identified to measure the variables. Measuring stress, without measuring coping would give an inaccurate data set. One person may have an abundance of stressful situations, while another person may have few. Without the ability to cope regardless of the quantity of stressful situations the students' GPA will decrease below the necessary 3.0 guidelines. Stress is a component of school, regardless of the level of education, and according to Lazarus (1966), it is postulated that stress is the consequence of an individual's observations and that they do not have the means to cope with a perceived situation from the past, present, or situations that may arise in the future.

In this study, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus uses a theoretical framework in identifying the relationship between variables. The student must determine whether the stressors that he or she is encountering such as health status, employment status and family status are either threatening or challenging and how he or she will handle the situation. Phase one, is a student participating in a graduate nursing program at a school in southern California and the stressors the student may experience. Phase two, is where the student weighs out his or her coping skills available, or learned coping skills that will help determine whether the student can handle the stresses faced or not. The third phase is the reaction phase, and in this case is the GPA

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and how it is affected. This study postulates that GPA decreases as the stress levels rise, and as the coping skills become inadequate to handle the amounts of stress.

Available studies on baccalaureate and graduate level nursing students or students from other educational fields are dated and do not reflect current nursing student populations. This lack of research findings only strengthens the need for more current and appropriate studies for the advanced practice nursing students, which will help both faculty and prospective students decide on a proper amount of classes to take at a given time.

### **Research Design & Methods**

#### **Major Aim**

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between stress, coping, and GPA in a sample size of 92 graduate nursing students at a school in southern California. This section describes the proposed project methodology, including design and the nature of the sample to be studied. This section also explains how the conceptual model will guide the proposed study, how the data is collected with consideration for both ethical issues and biases. Also included in this section are the G-power, inclusion and exclusion criteria, IRB submission, and measurement methods. Three computer-based questionnaires available through SurveyMonkey will be used to gather data related to stress levels. The three surveys are the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SSI) (Gadzella, 1994), Ways of Coping (Lazarus, 1966), and a demographic survey that will include GPA and other pertinent demographic information.

#### **Research Questions**

What is the relationship between stress, coping and success as measured by GPA among graduate nursing students?

How do stress management skills (or lack thereof) explain graduate nursing students' ability to succeed, with success measured by GPA at a school in Southern California, where covariates such as job status, family status, health status, and program enrollment status are considered?

#### **Identification of Setting**

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The setting for this research is a graduate nursing program at a school in southern California. In the site selected, the graduate student body consists of both males and females with predominantly higher numbers of females. There are also a number of different ethnicities among the graduate students with Caucasians having the highest enrollment amount at 44%.

### **Research Design**

The proposed study uses a non-experimental cross-sectional correlational design. A convenience sample of nursing students will be surveyed from a graduate school setting. A significant issue with any study is the risk of internal variability threats. However, because this is a survey study, internal variability threats are not substantial. The main design limitation for this proposed study is that cross sectional designs gather data at only one point and causation cannot be determined.

### **Research Variables**

The dependent variable is the GPA of the graduate nursing students in a school in southern California. This study contains two independent variables, which are the stress that graduate students experience, and their ability to cope with their stress levels. The first independent variable of stress will be measured by Gadzella's Student-Life Stress Inventory (SSI) (1991). The second independent variable of coping will be measured by Folkman's & Lazarus's Ways of Coping survey (1985). Four covariates will also be included in this proposed study. These covariates are job status, family status, health status, and program status.

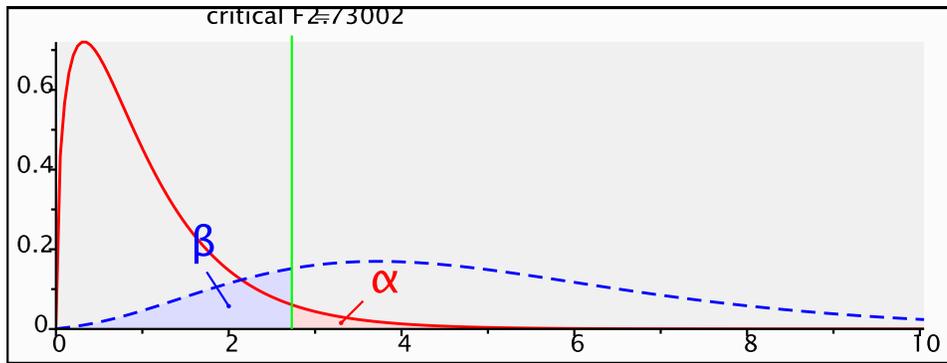
### **Population-and-Sample, and Sample Size**

The proposed target population is the graduate nursing students' from a school in southern California. The proposed sample is one of convenient non-probability sampling. According to Faul and colleagues (2007), G\*Power 3.1 a sample calculator, this proposed study needs a minimum sample size of 77 to provide a power of .80. G Power included an effect size of .15, which is a small effect size, a significance of .05, a power of .80, and five variables. Taking into consideration a loss factor of 20%, the total sample desired will be 92.

### **Figure 2**

#### **G\* Power Graph**

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Demonstration of the representativeness of the sample will be accomplished by comparing the sample to the target population from a school in southern California using chi square, t-test, or cross tabulation tests statistics. All participants of this research study will read a paragraph at the beginning that makes the students aware that when they proceed with the survey, by clicking “accept” the students’ agree to allow for the use of their information in this proposed study.

**Inclusion criteria.** The inclusion criterion will be a current enrollment status in a southern California graduate nursing program, and reading and writing English at the college level.

**Exclusion criteria.** The exclusion criteria include all other students at the same school in southern California with a different area of study from nursing, and all non-graduate level nursing students.

### Measurement Methods

In this research study, there are three separate questionnaire tools. These tools are the Ways of Coping survey (Appendix A), the Student-Life Stress Inventory or SSI (Appendix B) and a demographic survey (Appendix C) which includes GPA. The relevant variables are listed in Table 1, along with a description of the variables, their level of measurement and how to obtain the information. Reliability and validity will be calculated for each instrument and reported in the proposed study.

The Ways of Coping questionnaire will measure the variable of coping. The first survey has only yes and no questions. The current survey is a 66-item questionnaire using a Likert type scale for scoring. The total

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Cronbach alpha is .76, which is slightly lower than the .80 standard. A Cronbach alpha is important because the higher the Cronbach alpha the better the internal consistency in a questionnaire you will have. Other studies that have used the Ways of Coping survey are Stress and Coping Among Cardiovascular Nurses: a Survey in Brazil by Bianchi (2004), with a Cronbach alpha of .90, and Coping Strategies, Drinking Motives, and Stressful Life Events Among Middle Adolescents: Associations With Emotional and Behavioral Problems and With Academic Functioning by Windle and Windle (1996), has a Cronbach alpha of .84. These two studies demonstrate that despite the Cronbach alpha for the Ways of Coping survey being below the normal .80, that it is still an effective survey to use and will facilitate accurate results and demonstrates positive reliability. This survey is a public domain survey, and does not require permission from either the author or publisher.

The SSI by Gadzella (1994), measures the independent variable of stress using a 51-question survey. According to Gadzella to estimate the reliability of the inventory, several analyses were done. Cronbach alpha was computed for the total inventory and the value is .76 for all subjects. Once again this is important, because the higher the validity coefficient the more accurate your results should be. Since other researchers have used this survey and have determined a Cronbach alpha of .92 with concurrent validity this demonstrates a high reliability and makes the SSI a valid test to use. The survey is broken down into nine sections. Each section requires a separate measurement using a Likert scale. These parts are broken down into five types of stressors: frustrations, conflicts, pressures, changes, and self-imposed; as well as four reactions, which are physiological, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive.

Every possible avenue was researched to contact Dr. Gadzella in order to obtain permission to use her survey. Unfortunately, the email at the school in which she used to work for has no current contact information for her and so no permission was obtained to use her survey (Appendix D). However, an email from the publishing company explained that no permission was necessary unless the tool was actually being used. Because of this information, before completion of this proposed study permission from the publisher will be sought for use of the survey.

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The demographic survey will gather information on the variables: age in years, cohort number, GPA, family status including the number of children, job status including the number of hours of weekly employment, and health status. Some of the questions will use a Likert scale type question, while other questions, such as number of hours worked will require more specificity and will require a specific number to be entered.

### **Data Collection Process**

After obtaining university IRB approval, the director of the school will be asked for permission to conduct the study. A study flyer and email flyer with survey links will be provided to the school to distribute to the students. These surveys will only be available to open while students are on campus to protect the anonymity of the student. The survey may take up to 15 minutes for completion. An explanation of the informed consent will be found at the beginning of the e-mail survey. Instructions will state that by participating in this survey the student gives permission for documentation of all findings to be written up in the discussion of this proposed study (appendix B). In this informed consent, the graduate nursing students will be informed that they are able to skip any question they like, or are able to leave the surveys whenever they choose without repercussion. The informed consent will also explain to the students how their confidentiality will be maintained.

### **Coding and Scoring**

Each of the surveys uses a Likert scale allowing for numerically entering the information into SPSS 21. The Ways of Coping survey uses a 0-3 scoring system. With 0 being “not used,” 1 being “used somewhat,” 2 being “used quite a bit,” and 3 being “used a great deal.” The Student-Life Stress Inventory uses a scoring system of 1-3 for rating your stress, 1 equals “mild,” 2 equals “moderate,” and 3 equals “severe.” All other questions found on the Student-Life Stress Inventory are scores of 1-5, where 1 equals “never,” 2 equals “seldom,” 3 equals “occasionally,” 4 equals “often,” and 5 equals “most of the time.”

The dependent variable of GPA is a scale variable because it represents quantitative measurements with different possible responses. The covariate job uses the ordinal measurement of 1 = full time, 2 = part time, 3 = per-diem, 4 = not currently employed, and 5 = no answer. The covariate of health uses the ordinal value system.

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The information focuses on the question “do you consider yourself a healthy person”? The scale shows 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree, and 5 = refuse to answer. The final measurable covariate of marital status is also a nominal variable. The grouping will read as 1 = married, 2 = separated, 3 = divorced, 4 = no answer. There is also a second part to the question of family status, which asks for the number of living children and this is a scale value. For categorization purposes, cohort number, and age range are on the demographic survey. Gender is purposefully being left off to protect the anonymity of the students involved.

**Table 1**

**Variables Table**

No.	Variable	Type	Level of Measurement	How Obtained
1	Stress	Independent	Scale	Student - Life Stress Inventory Score
2	Coping	Independent	Scale	Ways of Coping Scale Score
3	Success	Dependent	Scale	Demographic Questionnaire Item
4	No of hours worked weekly	Covariate	Scale	Demographic Questionnaire
5	Job status	Covariate	Ordinal	Demographic Questionnaire
6	Marital status	Covariate	Nominal	Demographic Questionnaire
7	No of Children	Covariate	Scale	Demographic Questionnaire
8	Health	Covariate	Ordinal	Demographic Questionnaire
9	Age range	Demographic	Ordinal	Demographic Questionnaire
10	Cohort	Demographic	Ordinal	Demographic Questionnaire

### Data Analysis

All data will be analyzed using Pearson R with the program SPSS 21. The proposed analysis will start with descriptive statistics. The level of significance for the proposed research study is  $p \leq .05$  and the confidence interval is 95% unless otherwise specified.

All variables will be evaluated for normality and appropriate parametric or nonparametric tests will be chosen based on those assumptions. The representativeness of the sample will be described. Bivariate correlation will be evaluated for all variables in the proposed study.

Multiple linear regression will answer the research questions of what is the relationship between stress, coping, and success as measured by GPA among graduate nursing students and how do stress management

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skills (or lack thereof) explain graduate nursing students' ability to succeed, with success measured by GPA at a school in southern California, where covariates such as job status, family status, health status, and program enrollment status are considered.

The regression equation is:

$$y = B_1 \times X_1 + B_2 \times X_2 \dots B_5 \times X_5 + A$$

where Y is the dependent variable, B is the stress, X1-X5 are the other variables or covariates and A is the error term.

Use of a stepwise regression procedure will determine which of the variables are most significant to GPA and how much the variability in the GPA is accounted for by the proposed model.

### **Bias**

There are several different types of biases in a study such as this one. The first possible bias is the prejudice of the author and the author being a current graduate nursing student in an advanced nursing program. The second possible bias is measurement biases. A measurement bias involves the capacity to accurately measure the outcome of this proposed project due to a mistake made by the researcher, the sample size not obtained, or instructions not followed by the participants of the questionnaires. Despite steps that would be taken to prevent measurement biases through anonymity, this bias is a valid concern. The final possible bias for this proposed study is intervention biases. This is an observational behavioral study measuring stress levels versus GPA with coping abilities in place. Another bias that does hold consideration for this research study is attention bias. Because this study consists of three separate questionnaires totaling more than 100 questions, questions nearing the end may lose validity if the student grows tired of answering questions from all three questionnaires.

### **Ethical Considerations**

IRB approval will be obtained at the participating university prior to the beginning of this study. All information gathered via the surveys is completely anonymous to protect the privacy of the students. Only

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students who wanted actively to participate and answer the questionnaires are included. There are no rewards or incentives offered to the students for their participation. The institutional review board (IRB) on the campus of the school in southern California will receive an expedited application; demonstrating consideration of the rights and welfare of the students involved. To protect against tampering or loss of information, a zip drive will hold all survey results, and it will be kept in a cabinet in a locked office.

### **Summary**

Most students experience stress when in a graduate nursing program. The students from a school in southern California are no different. Using the Transactional Model of Stress by Robert Lazarus, this research study will examine the independent variables of stress and coping to determine how these affect GPA. This proposed study will use a quantitative cross-sectional approach with linear regression to examine the inverse relationship between stress and coping, and its outcome on GPA. According to Folkman et al. (1986), even though there has not been a solution to the problem causing distress, an outcome can be calculated if the person feels that the stresses of the encounter were achieved as expected. In essence, if the person can cope, then regardless of stress levels a person's GPA remains adequate and the student continues to be successful.

Using G Power 3.1, this proposed study requires a sample size of  $n=92$ . This is taking into consideration a 20% error factor from lack of completeness in some of the survey results. This research study uses convenient sampling because only accessible students of the graduate nursing program gained consideration. The researcher issued three separate questionnaires to the students, the SSI for stress, the Ways of Coping for coping ability, and a demographic tool for the dependent variable of GPA, and covariates. Using an ANOVA table SPSS 21 to was able to deduce all results of the linear regression, which included the dependent variable, both independent variables, and the covariates. The attention bias is the most valid bias considered, due to the lengthy process of filling the three questionnaires out, and all ethical considerations took place before submission of the expedited application to the IRB.

### **Dissemination plan**

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Once analysis and interpretation of all data is completed the findings will be disseminated at conferences and in publications. There are three potential conferences where it would be appropriate to discuss the findings and recommendations. The first of the conferences is a local conference. The first conference is the Sigma Theta Tau International Odyssey Conference in Ontario, California. The second conference is a national conference held by Cleveland Clinic Enterprise which focuses on nursing education. This seminar is located in Aurora, Ohio. The third conference is an international conference, and is located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. This conference is the biennial conference held by the Canadian Association of Advanced Practice Nurses (CAAPN) regarding continuing education for nurses. All three conferences are focused on education and are appropriate symposiums to present this important topic. Podium power point presentations or poster formats will be used to demonstrate summarization of the research findings, stress in graduate students' increase and the students' ability to cope decreases, implications for nursing education, and the impact on the students GPA in direct relation to the rise in stress levels.

Three peer-reviewed journals suited for publishing the findings of this research are Issues in Mental Health Nursing, the Journal of Nursing Education, and the Journal of Advanced Nursing. The three journals chosen focus on either the mental status of the nurse, or on the growth of the Registered Nurse in the academic setting; both of which are pertinent to this proposed study. The findings of this proposed study will also be emailed to participants if so requested.

Funding for this proposed study will be sought through small grants offered by Sigma Theta Tau (STTI) and the National Institute of Nursing Research (NIH). Each of these foundations offers different types of funding suitable for a study such as this. STTI has two separate grants that this proposed study would meet the criteria for: <http://www.nursingsociety.org/Research/Grants/Pages/STTIATI.aspx>, and [http://www.nursingsociety.org/Research/Grants/Pages/small\\_grants.aspx](http://www.nursingsociety.org/Research/Grants/Pages/small_grants.aspx). While NIH has the grant at <https://www.ninr.nih.gov/researchandfunding/dea/srb#.VTXM4dJViko> that this proposed study would be acceptable for. All three grants are for small studies, where the total cost does not exceed \$5,000.

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Appendix A

**Ways of Coping (Revised)**

By

Robert Lazarus

**1. I felt that time would make a difference – the only thing to do was to wait.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**2. Bargained or compromised to get something positive from the situation.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**3. I did something which I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**4. Tried to get the person responsible to change his or her mind.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**5. Talked to someone to find out more about the situation.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**6. Criticized or lectured myself.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**7. Tried not to burn my bridges, but leave things open somewhat.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**8. Turned to work or substitute activity to take my mind off things.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**9. Just concentrated on what I had to do next – the next step.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**10. I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**11. Hoped a miracle would happen.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**12. Went along with fate; sometimes I just have bad luck.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**13. Went on as if nothing had happened.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**14. I tried to keep my feelings to myself.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**15. Looked for the silver lining, so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**16. Slept more than usual.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**17. I expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**18. Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**19. I told myself things that helped me to feel better.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite A Bit
- Used A Great Deal

**20. I was inspired to do something creative.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**21. Tried to forget the whole thing.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**22. I got professional help.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**23. Changed or grew as a person in a good way.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**24. I waited to see what would happen before doing anything.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**25. I apologized or did something to make up.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**26. I made a plan of action and followed it.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**27. I accepted the next best thing to what I wanted.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**28. I let my feelings out somehow.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**29. Realized I brought the problem on myself.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**30. I came out of the experience better than when I went in.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**31. Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**32. Got away from it for a while; tried to rest or take a vacation.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**33. Tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs or medication, etc.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**34. Took a big chance or did something very risky.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**35. I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**36. Found new faith.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**37. Maintained my pride and kept a stiff upper lip.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**38. Rediscovered what is important in life.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**39. Changed something so things would turn out all right.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**40. Avoided being with people in general.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**41. Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**42. I asked a relative or friend I respected for advice.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**43. Kept others from knowing how bad things were.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**44. Made light of the situation; refused to get too serious about it.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**45. Talked to someone about how I was feeling.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**46. Stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**47. Took it out on other people.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**48. Drew on my past experiences; I was in a similar situation before.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**49. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**50. Refused to believe that it had happened.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**51. I made a promise to myself that things would be different next time.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**52. Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**53. Accepted it, since nothing could be done.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**54. I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**55. Wished that I could change what had happened or how I felt.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**56. I changed something about myself.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**57. I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**58. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**59. Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**60. I prayed.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**61. I prepared myself for the worst.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**62. I went over in my mind what I would say or do.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**63. I thought about how a person I admire would handle this situation and used that as a model.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**64. I tried to see things from the other person's point of view.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**65. I reminded myself how much worse things could be.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

**66. I jogged or exercised.**

- Not Used
- Used Somewhat
- Used Quite a bit
- Used A Great Deal

Appendix B

**Student-Life Stress Inventory**

Bernadette M. Gadzella, Ph.D., 1991 Copyright

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Note: Do #52 on Answer Sheet first.

Rate your overall level of stress as 1= Mild, 2= Moderate, 3= Severe

This inventory contains statements dealing with student-life stress. Read it carefully and respond to each statement as it has related or is relating to you as a student. Use the 5-letter scale, which indicates the level of your experiences with:

I. STRESSOR:

A. As a student:

**1. I have experienced frustrations due to delays in reaching my goal.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**2. I have experienced daily hassles which affected me in reaching my goals.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**3. I have experienced lack of sources (money for auto, books, etc.)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

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**4. I have experienced failures in accomplishing the goals that I set.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**5. I have not been accepted socially (became a social outcast).**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**6. I have experienced dating frustrations.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**7. I feel I was denied opportunities in spite of my qualifications.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

B. I have experienced conflicts which were:

**8. Produced by two or more desirable alternatives.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**9. Produced by two or more undesirable alternatives.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

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C. I have experienced pressures:

**10. Produced when a goal had both positive and negative alternatives.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**11. As a result of competition (on grades, work, relationships with spouse and/or friends).**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**12. Due to deadlines (papers due, payments to be made, etc.).**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**13. Due to an overload (attempting too many things at one time).**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**14. Due to interpersonal relationships (family and/or friends expectations, work responsibilities).**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

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D. I have experienced:

**15. Rapid unpleasant changes.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**16. Too many changes occurring at the same time.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**17. Changes which disrupted my life and/or goals.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

E. As a person:

**18. I like to compete and win.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**19. I like to be noticed and be loved by all.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**20. I worry a lot about everything and everybody.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**21. I have a tendency to procrastinate (put off things that have to be done).**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**22. I feel I must find a perfect solution to the problems I undertake.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**23. I worry and get anxious about taking tests.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

II. REACTIONS TO STRESSORS

F. During stressful situations, I have experienced the following:

**24. Sweating (sweaty palms, etc.)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**25. Stuttering (not being able to speak clearly)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**26. Trembling (being nervous, biting finger-nails, etc.)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**27. Rapid movements (moving quickly from place to place)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**28. Exhaustion (worn out, burned out)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**29. Irritable bowels, peptic ulcers, etc.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**30. Asthma, bronchial spasms, hyperventilation**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**31. Backaches, muscle tightness, (cramps), teeth-grinding**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**32. Hives, skin itching, allergies**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**33. Migraine headaches, hypertension, rapid heartbeat**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**34. Arthritis, overall pains**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**35. Viruses, colds, flu**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**36. Weight loss (can't eat)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**37. Weight gain (eat a lot)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

G. When under stressful situations, I have experienced:

**38. Fear, anxiety, worry**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**39. Anger**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**40. Guilt**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**41. Grief, depression**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

H. When under stressful situations, I have:

**42. Cried**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**43. Abused others (verbally and/or physically)**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**44. Abused self**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**45. Smoked excessively**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**46. Was irritable towards others**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**47. Attempted suicide**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**48. Used defense mechanism**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**49. Separated myself from others**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

I. With reference to stressful situations, I have:

**50. Thought and analyzed about how stressful the situations were.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**51. Thought and analyzed whether the strategies I used were most effective.**

- Never
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Often
- Most of the time

**52. Rate your overall level of stress**

- Mild
- Moderate
- Severe

## Appendix C

### Demographic Data Sheet

#### 1. Current age:

- 20-30yrs
- 30-40yrs
- 40-50yrs
- 50-60yrs

#### 2. Cohort:

- Cohort 1
- Cohort 2
- Cohort 3
- Cohort 4
- Cohort 5

#### 3. Current family status:

- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Living with significant other
- Decline to answer

#### 4. Number of living children

#### 5. Health Status: Do you consider yourself a healthy person?

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Decline to answer

**6. Overall GPA**

**7. Work status:**

- Working full-time
- Working part-time
- Per-diem employment
- Not working
- Decline to answer

**8. Number of hours worked each week:**

## Appendix D

### **Instrument Permission Request**

Hello Dr. Schroeder,

My name is Brett Longacre and I am a graduate student at California State University San Marcos. I am currently working on my graduate project and I wanted to use Dr. Gadzellas Student-Life Stress Inventory in my study. I called the campus the other day, and I was made aware that the school does not have any contact information on her. I am emailing you today to confirm that the school does not have any contact information on her. Any help would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Brett Longacre, RN, BSN

Reply Forward

SchroederJennifer

to me

Hello Mr. Longacre,

Unfortunately that is correct, we do not have any contact information for Dr. Gadzella. Dr.

Schroeder

Jennifer L. Schroeder, PhD

Interim Department Head

Associate Professor

Department of Psychology, Counseling & Special Education Texas

A&M University – Commerce [Jennifer.Schroeder@tamuc.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Schroeder@tamuc.edu)

Good Afternoon Brett:

If you have the chance to administer the Student-Life Stress Inventory we would allow you to use Survey Monkey. This email is NOT the permission to do so, simply to answer your question. If you are able to pursue the research, please email to this address a request to use the inventory. In your request, please give the citation to the article and include the number of subjects you will have. Also that the electronic survey would be password-protected and would be destroyed once the research was complete.

In answering our permission requests we do still respond via hardcopy. So in your request, please include a current mailing address. We wish you luck in completing your studies and we will wait to hear from you.

Regards,

**Sue Partridge**, *Editorial Desk*  
**AmSci** (*Ammons Scientific Ltd*)  
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[www.ammonsscientific.com](http://www.ammonsscientific.com)

## Appendix E

### Stress and Coping: Measuring Graduate Nursing Success

#### **Informed Consent Form**

##### **Purpose of the Study:**

This is a study in nursing that is being conducted by Brett Longacre, a graduate student at a school in southern California. The purpose of this study is to obtain the stress factors and coping ability of the graduate nursing students.

##### **What will be done:**

You will complete a survey, which will take 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about your coping ability and levels of stress. We also will ask for some demographic information (e.g., age, marital status, number of children, and education level) so that we can accurately describe the general traits of the group of students who participate in the study.

##### **Risks or discomforts:**

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study altogether. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the questionnaire, your answers will NOT be recorded.

##### **Confidentiality:**

**Your responses will be kept completely confidential.** We will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the Internet survey because it is only taken here on campus. Only the researchers will see your individual survey responses and the results of our content analysis. All information will be kept on campus on a zip drive in a locked cabinet.

##### **Decision to quit at any time:**

Your participation is voluntary; you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave this website. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. You also may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, you will be entered in the drawing. The number of questions you answer will not affect your chances of winning the gift certificate.

##### **How the findings will be used:**

The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. The results from the study will be presented in educational settings and at professional conferences, and the results might be published in a professional journal in the field of nursing.

##### **Contact information:**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Brett Longacre at [longa004@cougars.csusm](mailto:longa004@cougars.csusm). By beginning the survey, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.