COMPARING THE USE OF HUMOR TO OTHER COPING MECHANISMS IN RELATION TO MASLACH’S THEORY OF BURNOUT

By

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To my family, for the humor we share
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This study compared the use of humor to other coping mechanisms in relation to Maslach’s theory of burnout. Data were analyzed to determine statistically significant relationships among humor dimensions, other coping mechanisms, and public elementary school principals’ level of burnout.

The school principal’s job has become more challenging. The literature supported the use of humor as a means of coping. Humor can be used as a form of communication in organizations to promote cohesiveness, build consensus, deliver messages across power and authority, make situations less threatening, and promote change.

The sample for this study included a random sampling of 400 public elementary school principals from across Florida. Participants in this study used the Maslach Burnout Inventory to rate their level of burnout on the scales of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement; the Humor Styles Questionnaire to rate their self-perceived use of humor; and the COPE Inventory to rate their self-perceived use of humor compared to other coping mechanisms.
Self-Enhancing Humor is associated with having a humorous outlook on life, showing amusement to incongruities in life and using humor as a coping mechanism, and was supported by this study as an effective coping mechanism. The dimension of Affiliative Humor is associated with making funny comments and telling jokes which facilitate relationships while reducing tension among others, and was not supported by this study as an effective coping mechanism. The dimension of Aggressive Humor is related to the use of humor to show superiority over others by ridicule, put-downs, and disparagement, and was not supported by this study as an effective coping mechanism. The dimension of Self-Defeating Humor is identified with the use of humor at an individual’s own expense through excessive humorous self-ridicule, and was not supported by this study as an effective coping mechanism.

This study can aid principals in understanding the coping mechanisms they use to deal with stressors. This study can help principals realize that the use of specific types of humor, along with other coping mechanisms within the workplace, can help reduce their level of burnout.
CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION  

Burnout Research

*Burnout* is defined by Freudenberger (1980) as “someone in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward” (p. 13). Those suffering from burnout do not perceive themselves as angry, rigid, or cynical, but believe they have worked harder, given more, and are unappreciated (Freudenberger, 1977). Maslach’s (1982) research delved into the world of human services workers and the coping strategies utilized for professional identity and job behavior.

Burnout is a continuous variable, ranging from low to high degrees of feeling (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Burnout is not viewed as a dichotomous variable being either present or absent, but is exhibited somewhere within the range from low to high degrees of feeling. Maslach (1982) found three elements to describe her model of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion; (b) depersonalization; and (c) personal accomplishment. These elements coexist while being viewed individually as a step-by-step process, with emotional exhaustion being the key variable in assessing burnout (Carruth, 1997). Burnout does not occur in one dramatic episode, but is progressive, prolonged, and appears in stages (Brock & Grady 2002).

Stress was defined by Selye (1974) as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it” (p. 14). Stress occurs when demands are placed on an organism, challenging the status quo. All activities, pleasurable or otherwise, generate stress. Burnout is different from stress in that burnout is chronic and has specific behavioral indicators (Cherniss, 1980). Stress may also be chronic, but it does not necessarily produce emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment as burnout produces.
Burnout and Organizations

Seven early warning signs of burnout include: (a) feeling exhausted; (b) feeling overwhelmed; (c) feeling out of control; (d) feeling increased negativity; (e) dreading going to work; (f) experiencing declining productivity; and (g) feeling increased isolation from family, friends, and colleagues (Brock & Grady, 2002). Work overload, loss of control, and conflicting values have contributed to the increase in burnout among public school administrators (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). It is important for organizations to understand burnout because it can have a serious impact on the overall effectiveness of the organization. Burnout can also affect more than just individuals; it can impede the performance of teams and groups that are part of the organization.

Humor

Humor Research

The significance of laughter has been recognized by such luminaries as Aristotle, Kant, Darwin, Bergson, and Freud (Provine, 1996). Nilsen’s (1993) work titled Humor Scholarship listed a bibliography of 3,850 humor studies, 24 humor journals and magazines, 96 humor organizations, and 106 humor scholars with humor courses and/or humor programs. Interest in the study of humor can be tracked through the database PsycINFO, which lists 4,228 studies involving humor since 1887 (Roeckelein, 2002).

The three basic theories regarding humor include the incongruity theory, the superiority theory, and the relief theory. The incongruity theory, developed by Kant (1790), proposed the hypothesis that humor occurs as an intellectual reaction to incongruous perceptions occurring simultaneously. Kant wrote: “Something absurd must be present in whatever is to raise a hearty convulsive laugh. Laughter is an all action arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing” (p. 132). An incongruity is a mismatch between what actually happens to
what is expected to happen (Perlmutter, 2002). In order for an incongruity to be funny, a joke has to be a logical compromise, has to arouse a sense of fun, and must observe social rules (Matte, 2001). Philbrick (1989) showed resolution to be the aspect of incongruity that is necessary to distinguish humor from nonsense.

The superiority theory of humor was originated by Hobbes (1651), who proposed the hypothesis that humor results when those joking feel superior to those they are joking about.

Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to keep themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections of other men. (p. 38)

Humor might be used aggressively toward an individual with lower status, thereby stressing an individual’s own superiority (Ehrenberg, 1995). Joking patterns could be used to preserve social structure in an organization by maintaining distance between leaders and other members of the organization (Yarwood, 1995).

The relief theory was developed by Spencer (1860). He proposed the hypothesis that humor occurs from the release of energy and feelings that have been suppressed. Freud (1960)--original work published in 1905--regarded humor to be the highest of defensive processes in preventing the generation of internal unpleasure.

Although the three theory humor groups compete with one another, they supplement each other by dealing with different aspects of the process. An individual who perceives an incongruity expresses laughter through release and feels superior to the object of humor (Davis, 1993).

Two forms of coping strategies linked to humor include: (a) finding humor in a situation and using humor to reduce negative emotions, and (b) using humor to alter the situation itself.
(Lefcourt, Davidson, Prkachin, & Mills, 1997). Nilsen (1993) listed four functions of humor: (a) physiological, (b) psychological, (c) education, and (d) social. Four psychological benefits of humor were discussed by Klein (1989): (a) humor gives us power; (b) humor helps us cope with change and uncertainty; (c) humor provides perspective, and (d) humor gives us balance.

Good leaders put people at ease and maintain group morale through the use of humor (Priest & Swain, 2002). Humor is often used as a means of coping (Hay, 2001). In a study of prisoners of war (POWs) humor was important to those who were held captive in Vietnam (Henman, 2001). The POWs would risk torture to joke through the walls when another prisoner needed cheering up. People who use humor to cope help provide support to others dealing with problems and ease their burdens (Nezlek & Derks, 2001).

A good sense of humor can help relax muscles, control pain and discomfort, promote positive mood states, and help overall psychological health (Abel, 2002). Humor decreases stress hormones while increasing activity within the immune system (Wycoff, 1999), and it is an important attribute for an effective leader to possess (Bolinger, 2001).

Cousins (1979) equated laughing to internal jogging. Twenty seconds of robust laughing is similar to three minutes of hard-rowing for the heart (Rahmani, 1994). Humor acts as a buffer to the negative effects of stress (Abel, 1998). It can be used to restructure a situation so that it is less threatening. Individuals with increased senses of humor can deal with situations in a more positive way than their counterparts can deal with them (Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995).

**Humor and Organizations**

Humor is considered as serious communication in organizations (Yarwood, 1995). It can be used to promote change (Nilsen, 1993), can aid communication, and can foster long-lasting relationships (Bolinger, 2001). “Humor provides a way of sharing common frustrations which in turn can promote cohesiveness among colleagues” (Talbot & Lumden, 2000, p. 420).
Humor is a communication tool that has been hypothesized to prevent burnout (Talbot & Lumden, 2000). Humor is a useful strategy for delivering a negative or critical message across differences in power and authority (Holmes & Marra, 2002). It could be used to make orders or reprimands more palatable (Yarwood, 1995). Humor also provides a means for subordinates to challenge or criticize their superiors (Holmes, 1998).

Promoting the well-being of employees should increase organizational productivity and profitability (Keyes, Hysom, & Lupo, 2000). People who report higher levels of well-being are more productive, are less prone to using leave time, and have a higher rate of employee retention.

**School Principal Job Demands**

Because of the rapid changes in society, the school principal’s job has become more challenging and demanding (Shumate, 1999). Schools are performing more tasks than in past decades. Vollmer (2000) pointed out that the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay established schools in 1640 to teach basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic, and to develop democratic values for society. At the beginning of the 20th century, additional responsibilities began to be assigned to schools. Vollmer indicated that from 1900 to the 1990s, 61 new academic and social programs were added to the list of school responsibilities. More recently, demands for performance and demands for improved student, teacher, and administrative accountability have further heightened the demands on the principal.

Four categories of situations that administrators find stressful include: (a) administrator’s perception of his role in the school, (b) tasks and daily activities, (c) external issues, and (d) handling conflicts related to the operations of the school (Gmelch & Torelli, 1993). Ten administrative stressors identified include: (a) teacher attitudes and behavior, (b) teacher absences, (c) meetings, (d) student behavior, (e) parents and parent organizations, (f) policy and
curriculum, (g) equipment and supplies, (h) building and grounds, (i) workload, and (j) time pressures (Whan & Thomas, 1996). Brock and Grady (2002) recognized 11 other common stressors: (a) paperwork, (b) interruptions, (c) activities after hours, (d) complaints, (e) decisions affecting others, (f) evaluations, (g) terminating employees, (h) rumor control, (i) lack of support, (j) salary issues, and (k) dissatisfaction with career advancement. Administrators experience stress due to the high public visibility of their jobs, and their actions and decisions are subject to scrutiny and criticism. The five highest stress factors of public elementary school principals identified by Shumate (1999) include: (a) school activities outside normal working hours, (b) workload that was too heavy, (c) meetings taking up too much time, (d) compliance with state and federal policies, and (e) high personal expectations.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of humor compared to other coping mechanisms in relation to Maslach’s (1982) theory of burnout. The effects of burnout are serious for individuals and organizations in the education profession (Waugh & Judd, 2003). Potter (1987) listed the following six conditions as common symptoms of job burnout: (a) negative emotions, (b) interpersonal problems, (c) health problems, (d) declining performance, (e) substance abuse, and (f) feelings of meaninglessness.

**Instrumentation**

Participants in this study rated their level of burnout on the scales of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Participants in this study rated their self-perceived use of humor, as measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire. Participants in this study rated their self-perceived use of humor compared to other coping mechanisms, as measured by the COPE Inventory.
Maslach Burnout Inventory

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a 22-item measure that was initially published by Maslach and Jackson in 1981 to measure burnout based on subscales of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The MBI is recognized as the leading burnout measure (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996; Richardsen & Martinussen, 2004). High scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, along with low scores on the personal accomplishment subscale, show a high degree of burnout. Low scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, along with high scores on the personal accomplishment subscale, reflect a low degree of burnout. Average scores on all three subscales reflect an average degree of burnout.

Humor Styles Questionnaire

The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was developed to assess four dimensions of the function of humor in daily life. Two of the dimensions are considered to be positively related to well-being, while the two other dimensions are considered to be negatively related to well-being.

The dimension of Affiliative Humor is associated with making funny comments and telling jokes which facilitates relationships while reducing tension among others. The dimension of Self-Enhancing Humor is associated with having a humorous outlook on life, showing amusement to incongruities in life, and using humor as a coping mechanism. The dimension of Aggressive Humor is associated with the use of humor to show superiority over others by ridicule, put-downs, and disparagement. The dimension of Self-Defeating Humor is associated with the use of humor at an individual’s own expense through excessive, humorous self-ridicule.

During the initial development of the scale, a pool of 111 items was generated and examined in a study involving 117 psychology students at the University of Western Ontario. Participants in the study also completed the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability (MCSD) Scale.
to assess response to test items in a desirable manner. Standard deviations were reviewed resulting in the removal of one item. Item correlations were examined resulting in the removal of 16 items from the scale. Items were then compared with total correlation to the other three humor scale totals, as well as being compared with the MCSD. These comparisons were done to minimize intercorrelations among the four humor scales. Thirty-seven items were eliminated based on the analysis of item correlation. Additional items were generated resulting in a new pool of 96 items. These items were examined in a study involving two samples of participants. The first sample consisted of 165 introductory psychology students, and the second sample consisted of 93 organizational members in a senior continuing education program. Analysis from this study resulted in choosing 15 items to measure each of the four humor scales. The Cronbach alpha reliability on these scales ranged from .82 to .88. Scale refinement samples were conducted with 485 participants, with the goal of refining the 60 items to 8 items per scale. Items were retained with high corrected item-total correlation with the designated scale and weak correlation with the other three scales. Redundancy among items was reduced while retaining specific negatively keyed items. Internal consistencies of the four scales showed Cronbach alphas ranging from .77 to .81, and test-retest correlations of .80 to .85.

**COPE Inventory**

The COPE Inventory is a 60-item survey that measures 15 coping strategies. They include: (a) Active Coping, (b) Planning, (c) Suppression of Competing Activities, (d) Restraint Coping, (e) Seeking Social Support--Instrumental, (f) Seeking Social Support--Emotional, (g) Focus on and Venting of Emotions, (h) Behavioral Disengagement, (i) Mental Disengagement, (j) Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, (k) Denial, (l) Acceptance, (m) Turning to Religion, (n) Alcohol-Drug Disengagement, and (o) Humor.
Active Coping is a problem-focused strategy that involves taking direct action to remove the stressor. Planning is a problem-focused strategy that involves thinking about the stressor and how to cope with it. Suppression of Competing Activities is a problem-focused strategy that involves putting aside or avoiding other tasks to be able to deal with the stressor. Restraint Coping is a problem-focused strategy that involves holding back for a more appropriate opportunity to deal effectively with the stressor. Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons is a problem-focused strategy of seeking outside assistance to deal with the stressor. Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons is an emotion-focused strategy that involves support from others to cope with the stressor. Positive Reinterpretation and Growth is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual manages emotional distress rather than the stressor itself. Denial is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is ignored altogether. Acceptance is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is accepted. Turning to Religion is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual turns to religion as a means of coping with a stressor. Focusing on and Venting of Emotions is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on the stressor, and vents his emotions. Behavioral Disengagement is a strategy that involves an individual reducing effort to deal with the stressor. Mental Disengagement is a strategy involving the use of mental distractions and activities to distract an individual from thinking about the stressor, such as daydreaming or escaping through television. Alcohol-Drug Disengagement is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on escaping the stressor. Humor is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on relief from the stressor (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

Through the process of developing the COPE Inventory, item sets were administered to several hundred subjects, with revisions due to items with weak loadings, new items being
written, and the inventory readministered. In addition to items being changed, factor structure was revised due to items loading on specific scales. The final item set was completed by group sessions consisting of 978 undergraduates at the University of Miami. Test-retest reliability was completed by 89 students in an initial session and in a retest session eight weeks later.

The undergraduates who completed the COPE Inventory were also given personality measures to determine the differences in coping between optimism and pessimism. Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, (1989) stated:

Because optimists have favorable expectations for their future, optimism should be associated with Active Coping efforts and with making the best of whatever is encountered. Because pessimists have unfavorable expectations for the future, pessimism should be associated with focus on emotional distress and with disengagement (p. 274).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of humor compared to other coping mechanisms in relation to Maslach’s (1982) theory of burnout. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions.

**Question 1**

Do statistically significant relationships exist between humor, other coping mechanisms, and public elementary school principals’ level of burnout?

**Question 2**

Do statistically significant relationships exist between Self-Enhancing Humor, Affiliative Humor, Aggressive Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, other coping mechanisms, and public elementary school principals’ level of burnout?

**Question 3**

Do statistically significant relationships exist between humor, other coping mechanisms, and public elementary school principals’ level of burnout when compared to the following
demographic variables: gender; level of completed degree; number of students in school; number of Years as a Principal; number of Years as an Educator; English to Speakers of Other Languages/Limited English Proficiency (ESOL/LEP) status of school; ESE (Exceptional Student Education) status of school; and socioeconomic status of school as determined by the percent of students enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch program.

**Glossary**

**Acceptance** is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is accepted.

**Active Coping** is a problem-focused strategy that involves taking direct action to remove the stressor.

**Affiliative Humor** is humor expressed by making funny comments and telling jokes that facilitate relationships while reducing tension among others.

**Aggressive Humor** is the use of humor to show superiority over others by ridicule, put-downs, and disparagement.

**Alcohol-Drug Disengagement** is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on escaping the stressor.

**Behavioral Disengagement** is a strategy that involves one reducing effort to deal with the stressor.

**Coping** is contending with demands and acting to overcome them.

**Denial** is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is ignored altogether.

**Depersonalization** is the transformation from a positive to negative attitude that the subject develops toward his clients.

**Emotional Exhaustion** is the feeling of fatigue that develops as emotional energy is drained.
**Focusing on and Venting of Emotions** is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on the stressor, and vents his emotions.

**Humor** is a form of communication that is intended to result in or bring forth amusement or laughter; and/or is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on relief from the stressor.

**Incongruity** is a mismatch between what actually happens and what is expected to happen.

**Inurement** is becoming accustomed to something undesirable by frequent repetition or prolonged exposure.

**Mental Disengagement** is a strategy involving the use of mental distractions and activities to distract an individual from thinking about the stressor, such as daydreaming, or escaping through television.

**Personal Accomplishment** is the feeling the subject receives from the perception that the subject is making a difference with the clients.

**Planning** is a problem-focused strategy that involves thinking about the stressor and how to cope with it.

**Positive Reinterpretation and Growth** is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual manages emotional distress rather than the stressor itself.

**Restraint Coping** is a problem-focused strategy that involves holding back for a more appropriate opportunity to deal effectively with the stressor.

**Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons** is an emotion-focused strategy that involves support from others to cope with the stressor.

**Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons** is a problem-focused strategy of seeking outside assistance to deal with the stressor.
**Self-Defeating Humor** is the use of humor at an individual’s own expense through excessive humorous self-ridicule.

**Self-Enhancing Humor** is humor expressed by having a humorous outlook on life, showing amusement to incongruities in life, and using humor as a coping mechanism.

**Stress** is the physical, chemical, and emotional process that produces tension.

**Stressor** is any demand that causes stress.

**Suppression of Competing Activities** is a problem-focused strategy that involves putting aside or avoiding other tasks to be able to deal with the stressor.

**Turning to Religion** is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual turns to religion as a means of coping with a stressor.

**Significance of the Study**

It is important for organizations to understand burnout because its effects could seriously impact individuals and organizations (Waugh & Judd, 2003). The effects of burnout are reflected in high rates of absenteeism, turnover, and complaints about staff performance (Maslach, 1982). The ability to identify the level of burnout in administrators could provide advance warning, which would signal a developing problem. Principals experiencing high stress levels reduce productivity throughout the school and contribute to a negative work environment (Pahnos, 1990). When demands and pressure at work become overwhelming and exceed the ability to cope, an individual is likely to reach a breaking point (Pines & Kafry, 1978).

An investigation into the use of humor as a coping mechanism in the workplace is important because Talbot and Lumden (2000) showed that humor has been identified as a tool used to prevent burnout and create resiliency to stress, thus reducing its impact. Nilsen (1993) indicated that change could be promoted using humor.
This study should provide knowledge that will help principals determine the relationship between the use of humor as a coping mechanism and the level of burnout being experienced. Promoting the well-being of employees should increase organizational productivity and profitability (Keyes, Hysom, & Lupo, 2000). People who report higher levels of well-being are more productive, are less prone to using leave time, and have a higher rate of employee retention.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

This section identifies the delimitations and limitations for this study.

**Delimitations**

1. Data for this study were collected from public elementary school principals. No conclusions from this study were generalized to other educational administrators.

2. For the purposes of this study, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were defined using the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

3. For the purposes of this study, the self-perceived use of humor was defined using the Humor Styles Questionnaire and the COPE Inventory.

4. For the purposes of this study, the self-perceived use of other coping mechanisms was defined using the COPE Inventory.

5. This study was limited to data gathered during the 2006-2007 school year. No conclusions from this study were generalized to other time periods.

6. Data for this study were gathered using random sampling of public elementary school principals in Florida. No results from this study were generalized to other states.

7. Data for this study were gathered using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Humor Styles Questionnaire, and the COPE Inventory.

**Limitations**

1. This study was conducted with the assumption that public elementary school principals had a common understanding of the terminology used in the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Humor Styles Questionnaire, and the COPE Inventory.

2. This study was conducted with the assumption that public elementary school principals accurately responded on the self-rating of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.
3. This study was conducted with the assumption that public elementary school principals accurately responded on the self-perceived use of humor as a coping mechanism on the Humor Styles Questionnaire and the COPE Inventory.

4. This study was conducted with the assumption that public elementary school principals accurately responded on the self-perceived use of coping mechanisms on the COPE Inventory.
Burnout

Burnout Research

The word burnout was first defined by Freudenberger (1980). He indicated that “a burnout is someone in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward” (p. 13). Those suffering from burnout do not perceive themselves as angry or cynical, but believe they work harder than others and that they are unappreciated. Freudenberger (1980) added, “Burnout is a chronic condition, something a person has been working toward over a period of weeks, months, even years” (p. 13). Burnout seldom is acute. It is the consequence of a work situation where an idealistic individual feels he is batting his head against the wall day after day, hoping to have an impact on his associates. Burnout is inevitable when the individual persists in trying to reach an expectation level that is dramatically opposed to reality.

“Job burnout is an impairment of motivation to work” (Potter, 1987, p. 2). Burnout begins with warning signals such as frustration, emotional outbursts, health problems, and the use of drugs or alcohol. The helping professions, including social workers, nurses, teachers, and police officers, are prone to burnout. Human service work began to emerge for the first time in the 1920’s. At that time, no governmental policies existed to regulate services. During the Depression in the early 1930s and into the late 1930s, government projects and programs increased dramatically to help people in need. These programs continued well into the post-World War II era where governmental influence and interference set the stage for burnout to occur through institutional constraints and unrealistic expectations (Farber, 1983). Complaints that are common among all human service professionals include: long hours, isolation, lack of
independence, client needs, public perception, lack of resources, insufficient criteria for measuring accomplishments, productivity demands, lack of training, administrative interference, and apathy. Primary stressors on caregivers include: activities of daily living; cognitive functioning of the dependent; and behaviors of the dependent that pose a threat to safety. When the caregiver begins to succumb to the primary stressors, secondary stressors then become prevalent. Secondary stressors include: family roles; occupational roles; social activities; and loss of self. Coping strategies may be protective because they alter an individual’s response to stressors, and they help develop resiliency to later stressors (Stevens & Higgins, 2002). Coping mechanisms are used to mediate and buffer the effects of the stress that is accumulating. “Since different kinds of coping are appropriate for different kinds of stressors, no single form of coping may be the most useful as a mediator of stressful outcomes” (McCrae, 1984, p. 927).

Personality traits may influence the appraisal of situations as being stressful or not being stressful. Some caregivers may be more likely to perceive a situation as stressful. Two specific personality traits linked to positive health outcomes are optimism and mastery. On the other hand, caregivers who have high levels of anger report high levels of burden. Personal resources that are drawn upon include physical health, personality variables, and coping strategies (Katz, 2005). Social workers use a variety of practical and psychological means to help people who have to deal with reduced autonomy and reduced resources. Risk factors associated with burnout among social workers include: lack of challenge; low work autonomy; difficulty of providing services; and low professional self-esteem (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002).

Potter (1987) also reported other professions prone to burnout which require or involve: rigorous attention; life or death decisions; demanding time schedules; detailed work; and social criticism. In a study of medical oncologists, with a response of 660 out of 1,000, 56% of the
respondents indicated they were burned out. Failure, frustration, and depression were suffered by more than half of the respondents. One in five respondents said he lost interest, 18% indicated they were totally bored, and 85% stated their personal and social life were being affected. When given options to help reduce burnout, 70% of the respondents chose time away from the office instead of the choices of administration, teaching, clinical research, research, and treating nonmalignant disease. Caregiver burnout can impair the quality of care given to the patient. A proactive approach to train caregivers in reasonable expectations for patient care can be very productive in providing them with the means to cope with the stressors associated with caring for critically ill patients (Penson, Dignan, Canellos, Picard, & Lynch, 2000).

High stress levels among psychiatrists may impact their effectiveness with clients. In order to avoid psychological problems, psychiatrists need coping strategies to deal with the personal stresses that occur after a situation involving patient suicide (Fothergill, Edwards, & Burnard, 2004).

Journalism is a stressful profession with a combination of competition, deadlines, long hours, and low pay. What makes this kind of stress unhealthy is that journalism carries responsibility, but with a lack of personal control. Those journalists most at-risk to burnout are usually the best and brightest at what they do. They are dedicated and ambitious, and they work the hardest while facing frustration. They do not back off in the face of adversity, but instead double their efforts to succeed (Kalter, 1999).

Cherniss (1980) stated, “Burnout refers to a process in which a professional’s attitudes and behavior change in negative ways in response to job strain” (p. 5). Many new public professionals lose their idealism within the first year of their careers. They become less trusting, less sympathetic toward clients, and less committed to their jobs. Cherniss indicated that those
who worked in jobs that were demanding, frustrating, or boring tended to show more negative change than those who worked in jobs that were interesting, supportive, and stimulating.

Maslach’s (1982) research focused on coping strategies that service workers use for professional identity and job behavior. Burnout is not a new phenomenon, according to Maslach (1982). In the mid-1970s, concern regarding burnout focused on employees working in service and caregiving occupations (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). These authors reported that initial articles focused on the clinical and social psychological perspectives. The clinical articles focused on the symptoms of burnout and mental health. The social articles focused on the relationship between the provider and recipient of the service occupations. Work on burnout shifted to empirical research in the 1980s (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The research was quantitative, making use of questionnaires and surveys. The focus shifted to the assessment of burnout and several measures were developed.

The increase of professionalism, bureaucratization, and isolation leads to increased pressures on social service providers (Cherniss, 1980). These are conditions that were experienced differently in past generations. We are living in times of rapid change (Freudenberger, 1980). The impact of change has given us the dilemma of dealing with two conflicting cultures: (a) the culture of the past, which was more puritanical; and (b) the culture of the present, which is more hedonistic. This rapid change has put pressure on trying to determine our standards. Credit debt is increasing, social restraints and taboos have changed, sexual behaviors have changed, divorce has become common, and technology has given us new ways to perform tasks. Education has moved us to higher levels while at the same time creating discontent with simpler lifestyles. As we place more demands on ourselves to keep up with society’s changes, we exhaust our energy.
Not all personality types are susceptible to burnout, according to Freudenberger (1980), who stated that “it would be virtually impossible for the underachiever to get into that state” (p. 20). Burnout is limited to dynamic, charismatic, goal-oriented idealists who want everything to be ideal. An individual with low self-esteem is more likely to be overwhelmed by emotional pressures experienced among administrators (Brock & Grady, 2002). The greatest victims of burnout are those with high expectations and a sense of purpose. Professionals in medicine, religion, law, education, law enforcement, and social work give of themselves to those who are often physically and emotionally ill. These professionals seldom receive gratitude or recognition from those they help, which can lead to burnout (Helliwell, 1981).

Burnout ranges from low to high degrees of feeling as a continuous variable (Maslach et al., 1996). Burnout is not viewed as being present or absent, but exists within the range of low to high degrees of feeling. Maslach’s (1982) model of burnout uses three elements: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) personal accomplishment. These elements coexist although all three can be viewed individually in a step-by-step process (Carruth, 1997). Carruth believed emotional exhaustion to be the key variable in assessing burnout.

Burnout occurs in stages and is progressive and prolonged (Brock & Grady, 2002). Burnout does not occur spontaneously in one dramatic episode. Physical symptoms common to burnout are illness, weight problems, blood pressure changes, stomach problems, and intestinal distress. Burnout is a chronic condition that can occur over a period of weeks, months, and even years (Freudenberger, 1980). Exhaustion is the first stage of burnout and denial the second stage of burnout. Denial drains an individual’s energy and then burnout becomes self-generating.

Selye (1974), a medical doctor and researcher, defined stress as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it” (p. 14). Selye (1976) noted the term stress was used in
engineering “to denote the effects of a force acting against a resistance” (p. 45). Selye researched in the area of biology to determine nonspecific response to noxious agents. He called the response general adaptation syndrome, involving three stages: (a) the alarm reaction, (b) the stage of resistance, and (c) the stage of exhaustion.

I called this syndrome general, because it is produced only by agents which have a general effect upon large portions of the body. I called it adaptive because it stimulates defense and thereby helps in the acquisition and maintenance of a stage of inurement. I called it a syndrome because its individual manifestations are coordinated and even partly dependent upon each other. (p. 38)

Selye was the first to author a paper on the stress syndrome. The article, published on July 4, 1936, in the British journal Nature, was titled A Syndrome Produced by Diverse Nocuous Agents. All activities generate stress whether or not the activities are pleasurable. When demands are placed on an organism, stress occurs. There are differences between stress and burnout (Cherniss, 1980). Burnout is chronic and has specific behavioral indicators. Stress is not chronic— but it can be. Stress does not necessarily produce increased emotional exhaustion, increased depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment as burnout produces.

Stress consists of three processes: primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and coping (Lazarus, 1966). Primary appraisal involves the perception of a threat. Secondary appraisal involves the formulation of a potential response to the threat. Coping puts the formulated response into action. The availability of an adequate coping response may cause an individual to reassess the actual threat as being less than first perceived. The cognitive appraisal process is an evaluative process through which an individual views encounters with the environment as perhaps being relevant to his well-being. In primary appraisal, the individual evaluates the encounter for potential benefits or detriments. In secondary appraisal, the individual evaluates what can be done to overcome or prevent harm or improve benefits. Coping is the individual’s
efforts to manage demands, whether or not the efforts are successful (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986, p. 993).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) discussed two types of coping: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is used when an individual feels that something can be done to solve the problem. Emotion-focused coping is used when a situation cannot be changed.

Five categories for sources of stress include: (a) survival, (b) internally generated stress, (c) environmental stress, (d) job stress, and (e) overwork (Brock & Grady, 2002). It is important to understand the following characteristics regarding staff stress: organizational characteristics, resident characteristics, and staff characteristics (Mitchell & Hastings, 2001). Warning signs of stress-related problems include: feeling overwhelmed, feeling out of control, being worried, and being indecisive. Personal circumstances can contribute to feelings of work-related stress. Stress can motivate performance, but too much stress can cause burnout. Seven early warning signs of burnout include: (a) feeling exhausted; (b) feeling overwhelmed; (c) feeling out of control; (d) feeling increased negativity; (e) dreading going to work; (f) experiencing declining productivity; and (g) feeling increased isolation from family, friends, and colleagues (Brock & Grady, 2002).

**Burnout and Organizations**

It is important for organizations to understand burnout because burnout can have a serious impact on the overall effectiveness of the organization (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Burnout affects more than just individuals; it can hinder group and team performance within an organization. Examining burnout and factors contributing to burnout can lead to determining strategies to minimize the potential for worker burnout (Zellmer, 2003). Understanding and preventing burnout are important to organizations because turnover and decreased worker
effectiveness from burnout can put a drain on limited resources. This drain is especially true today with so much demand for health and human services workers.

Palmer (1983) examined paramedics’ strategies for dealing with death and dying, and found their coping mechanisms to be some of the same mechanisms used by doctors and nurses. The principal coping aids that were observed included: (a) desensitizing oneself from the visual discomfort of physical trauma by turning the trauma into signs to be analyzed; (b) using humor to provide relief from working under extreme conditions and situations; (c) using technical language in referring to death; (d) viewing the patient as a machine to be treated, thereby removing emotional or affectionate attachments to the patient; (e) rationalizing that the patient is better off dead or that the patient had a zero chance of surviving without help from the emergency medical services.

Work overload, loss of control, and conflicting values have contributed to the increase in burnout among public school administrators (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Increasing demands are being confronted without end by school principals (Thomas & Ayres, 1998). Tuuli & Karisalmi (1999) showed that conflicts in the workplace, job demands, and monotony on the job are all related to burnout, and they also stated that psychological job demands and conflicts have the strongest relationship.

Leiter and Maslach (2001) developed a focus on six areas of work life: (a) workload, (b) control, (c) reward, (d) community, (e) fairness, and (f) values. Engagement with work is promoted when an individual matches any of these areas of work life. Building job engagement may be more effective than focusing on reducing burnout. Job engagement consists of energy, involvement, and sense of efficacy. Job engagement is a state of fulfillment in employees that is
characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Maslach, 2003). When an individual has a mismatch in any of these areas of worklife, burnout is promoted.

Technology is bringing an increasing intensity to work. As the pace of work intensifies, the balance of control between individuals and the organization is strained. Work infringes on the individual’s ability to enjoy personal rewards. Greater connectivity reduces the time available to spend with family and friends. As the pace of work increases, the opportunity to be treated unfairly increases. With the intensification of work, individuals may become unaligned with the values of their organization, and then they may question their employment relationship. Employees were more likely to leave their positions if their feelings of burnout increased (Norton, 2004). As an individual’s values are strained, the individual experiences an alteration in his overall perception of the organization. Limits need to be considered when dealing with greater demands. If their limits are exceeded on a regular basis, exhaustion becomes a serious problem (Leiter & Maslach, 1999). Physical exhaustion can make an employee prone to accidents and vulnerable to illness. Emotional exhaustion brings along feelings of depression and hopelessness. Mental exhaustion leads to negative attitudes that can affect all aspects of an individual’s life (Weisberg & Sagie, 1999).

When leaders occupy a position of authority but are not serving legitimately, they are likely to be controlling and territorial, and they may generate negative feelings among employees (Keyes, Hysom, & Lupo, 2000). On the contrary, managers authorized with legitimacy are more open to innovation and suggestions from employees, and they are able to exert influence without negative consequences. These authors described leadership legitimacy as leading with support from individuals, peers, and subordinates. Legitimate leaders delegate authority, provide autonomy to subordinates, and share information. Effective leaders promote and sustain their
employees’ well-being and mental health, thereby creating sustainable businesses that are constructive, productive, and profitable. An employee’s sense of personal growth, purpose in life, and sense of social contribution should be bolstered by organizational outcomes, provided the employee’s ideas and effort are recognized as a factor in the company’s success.

It is important for organizations to understand burnout because its effects could seriously impact individuals and organizations (Waugh & Judd, 2003). The effects of burnout are reflected in high rates of absenteeism, turnover, and complaints about staff performance (Maslach, 1982). The ability to identify the level of burnout in administrators could provide advance warning, which would signal a developing problem. Principals experiencing high stress levels reduce productivity throughout the school and contribute to a negative work environment (Pahnos, 1990). When demands and pressure at work become overwhelming and exceed the ability to cope, an individual is likely to reach a breaking point (Pines & Kafry, 1978).

The best way to beat burnout is to take action to prevent it from appearing. “Burnout can be dealt with more effectively in its formative stages than when it is full-blown” (Maslach, 1982, p. 132). Other people, such as friends and colleagues, are the best early warning system for burnout. They may be able to help the principals recognize what is happening and do something about it. Three major reasons that qualified applicants are not applying for principal positions are low pay, job stress, and long hours (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003).

The greatest protection against burnout is self-awareness (Freudenberger, 1980): “People who burn out seldom take time for that quality of aloneness” (p. 125). When people are alone, they seldom think about their feelings and shut themselves out of their own minds. He added, “Just as other-directedness and distance are the allies of burnout, so closeness and inner-directedness are its foes” (p. 123). Energy, involvement, and efficacy are the direct
opposites of the three dimensions of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). In a study to predict burnout among HIV-AIDS and oncology healthcare workers, Planning and Restraint Coping strategies were found to be protective factors from burnout and predictive factors for personal accomplishment (Dorz, Novara, Sica, & Sanavio, 2003). In a study involving clinical research coordinators, those with high levels of burnout reported dissatisfaction with their profession. Personality characteristics were found to be associated with burnout. Those clinical research coordinators who demonstrated the characteristics of high endurance and nurturance traits seemed to be protected from burnout. The data collected in this study showed burnout levels for clinical research coordinators to be comparable to other healthcare professionals (Gwede, Johnson, Roberts, & Cantor, 2005).

Some preventative measures to prevent burnout include: make sure to include some variation in your job; limit the number of hours you work; take time off when you feel you need it; share your experiences with other members of your organization; get involved in a learning experience, such as a workshop, to recharge your batteries; delegate some of the workload to others for help; and get plenty of exercise (Freudenberger, 1974). Unaddressed burnout will affect nonprofessional areas of an individual’s life (Gold, 2001).

Humor

Humor Research

Humor was defined by Martin (1996) as “the frequency with which a person smiles, laughs, and otherwise displays mirth in a wide variety of life situations” (p. 255). The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed. (2000) (http://www.bartleby.com/61/29/H0322900.html), defined humor as:

The quality that makes something laughable or amusing; Funniness; That which is intended to induce laughter or amusement; The ability to perceive, enjoy, or express what is amusing, comical, incongruous, or absurd; One of the four fluids of the body, blood,
phlegm, choler, and black bile, whose relative proportions were thought in ancient and medieval physiology to determine a person's disposition and general health.

Humor was described as “a form of communication in which a complex mental stimulus illuminates or amuses, or elicits the reflex of laughter” (Roekelein, 2002, p. 17). The term humor could be used to refer to a stimulus, a mental process, or a response (Martin, 2001). Four conditions associated with the full support of humor include: (a) recognizing the humor, (b) understanding the humor, (c) appreciating the humor, and (d) agreeing with the humor’s message (Hay, 2001).

Aristotle, Kant, Darwin, Bergson, and Freud recognized the significance of laughter (Provine, 1996). Nilsen’s (1993) work titled Humor Scholarship listed a bibliography of 3,850 humor studies, 24 humor journals and magazines, 96 humor organizations, and 106 humor scholars with humor courses and/or humor programs. Roekelein (2002) commented about this interest in the study of humor:

Overall interest in the study of humor in the discipline of psychology in the last 114 years from 1887 through 2000 may be assessed quantitatively, decade by decade, by consulting the computer database PsycINFO. This source indicates that three psychological studies on humor were conducted in 1887-1900; three studies conducted in 1901-1910; four studies in 1911-1920; 45 studies in 1921-1930; 101 studies in 1931-1940; 93 studies in 1941-1950; 105 studies in 1951-1960; 171 studies in 1961-1970; 464 studies in 1971-1980; 945 studies in 1981-1990; and 1,156 studies in 1991-2000. (p. 3)

“More research in humor physiology has been conducted during the final quarter of the 20th century than during any previous recorded period in the human adventure” (Fry, 2002, p. 305). Until the early 1990s, the only procedures available to study the central nervous system were to examine the brain in ablation cases (traumatic loss of removal of central nervous system tissue), direct stimulation during operations where the skull was open, and electroencephalography (EEG). But some limitations occur in these procedures. The opportunity for ablation case studies is very limited. Open-skull operations give information on
the site in the brain that is being stimulated, but no information is revealed about the location, configuration and continuity of the network involved in humor behavior. The EEG uses multiple electrodes that receive and transmit electrochemical signals from the adjacent central nervous system (CNS) tissues. The EEG is limited in not having differentiation in the breadth, depth or relative strengths of the composite messages regarding the strengths of the signals from each contributing electrode.

Better methods are now available to study tissue function. One of these methods involves bombarding living tissue with radio waves. Radiomagnetic signals are received and converted to three-dimensional images. This method is called Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). An enhancement of this method is called the functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). This method can be used as a rapid scanner to view activity in different areas of the brain. Another method of studying central nervous system activity is through Positron Emission Tomography (PET) in which a small amount of radioactive substance is injected into the subject. The radioactive substance combines with glucose molecules, which are a primary food for neuron cells. Neurons that are active will consume more of the glucose. Through continuous scanning, neurons will present themselves through the signals sent from the radioactive substance that is combined with the glucose. Another method is Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS). Magnetic rays are finely focused on specific areas of the brain, and the stimulation provided by the magnetic rays temporarily renders the tissue inactive. By isolating specific tissue from activity, temporary ablation is provided for study.

The traditional procedures of ablation, direct stimulation, and EEGs led to the conclusion that a humor center exists in the brain. The newer technologies are changing that conclusion, showing that the brain is comprised of a network architecture. In a functional magnetic
resonance imaging (fMRI) study, it was found that separate and different networks in the brain are activated according to the type of humor to which a subject is exposed (Goel & Dolan, 2001). The fMRI shows images of the brain that register blood flow to functioning areas. Humor involving semantic juxtaposition, or incongruity, showed up on the fMRI throughout a bilateral temporal lobe network. But humor involving puns, or phonological juxtaposition, showed up on the fMRI in the left hemisphere network centered around speech production regions.

Dillon, Minchoff, and Baker (1985) examined subjects’ perception of their use of humor as a coping device. Salivary immunoglobulin A (IgA), which appears to defend against viral infection of the upper respiratory tract, “can vary as a function of both personality and situational variables” (p. 14). In their study, they measured immunoglobulin A (IgA) concentrations in saliva and changes in IgA concentrations after viewing humorous videotapes and control videotapes. Subjects were randomly assigned to view a humorous videotape, Richard Pryor Live, and a control tape, The Thin Edge: Anxiety. Each subject viewed each tape for 30 minutes with a 10-minute intermission between viewings. Before and after viewing each video, subjects were asked to salivate into a test tube. After the viewings, subjects were asked to complete a humor scale. Scores on the scale were correlated with IgA concentrations before and after viewing each videotape. The average concentration of IgA after viewing the humorous videotape was significantly greater than before viewing; the concentration of IgA did not change significantly with the viewing of the control videotape. The results were positively related and suggested that salivary IgA concentrations are directly related to subjects’ perception of their use of humor as a coping device.

The three recognized theories regarding humor include the incongruity theory, the superiority theory, and the relief theory. The incongruity theory was developed by Kant (1790).
He proposed that humor occurs as a reaction to incongruous perceptions occurring simultaneously. Kant wrote: “Something absurd must be present in whatever is to raise a hearty convulsive laugh. Laughter is an all action arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing” (p. 132). An incongruity is a mismatch between what actually happens to what is expected to happen (Perlmutter, 2002). In order for an incongruity to be funny, a joke has to be a logical compromise, has to arouse a sense of fun, and has to observe social rules (Matte, 2001).

In order to distinguish humor from nonsense, resolution is the aspect that needs to be present (Philbrick, 1989). “The philosophical concept of incongruity, the simultaneous occurrence of normally incompatible elements, is retained as a central feature of psychological humor theory” (Staley & Derks, 1995, p. 97). “Incongruity is emphasized as the primary concept in cognitive views of humor because the particular presentation of incongruity constitutes the structure of the humorous stimulus” (p. 98). Beyond comprehension of the incongruity, cognitive, emotional, and social factors will determine whether or not the incongruity is found to be amusing.

Incongruity can be found in different forms, such as in a speaker’s presentation, mannerisms, emphasis, and facial expressions.

Not only can the humor response be different for each hearer, but it can even differ for a given hearer, depending on how he or she chooses to interpret the script and in particular how much one’s critical faculties are allowed to come into play. (Perlmutter, 2002, p. 156)

Determining specific sayings that generate incongruities is based on the logic of semantics and pragmatics (Cave, 2005). Some forms of humor use paradox to create an incongruity. Cave added, “Moore’s conjunction” is a method used to create incongruity. Moore’s conjunction uses the form “p, but I don’t believe that p” (p. 136). Another method used in creating incongruity is the use of a Machiavelli Puzzle. Creating incongruity with this method is dependent upon how
the deliverer of the message thinks the message will be taken by the hearer, either as truth or as falsehood. Cave stated that the incongruity is built upon “what he thinks we think he thinks we think (and so on)” (p. 140). Another method used to create incongruity is the way the joke is told or presented. The delivery of the message can make the difference between whether or not the incongruity is perceived.

The superiority theory of humor was originated by Hobbes (1651). He proposed the hypothesis that humor results when those joking feel superior to those they are joking about.

Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to keep themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections of other men. (p. 38)

The superiority theory was further developed by Bergson (1921) who stated that man is defined as “an animal which laughs” (p. 3). He indicated that a deformity that a normally built individual could successfully imitate may become comic. Bergson added, “Certain deformities undoubtedly possess over others the sorry privilege of causing some persons to laugh” (p. 23).

One may stress superiority by using humor aggressively toward an individual with lower status (Ehrenberg, 1995). Humor can be used to belittle oneself in order to protect oneself from the anticipation of being belittled by others (Hay, 2001). Social structure in an organization could be preserved using joking patterns to maintain distance between leaders and other members of the organization (Yarwood, 1995). “Laughter is an expression of a person’s feelings of superiority over other people” (Morreall, 1983, p. 4). Aristotle agreed with Plato that laughter is a form of derision.

The relief theory of humor was developed by Spencer (1860). The hypothesis of the relief theory is that humor occurs from the release of energy and feelings that have been suppressed.
In humor, joking, and laughter, the energy—normally used for emotion, thinking, and suppression of forbidden feelings—is saved and builds up and is then released. Humor was regarded to be the highest of defensive processes to prevent the generation of internal discomfort (Freud, 1960, original work published in 1905).

A joke has quite outstandingly the characteristic of being a notion that has occurred to us “involuntarily.” What happens is not that we know a moment beforehand what joke we are going to make, and that all it then needs is to be clothed in words. We have an indefinable feeling, rather, which I can best compare with an “absence” a sudden release of intellectual tension, and then all at once the joke is there—as a rule ready clothed in words. (p. 167)

Although the three theory humor groups compete with one another, they supplement each other by dealing with different aspects of the process (Davis, 1993). An individual who perceives an incongruity expresses laughter through release and feels superior to the object of humor.

Jones (2006) stated, “The theory of humour needs more than an account of the content of finding funny. We need to know what is accomplished when we find something funny, what function it serves, and what role it plays in our lives” (p. 130). Jones noted that the superiority theory and relief theory are not rivals regarding the content of humor. They are instead complements to the incongruity theory by describing the tendencies of behavior in what happens when we find an incongruity to be funny. Jones showed that as a result of this incongruity, either theory “might fit into a comprehensive theory of humor by providing us with a functional role for the state of finding funny” (p. 130).

Two forms of coping strategies linked to humor were proposed by Lefcourt, Davidson, Prkachin, & Mills, (1997). The first form involves finding humor in a situation and using humor to reduce negative emotions. The second form includes the use of humor to alter the situation itself. The four functions of humor include: (a) physiological, (b) psychological, (c) education, and (d) social (Nilsen, 1993). Physiological functions include exhilaration, relaxation, and
healing. Psychological functions contain relief, ego defense, coping, and gaining status. Educational functions consist of alertness, arguing and persuading, teaching effectively, and long-term memory learning. Social functions include: bonding with people who are like us, promoting social stability, and promoting social change. The four psychological benefits of humor include: (a) humor gives us power, (b) humor helps us cope with change and uncertainty, (c) humor provides perspective, and (d) humor gives us balance (Klein, 1989).

Good leaders use humor to put people at ease and maintain group morale (Priest & Swain, 2002). Humor is often used as a means of coping (Hay, 2001). Henman (2001) conducted a study of 566 prisoners of war (POW) who were held captive in Vietnam. He discovered the importance of humor among these POWs--they would risk torture to joke through the walls when another prisoner needed cheering up. People who use humor to cope help ease burdens experienced by others, and humor also provides support to deal with problems (Nezlek & Derks, 2001).

In a study on humor and depression, Deaner and McConatha (1993) stated:

A person who was more emotionally stable tended to laugh and smile more, use humor more as a coping mechanism, be more able to notice humor in the environment, and report more enjoyment of humor. Emotional stability appears to be strongly related to the humor construct. (p. 762)

Individuals whose scores on measures of sense of humor were higher tended to be more extroverted and emotionally stable (Cann & Calhoun, 2001). “Humor seemed to carry special weight with regard to social competence, which in turn we would expect to be positively associated with resilience in stressful social situations” (Lefcourt, 2001, p. 13).

Woods (1983) stated, “Above all, humor is power. It protects and invigorates the self in the constant interplay between determined and determining forces. It provides strength that enables the individual to adapt to situations, and on occasions to change them” (p. 112).
Stimulation was found to be the general physiological effect of mirthful laughter on the respiratory, muscular, cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune systems (Fry, 2002). A good sense of humor can help relax muscles, can control pain and discomfort, can promote positive mood states, and can aid overall psychological health (Abel, 2002). Humor can decrease stress hormones while increasing activity within the immune system (Wycoff, 1999). Berlyne (1972) wrote, “Nevertheless, laughter seems clearly to be capable of a cathartic effect. People often feel better and more relaxed after it” (p. 52). Martin and Lefcourt (1983) found that individuals who laugh and smile in a wide variety of situations, who place a high value on humor, and who use humor to cope with stress show less pronounced negative effects of stress than those who do not value or use humor.

It is important for an effective leader to possess the attribute of humor (Bolinger, 2001). Bolinger stated, “Not only is laughter good for the body and mind but the use of humor resulting in laughter aids in effective communication, facilitates the building of long-lasting, trusting, relationships, and helps foster creativity” (p. 1). Twenty seconds of robust laughing is similar to three minutes of hard rowing for the heart (Rahmani, 1994). Kline (1907) stated, “No stimulus, perhaps, more mercifully and effectually breaks the surface tension of consciousness, thereby conditioning it for a new forward movement, than humor” (p. 421).

Humor acts as a buffer to the negative effects of stress (Abel, 1998). Humor can be used to make a situation less threatening by restructuring the situation. Situations can be handled in a more positive way by those with increased senses of humor when compared to their counterparts who possess decreased senses of humor (Kuiper et al., 1995).

Cousins (1979) equated laughing to internal jogging. Cousins was diagnosed in 1964 with ankylosing spondylitis, a disorder that affects the connective tissue in the body. Cousins wrote
that “the will to live is not a theoretical abstraction, but a physiologic reality with therapeutic characteristics” (p. 44). His treatment consisted of massive doses of ascorbic acid, or vitamin C, and a daily regimen of humor films. At the time, three grams of vitamin C given by intramuscular injection were considered a high dose. Cousins’s treatment consisted of a four-hour intravenous drip initially started with 10 grams of vitamin C, then gradually moved up to 25 grams of vitamin C. The humor portion of his treatment consisted of watching Candid Camera and Marx Brothers movies. Cousins indicated that 10 minutes of genuine laughter would act as an anesthetic, and would give him two hours of pain-free sleep. When the effect would wear off, he would watch the films again, providing more laughter, which led to more pain-free sleep intervals. Cousins believed the humor treatment to be an important factor as part of the healing process.

Humor and Organizations

Humor can be used to promote change (Nilsen, 1993). Humor is considered as serious communication in organizations (Yarwood, 1995). Yarwood stated “The path taken by a humorous story or insight may even define the parameters of social interaction within an organization” (p. 81). Humor aids communication and fosters long-lasting relationships (Bolinger, 2001). Humor can promote cohesiveness among colleagues by providing a way of sharing common frustrations (Talbot & Lumden, 2000). Good leaders put people at ease through the use of good-natured humor (Priest & Swain, 2002). These kinds of leaders use humor to maintain group morale, are able to see the point of jokes, and are funny instead of lacking in humor.

The use of humor by organizational leaders is positively related to performance by individuals and units in the organization (Avolio, Howell, & Sosik, 1999). Humor can be used for consensus-building and control (Hay, 2001) and “reduce the face threat of a directive, a
challenge or a criticism” (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 66). Humor expands organizational as well as personal energy, and it is a valuable management tool (Rahmani, 1994).

Humor can be used for delivering a negative or critical message across power and authority differences (Holmes & Marra, 2002). Humor can make orders or reprimands more palatable (Yarwood, 1995). Subordinates can use humor to challenge or criticize their superiors (Holmes, 1998).

Humor which reinforces the status quo is termed reinforcing humor, and is used to control others and keep them in their place (Holmes & Marra, 2002). Humor that challenges the status quo is termed subversive humor, which can challenge an individual, a group, or the entire organization. Subversive humor is found in greater proportions in business meetings rather than in friendship groups. Joking patterns maintain distance between leaders and subordinates, and they contribute to preserving social structures by promoting cohesion of organizations and groups (Yarwood, 1995).

Organizational productivity and profitability can increase by promoting the well-being of employees (Keyes et al., 2000). Employees are more productive, less prone to taking leave, and have a higher rate of retention when reported to having higher levels of well-being. Humor is a communication tool that can prevent burnout (Talbot & Lumden, 2000).

Burnout signals not despair but hope. Recognized and attended to, it can become a positive energy force, signifying that the time has come for a cease and desist action, a hard look at yourself, and a change to something new. (Freudenberger, 1980, p. xxi)

The effects of burnout are serious for individuals and organizations in the education profession (Waugh & Judd, 2003). Six common symptoms of job burnout include: (a) negative emotions, (b) interpersonal problems, (c) health problems, (d) declining performance, (e) substance abuse, and (f) feelings of meaninglessness (Potter, 1987). Freudenberger (1980) listed the following 13 symptoms to check for burnout: (a) exhaustion, (b) detachment,
(c) boredom, (d) cynicism, (e) impatience, (f) heightened irritability, (g) a sense of omnipotence, (h) a sense of being unappreciated, (i) paranoia, (j) disorientation, (k) psychosomatic complaints, (l) depression, and (m) denial of feelings. “Where burnout exists, the sufferer unwittingly selects a cure which intensifies the burn-out, spreading it faster and further” (p. 104).

Five humor groups were defined by Babad (1974): (a) nonhumorous, (b) appreciators, (c) producer, (d) reproducer, and (e) producer-reproducer. Nonhumorous individuals were those with no readiness to laugh, tell jokes or create humor, and they never search for humorous situations or laugh at other people’s humor. Appreciators were those who show readiness to laugh, look for humorous situations, and enjoy other people’s humor, but they do not tell jokes or make up jokes or humor themselves. Producers invent humor, make up jokes and humorous stories, or create humorous situations. Reproducers do not invent their own humor, but they retell jokes or humorous stories and situations. Producers-reproducers are those individuals who not only invent humor, but they retell other people’s jokes and humorous stories.

To obtain a valid measure of humor, we must penetrate the social context, and measure directly how the person behaves in his daily interactions with others. This can be done by natural observations, by self-report, and by sociometric measurement. (Babad, 1974, p. 619)

Philbrick (1989) revised Babad’s (1974) list for her study to include only four humor groups: (a) nonhumorous, (b) appreciator, (c) producer, and (d) reproducer. Her definitions were the same as Babad’s for the nonhumorous, appreciator, producer and reproducer groups. Philbrick did not include a producer-reproducer as a group in her study. She indicated that school administrators might gain effectiveness from the use of humor by following the example of business executives and political leaders whose use of humor has worked for them. Philbrick noted: “Organizations are enhanced by leaders who are effective, and leader effectiveness may be enhanced by a sense of humor” (p. 5).
Humor competence can be impeded by individual religious beliefs, politics, sexual orientation, and so forth (Hay, 2001). Racial or ethnic jokes will often be accepted by those who enjoy the humor, even though they would be embarrassed to voice the same attitude in a serious discussion (Perlmutter, 2002).

The listener’s sacrifice is more than the ordinary suspension of disbelief; he or she is prepared to suspend a wide variety of every-day prerogatives that may include expressing opinions about immoral behavior or taking positions on political issues alluded to in the story presented by the jokester. (p. 158)

Yarwood (1995) stated, “Humor is culture and time specific. Behaviors which were accepted as appropriate or at least tolerated a decade ago may be considered sexual harassment today and can cost offenders their jobs” (p. 83). Humor is part of everyday life, is often taken for granted, and is not recognized as having serious impact (Linstead, 1985).

Readiness to respond to funny events differs from one individual to another and that people laugh for different reasons (Lefcourt, 2001). Timing, verbal and nonverbal signals, and appropriate relationships are all factors in determining whether or not participants find humor in a potentially funny situation.

It is possible for humor to offend and amuse someone simultaneously (Hay, 2001). A hearer may find the humor funny, while disagreeing with the message. “Especially in examples such as ethnic or sexist humor, if the hearer doesn't share a certain belief about the group in question, the joke may fall completely flat” (p. 76). Bolinger (2001) stated, “There are drawbacks to the use of humor by leaders. Inappropriate or offensive humor can do permanent damage to relationships” (p. 15).

School Principal Job Demands

The school principal’s job has become more challenging and demanding due to rapid transformations in society (Shumate, 1999). Society is rapidly changing, causing schools to
perform more tasks than in past decades. The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay established schools in 1640 to teach basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic, and to develop democratic values for society (Vollmer, 2000). The Puritans, according to Vollmer, believed that families and churches bore the responsibility of raising the children. At the beginning of the 20th century, additional responsibilities began to be assigned to schools. With the influx of immigrants and the rise of the Industrial Age, policymakers saw schools as the mechanism for providing training to accommodate social engineering.

From 1900 to the 1990s, 61 new academic and social programs were added to the list of school responsibilities (Vollmer, 2000). Health and nutrition programs were included between 1900 and 1910. Vocational education and art education programs were started between 1920 and 1940. Safety and driver’s education programs were added between 1950 and 1960. Consumer, career, and leisure and recreational programs were included between 1960 and 1970. Special education, drug and alcohol abuse programs, and character education were started between 1970 and 1980. Schools saw the influx of computer education and multicultural programs between 1980 and 1990. Programs were appended to the curriculum to include gun and gang education, sex education, and before-school and after-school programs between 1990 and 2000.

With the change of programs have come added responsibilities for school principals. Two studies in 1988 and 1998 compared principal profiles from 1988 and 1998 that showed additional responsibilities for school principals (Doud & Keller, 1998; Doud, 1989). Principals in 1988 were responsible for 29 professional and support staff, while principals in 1998 were responsible for 44 professional and support staff. Principals in 1988 typically worked with an 11-month contract, whereas principals in 1998 worked year round. The typical hours a principal worked in
1988 were 45 hours per week, with an additional 6 hours of school-related activities, whereas principals in 1998 worked 50 hours per week, with an additional 8 hours of school-related activities.

Compared with teachers, the school principal is also considered to be a service provider—but in a way a service provider is quite different from the teacher. The principal is required to complete a larger number of assignments. He is subject to more interruptions and must deal with more varied issues. Burned-out principals show physical, mental, and cognitive exhaustion. They experience emotional and personal detachment from the recipients of their services. Comparing school principal burnout to burnout among other primary service providers and professionals, school principals sense similar, internally focused experiences such as exhaustion. Differences in externally focused experiences were more pronounced among principals. They showed stronger negative feelings toward others, a strong sense of discontentment, and a desire for distance from service recipients (Friedman, 1995).

The four categories of situations that administrators find stressful are: (a) the administrator’s perception of his role in the school, (b) tasks and daily activities, (c) external issues, and (d) handling conflicts related to the operations of the school (Gmelch & Torelli, 1993). Motivated clients contribute to professional gratification because they make success more likely, are more stimulating to work with, and require less effort by the professional (Cherniss, 1980). Those who are apathetic and who do nothing to help themselves are seen as less deserving from the professional, and they generate a negative reaction and source of strain.

Lack of control over an individual’s work, lack of reward for contributions on the job, lack of fairness, and losing positive connections with others in the workplace are all important indicators that a mismatch exists between an individual and his job (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).
Six conditions related to burnout include: (a) conflicting demands, (b) procedures and policies, (c) hopelessness of clients’ life conditions, (d) workload, (e) negative attitudes, and (f) the inability of workers to achieve objectives (Minahan, 1980).

Brock and Grady (2002) stated, “The high public visibility of an administrator’s job underscores it with stress. Every action and decision is subject to scrutiny, suspicion, and misunderstanding. Criticism of public schools and demands for change are increasing” (p. 21). More recently, demands for performance and demands for improved student, teacher, and administrative accountability have further heightened the demands on the principal. Principals leaving the field were most likely to do so because of frustration brought on by politics, bureaucracy, and unreasonable demands for higher standards and accountability (Stricherz, 2001).

The greatest source of strain for the professional is the structure of the job and the work setting (Cherniss, 1980). Administrators experience stress due to the high public visibility of their jobs, and they see that their actions and decisions are subject to scrutiny and criticism (Brock & Grady, 2002). Stressful administrative tasks of administrators include: (a) finding substitutes, (b) staff meetings, (c) working with uncooperative parents, (d) implementing mandates, (e) equipment problems, (f) vandalism, (g) work overload, (h) time constraints, (i) meetings outside of school hours, (j) lack of resources, (k) isolation, (l) lack of control, (m) lack of appreciation, (n) paperwork, (o) interruptions, (p) complaints, (q) student misbehavior, (r) after-hours activities, (s) making decisions that affect others, (t) evaluations, (u) negative staff members, (v) terminating employees, (w) rumor control, (x) lack of support, (y) salary issues, and (z) dissatisfaction with career advancement (Whan & Thomas, 1996; Brock & Grady, 2002). Blaydes (2004) identified the following stressors that affect the principal:
(a) pressures related to the district office, (b) mandates from the state level, (c) federal mandates, (d) student learning and testing, (e) special education, (f) discipline, (g) contract management, (h) hiring, (i) supervision, (j) evaluation, (k) parent demands and expectations, and (l) personal and family issues.

Shumate (1999) identified the five highest stress factors of public elementary school principals. The highest stress factor was participating in school activities outside normal working hours. The second highest stress factor was having a workload that was too heavy. The third highest stress factor was having meetings take up too much time. The fourth highest stress factor was having to comply with policies at the state and federal levels. The fifth highest stress factor was having high personal expectations.

Participants in a study by Doud and Keller (1998) listed 11 major concerns that principals face. Those concerns were: (a) fragmentation of administrator’s time, (b) financial resources, (c) student assessment, (d) students not performing to their potential, (e) professional development and retraining of staff, (f) instructional practices, (g) inadequate availability of staff training for technology, (h) inadequate availability of technology support services, (i) curriculum development, (j) parental involvement level, and (k) management of student behavior.

Examining a random sample of 107 principals for causes of principal burnout, Whitaker (1996) focused on characteristics and attitudes contributing to high scores in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Thirteen principals scored high in both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and they indicated that emotional exhaustion was a significant problem. Factors contributing to emotional exhaustion include: (a) dealing with teacher and student problems, (b) parent concerns, (c) difficulties with the central office, (d) multitasking, (e) constant interruptions, (f) night meetings, (g) increased paperwork, (h) budget cuts,
greater demands for accountability, new reporting procedures to comply with state mandates, and implementing higher standards for students. Whitaker contacted these principals to interview them regarding their high scores in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Four of the 13 principals had already left the principal position, leaving nine principals to interview. Eight out of nine principals were not planning to remain until retirement. The average age of these 13 principals ranged from 35 to 44. Most participants were male, all were married, and most had children. One of the high school principals indicated that he had spent two days in the hospital with a heart arrhythmia that the doctor diagnosed as stress related. The principals in Whitaker’s study indicated that to improve the principal’s role, there was a greater need for support systems to be built into the job to deal with conflict, feeling overwhelmed, and being under constant pressure.

If the data concerning the number of principals who will exit their jobs in the next few years are accurate, districts may have a critical need to attract and retain high quality individuals for these roles. As pressure to improve schools continues at a time of shrinking resources and education bashing, we cannot afford to overlook the vital role principals play in the education of our children. The costs are too high. (p. 70)

Allison (1997) reported that a substantial number of school administrators in several Canadian districts took medical leave due to stress-related illness. In one district alone, four principals suffered heart attacks, three of which were fatal. Identifying effective coping strategies may provide tools to moderate the effects of stress on the individual. In a study including 1,455 public elementary and secondary school principals in British Columbia, the most common coping techniques found included: (a) practicing good human relation skills, (b) maintaining a sense of humor, (c) approaching problems optimistically and objectively, (d) maintaining regular sleep habits, (e) setting realistic goals while recognizing limitations,
(f) delegating, (g) talking with family members or close friends, (h) engaging in active recreational activities, (i) engaging in less active non-work activities such as dining out or listening to music, and (j) working harder to be more productive.

**Humor as a Coping Mechanism**

An investigation into the use of humor as a coping mechanism in the workplace is important because humor has been identified as a tool used to prevent burnout and create resiliency to stress, thus reducing its impact (Talbot & Lumden, 2000). Change could be promoted using humor (Nilsen, 1993). Research supporting the use of humor as a coping strategy in the prevention of burnout is increasing (Cade, 1992). Being mentioned in almost all reports on the prevention of burnout is an indication of humor’s potential as a coping strategy. In a study regarding burnout and community college nursing faculty members, humor was found to promote job satisfaction, foster relationships, and provide a relaxed and comfortable work atmosphere. Talbot (2000) stated, “It is not a situation that is stressful, but the individual’s interpretation of that situation” (p. 360).

Coping strategies can be viewed as active or inactive. Active coping strategies involve confronting the stress, changing the source of stress, confronting oneself, or changing oneself. In active coping, strategies involve avoiding or denying the stress cognitively or physically. Reactive humor involves humor that is produced by the environment. An individual using reactive humor effectively perceives and responds to humorous stimuli. Productive humor refers to the ability to produce and construct humor, and it does not rely on the environment to provide the humor (Lehman, Burke, Martin, Sultan, & Czech, 2001).

The quality of an individual’s own humor appreciation is the most important element for self-rating. Although an individual is self-judgmental, self-rating is done in relation to stimuli produced by others (Fine, 1975). Subjects with high scores on the humor measures are assumed
to use humor as a means of coping with the stressful experiences that they encounter in their everyday lives (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983). In order for humor to moderate the effects of stress, a high value must be placed on humor along with the ability to produce humor in stressful situations that are encountered in daily life. Humor reduces the impact of stress.

Humor is an important attribute for an effective leader to possess (Bolinger, 2001). It provides relief and distance from problems (Brock & Grady, 2002). Several ways to incorporate humor into the workday include: read and post cartoons in the office; include humor in newsletters; spend time with people who like to laugh; look for the funny side of annoying situations; laugh with others - but never at them; and include a full five minutes of hearty laughter every day.

Humor in organizations promotes and maintains employee wellness and health (Nason, 2005). Promoting the well-being of employees should increase organizational productivity and profitability (Keyes et al., 2000). People who report higher levels of well-being are more productive, are less prone to using leave time, and have a higher rate of employee retention. Cherniss (1980) listed eight interventions that could be put into place to reduce professional burnout: (a) provide orientation programs, (b) provide periodic appraisal and evaluation, (c) provide individual counseling, (d) provide staff support groups, (e) restructure the job, (f) modify the workload, (g) increase feedback in the job, and (h) reduce social isolation.

**Maslach Burnout Inventory**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a 22-item measure that was initially published in 1981. The MBI measures levels of burnout based on three subscales: (a) emotional exhaustion (9 items), (b) depersonalization (5 items), and (c) personal accomplishment (8 items). A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales and in low scores on the personal accomplishment subscale. An average degree of
burnout is reflected in average scores on the three subscales. A low degree of burnout is reflected in low scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, and it is reflected in high scores on the personal accomplishment subscale.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory focuses on personal experiences with people’s work (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

The close association between burnout and work differentiates it from more general emotional states, such as depression, which pervade every aspect of life without being tied to a specific domain of life. Thus, the MBI assesses burnout as the result of problems at work, not as a psychiatric syndrome. (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p. 156)

Boles, Dean, Ricks, Short, and Wang (2000) conducted a study to examine the generalizability of the MBI to populations other than human service workers. They compared two samples from educators and small business owners, analyzing data and relating the burnout dimensions to stress-related variables identified in the literature. The first sample consisted of 183 elementary and high school teachers and administrators. The second sample consisted of 162 small business owners.

The three dimensions of burnout were measured with the MBI, with some modification in wording on the depersonalization dimension to reflect interaction with employees and students for the respective samples. Coefficient alphas of the Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment dimensions for the educators/business owners were .89/.90, .80/.70, and .76/.78, respectively. The results of the study support the generalization of the MBI to occupational groups other than human services workers. The research suggests that even though personnel in different fields have dissimilar stressors, the results appear to be similar. The Maslach Burnout Inventory can be generalized to occupational groups other than human services groups (Boles et al., 2000). Although the stressors among educators and small business
owners were different, the patterns of correlations among the burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were found to be similar.

**Humor Styles Questionnaire**

Humor can be viewed as a multifaceted construct that consists of cognitive ability, aesthetic response, habitual behavior patterns, emotion-related traits, positive attitude, and perspective during adversity. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was developed to assess four dimensions of the function of humor in daily life. Two of the dimensions are considered to be positively related to well-being: Affiliative Humor and Self-Enhancing Humor. The other two dimensions are considered to be negatively related to well-being: Aggressive Humor and Self-Defeating Humor.

The dimension of Affiliative Humor is associated with making funny comments and telling jokes, which facilitate relationships while reducing tension among others. Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir (2003) stated, “Individuals with high scores on this measure appear to be socially extraverted, cheerful, emotionally stable, and concerned for others” (p.71). The dimension of Self-Enhancing Humor is associated with having a humorous outlook on life, showing amusement to incongruities in life, and using humor as a coping mechanism. They added, “It is also positively correlated with cheerfulness, self-esteem, optimism, psychological well-being, and satisfaction with social support, and negatively related to depression, anxiety, and bad mood” (p. 71).

The dimension of Aggressive Humor is associated with the use of humor to show superiority over others by ridicule, put-downs, and disparagement. The authors said, “This scale was positively related to measures of hostility and aggression and negatively related to seriousness” (p. 71). The dimension of Self-Defeating Humor is associated with the use of humor at an individual’s own expense through excessive humorous self-ridicule. “It is also positively correlated with depression, anxiety, hostility, aggression, bad mood, psychiatric
symptoms, and undesirable masculine traits and negatively related to self-esteem, psychological well-being, intimacy, satisfaction with social supports, and femininity” (p. 71).

**COPE Inventory**

The COPE Inventory is a 60-item survey that measures 15 coping strategies. They include: (a) active coping, (b) planning, (c) suppression of competing activities, (d) restraint coping, (e) seeking social support--instrumental, (f) seeking social support--emotional, (g) focus on and venting of emotions, (h) behavioral disengagement, (i) mental disengagement, (j) positive reinterpretation and growth, (k) denial, (l) acceptance, (m) turning to religion, (n) alcohol-drug disengagement, and (o) humor.

In developing the COPE Inventory, Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub (1989) looked at the research conducted by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Lazarus (1966) stated, “For threat to occur, an evaluation must be made of the situation, to the effect that a harm is signified. The individual’s knowledge and beliefs contribute to this” (p. 44). Appraisal of threat is a judgment of assimilated data with ideas and expectations, and relies on the stimulus as well as the psychological makeup of the individual. “Observable threat and stress reactions are reflections or consequences of coping processes intended to reduce threat” (p. 152). He added, “Threat leads to processes of coping with the threat” (p. 153). While primary appraisal is concerned with determining threat and amount of danger, secondary appraisal is concerned with the form of coping to use and to what extent any form of action will relieve the threat. “More adaptive and reality-oriented forms of coping are most likely when the threat is comparatively mild; under severe threat, pathological extremes become more prominent” (p. 162). The higher the degree of threat, the more primitive reaction or solution to it. When threat becomes great, cognitive functioning is impaired, resulting in the choice of the more primitive action.
Strategies that are chosen for coping are based on the capability of the action in reducing or eliminating the threat. Three factors thought to influence coping include the location of threat, the viability of actions to prevent harm, and situational constraints that inhibit the coping action. Personality traits may influence coping by affecting how the situation will be appraised. Lazarus (1966) looked at two categories of coping: direct action tendencies and defensive reappraisal. Direct action tendencies include strengthening an individual’s resources against threat. Defensive reappraisal refers to reappraising the threat as less harmful.

The concept of coping was found in literature regarding animal experimentation and psychoanalytic ego psychology. In the Darwinian approach, survival for an animal is dependent upon the animal being able to avoid, escape, or overcome threats in the environment. In the psychological model, coping is defined as the ability to solve problems to reduce stress. Coping is defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Coping can help to reduce the perceived threat of situations, but stress occurs when inappropriate coping mechanisms are used (van Dick & Wagner, 2001).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described two types of coping: emotion-focused and problem-focused. The authors stated that emotion-focused strategies that that are used to lessen emotional distress include: “avoidance, minimization, distancing, selective attention, positive comparisons, and wrestling positive value from negative events” (p. 150). Some emotion-focused strategies are directed at increasing emotional distress to mobilize for dealing with the threat. Reappraisal is an emotion-focused strategy that involves reappraising the level of threat.

Problem-focused coping strategies are directed at “defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, weighting the alternatives in terms of their costs and benefits, choosing
among them, and acting” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 152). Problem-focused strategies
directed toward the environment involve altering pressures, barriers, resources, and procedures.
Problem-focused strategies can also be directed inward, involving motivational and cognitive
changes, developing new behaviors, and learning new skills. Lazarus and Folkman conducted a
study involving 1,332 stressful episodes. Nearly everyone used both emotion-focused and
problem-focused strategies, with only 18 individuals showing use of just one of the strategies.

Burnout was studied among teacher coaches. Problem-focused coping was found to be
correlated to low levels of depersonalization and high levels of personal accomplishment.
Tension-releasing coping was found to be positively correlated to the intensity and frequency of
emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The more that negative behaviors such as getting
mad, smoking, and worrying are relied upon, the more likely that burnout will increase.

Morale-maintaining coping was found to be positively related to the frequency of
depersonalization. The more frequent these strategies are used, the more times these feelings of
depersonalization will occur. Strategies to reduce and help eliminate burnout among teacher-
coaches include subscribing to educational journals and magazines and attending stress-
management seminars to widen the knowledge base of burnout (Kosa, 1990).

Constraints to using coping include: personal constraints such as cultural values or beliefs;
environmental constraints such as competing demands for the same resources; and threat levels
ranging from minimal to extreme. Personality characteristics can influence how an individual
copes and adapts to situations (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986). Using a passive
or submissive approach in dealing with conflict at work can lead to health problems because the
conflict and stress continue (De Dreu, Dierendonck, & Dijkstra, 2002). Empathic concern,
communicative responsiveness, and validation are factors of active listening that can reduce
stress and burnout. Disagreements, verbal abuse, criticism, and rudeness are types of communication that can have negative impact, thereby reducing coping resources of an individual (Johnson & Indvik, 1990).

*Active Coping* is a problem-focused strategy that involves taking direct action to remove the stressor. *Planning* is a problem-focused strategy that involves thinking about the stressor and how to cope with it. *Suppression of Competing Activities* is a problem-focused strategy that involves putting aside or avoiding other tasks to be able to deal with the stressor. *Restraint Coping* is a problem-focused strategy that involves holding back for a more appropriate opportunity to deal effectively with the stressor. *Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons* is a problem-focused strategy of seeking outside assistance to deal with the stressor. *Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons* is an emotion-focused strategy that involves support from others to cope with the stressor. *Positive Reinterpretation and Growth* is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual manages emotional distress rather than the stressor itself. *Denial* is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is ignored altogether. *Acceptance* is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is accepted. *Turning to Religion* is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual turns to religion as a means of coping with a stressor.

Carver et al. (1989) found the following three coping strategies appear to be less useful as coping strategies: *Focusing on and Venting of Emotions*, a strategy whereby an individual focuses on the stressor, and vents his emotions; *Behavioral Disengagement*, a strategy that involves one reducing effort to deal with the stressor; and *Mental Disengagement*, a strategy involving the use of mental distractions and activities to distract an individual from thinking about the stressor, such as daydreaming, or escaping through television.
Alcohol-Drug Disengagement is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on escaping the stressor. Humor is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on relief from the stressor.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used to conduct the research study. It includes the description of the sample studied, instrumentation used to measure the dependent and independent variables, procedures used to collect the data, and the analysis that was conducted after the data were collected.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of humor as a coping mechanism among public elementary school principals in relation to Maslach’s (1982) theory of burnout. In this study, the Maslach Burnout Inventory measured the dependent variable—the level of burnout. The Humor Styles Questionnaire and the COPE Inventory measured the independent variable—the self-perceived use of humor. The COPE Inventory also measured the self-perceived use of other coping mechanisms. The following research questions were the focus of the study:

Question 1

Do statistically significant relationships exist between humor, other coping mechanisms, and public elementary school principals’ level of burnout?

Question 2

Do statistically significant relationships exist between Self-Enhancing Humor, Affiliative Humor, Aggressive Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, other coping mechanisms, and public elementary school principals’ level of burnout?

Question 3

Do statistically significant relationships exist between humor, other coping mechanisms, and public elementary school principals’ level of burnout when compared to the following
demographic variables: gender; level of completed degree; number of students in school; number of Years as a Principal; number of Years as an Educator; English to Speakers of Other Languages/Limited English Proficiency (ESOL/LEP) status of school; Exceptional Student Education (ESE) status of school; and socioeconomic status of school as determined by the percent of students enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch program?

Sample

The sample for this study was a random sampling of public elementary schools generated from a list of 759 elementary schools obtained from the Florida Department of Education (DOE) website http://www.fldoe.org. The random sample of 400 principals from across Florida was generated from this list by using a random integer generator. The random integer generator website was: http://www.random.org/nform.html. Four hundred numbers were generated and matched to schools on the DOE list. A list of public elementary school principals matching this list of schools was obtained from the website for the Florida Department of Education. Surveys were mailed to 399 participants instead of the original 400 because one school had to be omitted from the study. The researcher gave each participant the following items: an explanation of the study; a statement of confidentiality; instructions for completing the study instruments; the survey instruments; and a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the completed instruments.

According to the instructions, study participants completed the demographic sheet, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Humor Styles Questionnaire, and the COPE Inventory. Participants were asked to submit their responses within two weeks. Participants were told that by completing the survey, they agreed to take part in the study. Each participant was assigned a random code that was printed on the return envelope included with the survey instruments. This random code was used to track survey responses. After the deadline date passed to complete the
survey, an additional mailing was sent to those participants who failed to respond. The random codes were stored separately from the survey responses to maintain the participants’ confidentiality and anonymity.

The elementary schools in this sampling varied in size and demographics. The population per elementary school in this sampling ranged from 281 to 1,704 students. Students classified as having a primary mild, moderate, and/or severe disability ranged from 4.4% to 39.4%. Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch ranged from 0% to 100%. Limited English Proficient students who participated in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, ranged from 0.1% to 52.7%.

**Instrumentation**

Participants in this study rated their level of burnout on the scales of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Achievement, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Participants also rated their self-perceived use of humor, as measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire. Participants’ self-perceived use of humor compared to other coping mechanisms was measured by the COPE Inventory.

**Maslach Burnout Inventory**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a 22-item measure that was initially published in 1981. The MBI measures levels of burnout based on subscales of emotional exhaustion (9 items), depersonalization (5 items), and personal accomplishment (8 items). A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales and in low scores on the personal accomplishment subscale. An average degree of burnout is reflected in average scores on the three subscales. A low degree of burnout is reflected in low scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, and it is reflected in high
scores on the personal accomplishment subscale. The survey is measured by rating each item within a range from “0” for never to “6” for every day.

Three versions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory were developed to measure burnout for different occupations: (a) the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), for use with human services professionals; (b) the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES), for use with educators; and (c) the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS), for use with workers in other occupations (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The Maslach Burnout Inventory used in this study was the Educator Survey version, which uses the same questions, but uses the term students instead of recipients.

The validity and reliability of the Maslach Burnout Inventory were supported in two studies by Iwanicki and Schwab (1981), and Gold (1984). Both factor analysis studies conducted supported the three-factor structure of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Iwanicki and Schwab conducted a cross-validational study of the Maslach Burnout Inventory with 469 teachers from Massachusetts as participants. Construct validity was examined using principal components and principal factors approaches to factor analysis, with both orthogonal and oblique rotations. “A rotation which requires the factors to remain uncorrelated is an orthogonal rotation, while others are oblique rotations” (Darlington, 1997, ¶ 61).

In principal components analysis, all variability of an item is used in the analysis, whereas in principal factor analysis, only the variability of an item in common with other items is used (StatSoft, 2006). “For both the frequency and intensity dimensions, the principal components and principal factors approaches both resulted in four factor solutions with eigenvalues greater than one which accounted for 55% of the total variance” (Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981, p. 1169). Comparing the two approaches, the principal factors approach resulted in subscales which were
more conceptually meaningful and reliable. Iwanicki and Schwab’s examination broke the factor of depersonalization into two factors: job-related and student-related. The authors stated, “Because of the low correlations among the axes of the four factors derived through the principal factors solution for both the frequency (r = .29) and intensity (r = .26) dimensions, there were no major differences in factor loadings between the orthogonal and oblique rotations” (p. 1170).

The MBI measures the same basic constructs of emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization as those identified through studies in the helping professions.

Gold (1984) conducted a factorial validity study of the Maslach Burnout Inventory with 462 teachers from southern California as participants. In studying teachers, Gold found that teachers experiencing “negative perceptions associated with burnout could have detrimental effects on their students, their colleagues, their schools, and their own families” (p. 1011).

Gold (1984) indicated that construct validity of the Maslach Burnout Inventory was supported as the factor structure in the sample of California teachers, which was found to be basically invariant from the sample of Massachusetts teachers in the Iwanicki and Schwab study. Gold concluded in her study that the MBI “demonstrates factorial validity consistent with the rationale for its three subscales” (p. 1016). Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) reported Cronbach alpha reliability estimates of .90 for emotional exhaustion, .76 for depersonalization, and .76 for personal accomplishment. Gold (1984) reported Cronbach alpha reliability estimates of .88, .74, and .72, respectively. Factor loadings in the Gold study were consistent with the factor loadings in the Iwanicki and Schwab study.

Boles, Dean, Ricks, Short, & Wang (2000) conducted a study to examine the generalizability of the MBI to populations other than human services workers. They compared two samples from educators and small business owners, analyzing data and relating the burnout
dimensions to stress-related variables identified in the literature. The first sample consisted of 183 elementary and high school teachers and administrators. The second sample consisted of 162 small business owners.

The three dimensions of burnout were measured with the MBI, with some modification in wording on the depersonalization dimension to reflect interaction with employees and students for the respective samples. Coefficient alphas of the Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment dimensions for the educators/ business owners were .89/.90, .80/.70, and .76/.78, respectively. The results of the study support the generalization of the MBI to occupational groups other than human services workers. The research suggests that even though personnel in different fields have dissimilar stressors, the results appear to be similar. The Maslach Burnout Inventory can be generalized to occupational groups other than human service groups (Boles et al., 2000). Although the stressors among educators and small business owners were different, the patterns of correlations among the burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were found to be similar.

**Humor Styles Questionnaire**

Humor can be viewed as a multifaceted construct that consists of cognitive ability, aesthetic response, habitual behavior patterns, emotion-related traits, positive attitude, and perspective during adversity. The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was developed to assess four dimensions of the function of humor in daily life. Two of the dimensions are considered to be positively related to well-being: Affiliative Humor and Self-Enhancing Humor. The other two dimensions are considered to be negatively related to well-being: Aggressive Humor and Self-Defeating Humor.

During the initial development of the scale, a pool of 111 items was generated and examined in a study involving 117 psychology students at the University of Western Ontario.
Participants in the study also completed the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability (MCSD) Scale to assess response to test items in a desirable manner. Standard deviations were reviewed, resulting in the removal of one item. Item correlations were examined resulting in the removal of 16 items from the scale. Items were then compared with total correlation to the other three humor scale totals, as well as being compared with the MCSD. This comparison was done to minimize intercorrelations among the four humor scales. Thirty-seven items were eliminated based on the analysis of item correlation. Additional items were generated resulting in a new pool of 96 items. These items were examined in a study involving two samples of participants. The first sample consisted of 165 introductory psychology students; the second sample consisted of 93 organizational members in a senior continuing education program. Analysis from this study resulted in choosing 15 items to measure each of the four humor scales. The Cronbach alpha reliability on these scales ranged from .82 to .88.

Additional scale refinement was conducted based on data collected from 485 participants. Each participant was administered the 60 items with the goal to refine the instrument to 8 items per scale. Items were retained with high corrected item-total correlation with the designated scale and weak correlation with the other three scales. Redundancy among items was reduced while retaining specific negatively keyed items. Internal consistencies of the four scales showed Cronbach alphas ranging from .77 to .81 and test-retest correlations of .80 to .85.

Two additional samples of participants were chosen to replicate the factor structure of the final version. Participants included 300 students (131 male, 169 female, mean age of 19.7 years) from the Introductory Psychology subject pool, and 152 participants (46 male, 106 female, mean age of 39.1 years) from the general community. This created a total of 452 participants (177 male, 275 female) to be used for cross-validation. Affiliative Humor showed a mean of 46.4 with
a standard deviation of 7.17. Self-Enhancing Humor showed a mean of 37.3 with a standard
deviation of 8.33. Aggressive Humor showed a mean of 28.5 with a standard deviation of 8.79.
Self-Defeating Humor showed a mean of 25.9 with a standard deviation of 9.22. Factor analysis
was conducted from all participants in all the samples who had completed the final set of 32
items during the scale development samples (n = 1,195). The factor loadings supported the four
dimensions of humor. Internal consistencies of the four scales showed Cronbach alphas ranging
from .77 to .81. Test-retest correlations ranged from .80 to .85.

Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir (2003) presented correlations studied between
the HSQ subscales and other humor-related measures. Significant multiple R correlations were
found, indicating that the subscales of the Humor Styles Questionnaire are strongly related to the
other existing measures of sense of humor. The Situational Humor Response Questionnaire
(SHRQ) measures the tendency to smile and laugh at a variety of situations (Martin & Lefcourt,
1984), and was correlated with the HSQ at r = .47, p < .001. The Coping Humor Scale (CHS)
measures the tendency to use humor as a coping mechanism (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983), and was
correlated with the HSQ at r = .62, p < .001. The Sense of Humor Questionnaire (SHQ-6)
measures the tendency to notice and enjoy humor in daily life (Svebak, 1996), and was
correlated with the HSQ at r = .63, p < .001. The Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale
(MSHS) measures a range of behaviors and attitudes that are related to humor (Thorson &
Powell, 1993), and was correlated with the HSQ at r = .67, p < .001. The COPE Inventory
(Carver et al., 1989) measures the degree to which participants utilize different coping strategies
to deal with life stress. The humor dimension on the COPE Inventory was correlated with the
HSQ at r = .61, p < .001. The State-Trait Cheerfulness Inventory (STCI) measures cheerfulness,
seriousness, and bad mood, (Ruch, Kohler, & van Thriel, 1996). The cheerfulness dimension
was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .75$, $p < .001$.

The serious dimension was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .47$, $p < .001$.

The bad mood dimension was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .56$, $p < .001$.

Martin et al., (2003) also showed the relationships that the Humor Styles Questionnaire has with other measures of aspects of psychological health and well-being. The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CESD) Scale is a 20-item measure of symptoms of depression (Radloff, 1977), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .43$, $p < .001$. The Cook-Medley Hostility (CMHS) Scale is a 50-item measure of anger, resentment, and hostility (Cook & Medley, 1954), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .43$, $p < .001$.

The Symptom Checklist-90-R (SCL-90R) is a 90-item inventory measuring psychological and physical symptoms (Derogatis, 1977), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .35$, $p < .001$.

The Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) is a 6-item measure reporting satisfaction with social support (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .38$, $p < .001$.

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is a 20-item measure of tendencies for experiencing anxiety and nervousness (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1969), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .46$, $p < .001$.

The Index of Self-Esteem (ISE) is a 25-item measure of self-esteem (Hudson, 1982), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .51$, $p < .001$.

The Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS) is a 17-item scale that measures closeness and intimacy with another individual (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .33$, $p < .001$.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (RSEI) is a 10-item measure of positive self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), and was correlated with the HSQ at $r = .49$, $p < .001$.

The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) is a 29-item measure of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility (Buss & Perry, 1992), and was correlated with the HSQ at
r = .47, p < .001. The Life Orientation Test (LOT) is a 12-item measure of optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985), and was correlated with the HSQ at r = .43, p < .001. The Ryff measure of psychological well-being is an 84-item inventory with scales for self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989), and was correlated with the HSQ at r = .61, p < .001. Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir (2003) found that the correlations for the HSQ were considerably stronger than those found using previous humor scales. Assessing both harmful and favorable uses of humor appears to result in greater proportion of variance with the various aspects of psychological well-being.

**COPE Inventory**

The COPE Inventory is a 60-item survey that measures 15 coping strategies. They include: (a) active coping, (b) planning, (c) suppression of competing activities, (d) restraint coping, (e) seeking social support--instrumental, (f) seeking social support--emotional, (g) focus on and venting of emotions, (h) behavioral disengagement, (i) mental disengagement, (j) positive reinterpretation and growth, (k) denial, (l) acceptance, (m) religion, (n) alcohol-drug disengagement, and (o) humor. The instrument was subdivided into multiple factors because Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub (1989) believed that coping was more complex and a variety of ways exists to solve problems and regulate emotions (Schwarzer & Schwarzer, 1996).

Through the process of developing the COPE Inventory, item sets were administered to several hundred subjects, with revisions due to items with weak loadings, new items being written, and the inventory readministered. In addition to items being revised, factor structure was changed due to items loading on specific scales. The final item set was completed by group sessions consisting of 978 undergraduates at the University of Miami. Test-retest reliability was completed by 89 students in an initial session and in a retest session eight weeks later.
The undergraduates who completed the COPE Inventory were also given personality measures to determine the differences in coping between optimism and pessimism. Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub (1989) stated:

Because optimists have favorable expectations for their future, optimism should be associated with Active Coping efforts and with making the best of whatever is encountered. Because pessimists have unfavorable expectations for the future, pessimism should be associated with focus on emotional distress and with disengagement. (p. 274)

In a study of female counselors who work with sexual violence survivors, the four strategies most often used for coping by counselors included: (a) seeking emotional support; (b) planning; (c) seeking instrumental social support; and (d) humor. Those most often used were also associated with lower levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. The three strategies least often used for coping included: (a) using alcohol or drugs; (b) denial; and (c) behavioral disengagement (Schauben & Frazier, 1995).

Phelps and Jarvis (1994) conducted a study using the COPE Inventory with 484 participants (male = 260, female = 224) including high school students ranging from 9th through 12th grades. Their study extended the work of Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub (1989) by reporting internal reliability, factorial validity, and normative data on the COPE Inventory. The means on the 15 dimensions ranged from 10.71 for females and 10.00 for males on the Acceptance dimension to 5.26 for males and 4.35 for females on the Alcohol-Drug Disengagement dimension. Standard deviations ranged from 4.03 on the Religion dimension for females to 1.32 on the Alcohol-Drug Disengagement dimension for males. Cronbach alphas on the dimensions ranged from .87 on the Religion dimension to .51 on the Mental Disengagement dimension. The Cronbach alpha for the Humor dimension was .82.

Cronbach and Meehl (1955) stated, “If two tests are presumed to measure the same construct, a correlation between them is predicted” (p. 287). Benson and Hagtvet (1996) noted
that validity studies are “continually needed as our interpretation of the trait can change due to changes in social or cultural conditions. Thus, for a scale to remain valid over time, its validity must be reestablished periodically” (p. 84). Clark, Bormann, Cropanzano, and James (1995) conducted a study to investigate the construct validity of three coping scales: the Coping Strategy Indicator ([CSI]; Amirkhan, 1990); the Ways of Coping-Revised ([WOC]; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985); and the COPE Inventory ([COPE]; Carver et al., 1989). Three scales across the measures were evaluated for relationships: Problem-Solving; Seeking Social Support; and Avoidance. The analysis of their results indicated “that the three measures contain factors which tap similar constructs showing high levels of congruence” (Clark et al., 1995, p. 446). Upon examination of the COPE Inventory, Clark, Bormann, Cropanzano, & James found that the 15-factor structure was supported, and fit better than the alternative model with the 3-factor structure: Active Coping and Planning; Seeking Emotional Social Support; and Seeking Instrumental Social Support.

Data Collection

The sample for this study was a random sampling of public elementary schools generated from a list of 759 elementary schools obtained from the Florida Department of Education (DOE) website http://www.fldoe.org. The random sample of 400 principals from across Florida was generated from this list by using a random integer generator. The random integer generator website was: http://www.random.org/nform.html. Four hundred numbers were generated and matched to schools on the DOE list. A list of public elementary school principals matching this list of schools was obtained from the website for the Florida Department of Education. Surveys were mailed to 399 participants instead of the original 400 because one school had to be omitted from the study. The researcher gave each participant the following items: an explanation of the study; a statement of confidentiality; instructions for completing the study instruments; the
survey instruments; and a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the completed instruments.

According to the instructions, study participants completed the demographic sheet, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Humor Styles Questionnaire, and the COPE Inventory. Participants were asked to submit their responses within two weeks. Participants were told that by completing the survey, they agreed to take part in the study. Each participant was assigned a random code that was printed on the return envelope included with the survey instruments. This random code was used to track survey responses. After the deadline date passed to complete the survey, an additional mailing was sent to those participants who failed to respond. The random codes were stored separately from the survey responses to maintain the participants’ confidentiality and anonymity.

**Data Analyses**

The computer software used in analyzing the data was Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Norusis, 1990). The dependent variable--the level of burnout among public elementary school principals--was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The independent variable--the self-perceived use of humor as a coping mechanism--was measured by the Humor Styles Questionnaire and the COPE Inventory. Other coping mechanisms were measured with the COPE Inventory.

To answer the research questions, means and standard deviations were calculated between the three Maslach Burnout Dimensions and the demographic variables. Correlations were computed between the dependent variable burnout, the demographic variables, the COPE Inventory variables, and the Humor Styles Questionnaire variables. Cronbach alphas for this study were calculated for the Maslach Burnout Inventory dimensions, the Humor Styles Questionnaire dimensions, and the COPE Inventory dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis
was conducted for the Maslach Burnout Inventory scales, the Humor Styles Questionnaire scales, and the COPE Inventory scales.

Regression analysis was conducted using the forward block entry method to analyze three different models. In the forward block entry method, a block of variables is entered as a block for the independent variable. After this block is entered, a separate block of variables is then entered as another independent variable. The blocks of variables are entered into the regression model to predict variance in the dependent variable. The first block calculates variance in the dependent variable, and then the next block of variables is entered into the analysis. This results in another prediction of the variance in the dependent variable. The procedure is repeated until all chosen variable blocks are entered into the regression model. Collinearity information was analyzed to determine correlation between independent variables.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND ANALYSES OF DATA

This chapter presents the data analyses based on the research questions. This study investigated the use of humor as a coping mechanism among public elementary school principals in relation to Maslach’s (1982) theory of burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to measure the dependent variable—the level of burnout. The Humor Styles Questionnaire and the COPE Inventory were used to measure the independent variable—the self-perceived use of humor. The COPE Inventory was also employed to measure the self-perceived use of other coping mechanisms.

Response Rate

The computer software used in analyzing the data was Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Surveys were mailed to 399 participants instead of the original 400 because one school had to be omitted from the study. Each participant was assigned a random code that was printed on the return envelope included with the survey instruments. This random code was used to track survey responses. After the deadline date passed to complete the survey, an additional mailing was sent to those participants who failed to respond. A total of 136 surveys were returned for a response rate of 34%. The participants who identified their demographic information totaled 135 (Table 4-1). Demographic information included: gender, degree status, the number of years as a school principal, the number of years as an educator, student population within the school, the percentage of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students in the participants’ schools, the percentage of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students in the participants’ schools, and the percentage of students enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch program at the participants’ schools.
One survey had missing responses for demographic information. Eight surveys had a missing response for one item. Two surveys had missing responses for three items. One survey had missing responses for the second page of the COPE Inventory. Two surveys had no responses for the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Downey and King (1998) indicated that researchers can increase power and accuracy of the analyses by replacing missing survey data. Listwise deletion eliminates all data from a participant having missing data for any one test. Pairwise deletion excludes cases involving variables for which data are missing, while still using information for other variables with data collected. Roth (1994) found that “mean substitution can be more accurate than listwise deletion and, as often as not, is as accurate as pairwise deletion” (p. 541). Roth and Switzer (1995) indicated that the mean substitution approach preserves data that would otherwise be lost to both listwise deletion and pairwise deletion. The series mean data replacement function in SPSS was used to generate values for all items missing responses, with the exception of the missing demographic information in one survey.

**Data Analyses**

Table 4-1 lists the means and standard deviations between the three Maslach Burnout Dimensions and the demographic variables. Higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, combined with lower levels of Personal Accomplishment suggest higher burnout levels. Lower levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, combined with higher levels of Personal Accomplishment suggest lower burnout levels.

The Humor Styles Questionnaire dimensions are presented in Table 4-2. Using the mean scores that were reported by participants, humor styles were used in the following order from most frequent to least frequent: Affiliative Humor, Self-Enhancing Humor, Self-Defeating
Humor, and Aggressive Humor. Affiliative Humor and Self-Enhancing Humor were reported as being used more than Aggressive Humor and Self-Defeating Humor.

According to the descriptive statistics for the COPE Inventory, Planning, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, and Active Coping were the three most reported coping mechanisms used (Table 4-2). Denial, Behavioral Disengagement, and Substance Use were the three least reported coping mechanisms used. Using the mean scores that were reported by participants, coping mechanisms were used in the following order from most frequent to least frequent: Planning, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth, Active Coping, Instrumental Social Support, Restraint, Acceptance, Religious Coping, Suppression of Competing Activities, Emotional Social Support, Humor, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Mental Disengagement, Behavioral Disengagement, Denial, and Substance Use.

Correlations were computed between the dependent variable burnout, the demographic variables, the COPE Inventory variables, and the Humor Styles Questionnaire variables (Table 4-3). The only significant correlations with burnout were: the demographic variables ESE Population ($r = .18$, $p = .04$) and Free/Reduced Population ($r = .18$, $p = .03$); the Humor Styles Questionnaire variables Self-Enhancing Humor ($r = -.22$, $p = .01$), Aggressive Humor ($r = .27$, $p = .00$), and Self-Defeating Humor ($r = .25$, $p = .00$); and the COPE Inventory variables Mental Disengagement ($r = .21$, $p = .02$), Focus on and Venting of Emotions ($r = .36$, $p = .00$), Behavioral Disengagement ($r = .20$, $p = .02$), and Substance Use ($r = .17$, $p = .04$). All of the correlations are positive, with the exception of the correlation between Self-Enhancing Humor and Burnout. The correlations are weak, possibly affected by the small sample size of this study.

Cronbach alphas for this sample were calculated for the Maslach Burnout Inventory dimensions, the Humor Styles Questionnaire dimensions, and the COPE Inventory dimensions,
and are shown in Table 4-4. The alphas for the Maslach Burnout Inventory ranged from $\alpha = .92$ for Emotional Exhaustion to $\alpha = .65$ for Depersonalization. Through confirmatory factor analysis, the Depersonalization scale was reduced by removing items 5, 15, and 22, resulting in an improved alpha, $\alpha = .75$. The Personal Accomplishment scale had an alpha of $\alpha = .70$, but formed two dimensions through factor analysis. Scale reduction by removing items 4, 7, and 21, improved the alpha to $\alpha = .71$, with factors loading on one dimension.

Cronbach alphas for the Humor Styles Questionnaire dimensions ranged from $\alpha = .82$ for Affiliative Humor to $\alpha = .64$ for Aggressive Humor. The Self-Enhancing Humor scale was reduced by removing items 2 and 22, increasing the alpha from $\alpha = .80$ to $\alpha = .81$. The Aggressive Humor dimension loaded onto two separate dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that no items could be removed to improve the alpha. Self-Defeating Humor scale was reduced by removing items 16 and 28, resulting in items loading on one scale while maintaining an alpha of $\alpha = .80$.

Cronbach alphas for the COPE Inventory Dimensions ranged from $\alpha = .97$ for Religious Coping to $\alpha = .23$ for Mental Disengagement. Scale reduction for the dimension Positive Reinterpretation and Growth by removing items 1 and 59 improved the alpha from $\alpha = .66$ to $\alpha = .70$.

The scales Mental Disengagement, Active Coping, Denial, Behavioral Disengagement, Acceptance, and Suppression of Competing Activities were eliminated from further analysis and not used in the regression model due to the reliability levels indicated by the Cronbach alphas. Scale reduction for the dimension Mental Disengagement by the removal of items 2 and 31 resulted in the alpha increasing from .23 to .38. Scale reduction for the dimension Active Coping by the removal of item 47 resulted in the alpha increasing from .39 to .47. Removal of
any of the other items resulted in the alpha going back down to .42. Scale reduction for the
dimension Denial by the removal of item 27 resulted in the alpha increasing from .48 to .52.
Removal of item 6 increased the alpha from .52 to .56. Removal of any more items from this
scale did not increase the alpha any further. Scale reduction for the dimension Behavioral
Disengagement by the removal of any items only resulted in the alpha going down from .54 to
.51. Scale reduction for the dimension Acceptance by the removal of item 44 only resulted in the
alpha increasing from .60 to .61. Removal of any further items resulted in the alpha decreasing
from .61 to .58. Scale reduction for the dimension Suppression of Competing Activities by the
removal of item 15 resulted in the alpha increasing from .36 to .41. Removal of item 42 resulted
in the alpha increasing from .41 to .49. Removal of any more items from the scale did not result
in the alpha increasing any further.

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for the Maslach Burnout Inventory scales, the
Humor Styles Questionnaire scales, and the COPE Inventory scales (Tables 4-4, 4-5, 4-6, and
4-7). Scale reduction resulted in the following altered scales: Depersonalization scale reduced by
removing items 5, 15, and 22; Personal Accomplishment scale reduced by removing items 4, 7,
and 21; Self-Enhancing Humor scale reduced by removing items 2 and 22; Self-Defeating
Humor scale reduced by removing 16 and 28. The Positive Reinterpretation and Growth scale
was combined with the Planning scale with the reduction of removing item 29, resulting in a
higher alpha ($\alpha = .76$). The Instrumental Social Support scale was joined with the Emotional
Social Support scale with the reduction of removing item 14, resulting in a higher alpha
($\alpha = .84$).

Regression analysis was conducted using the forward block entry method to analyze three
different models (Table 4-8). In the forward block entry method, a block of variables is entered
as a group of independent variables. After this block is entered, a second block of variables is then entered as another set of independent variables. The blocks of variables are entered into the regression model to predict variance in the dependent variable. The first block contributes to explaining a proportion of variance in the dependent variable, and then the next block of variables is entered into the analysis. This results in additional variance explained in the dependent variable. The procedure is repeated until all variable blocks have been entered into the regression model. The first block of variables chosen to be entered into the regression model were the demographic variables. These were chosen first to determine if they could significantly predict variance in the dependent variable burnout. The following demographic variables were included in the block: Free/Reduced Population, Degree, Gender, ESE Population, Years as a Principal, Student Population, LEP Population, and Years as an Educator. The first block entry did not significantly explain the variance in the dependent variable burnout.

The second block entry of variables added into the regression model were the following COPE Inventory variables: Substance Use, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Restraint, Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Social Support, and Religious Coping. These COPE Inventory variables were chosen to be included in the regression model due to the alpha levels that were described in Table 4-4. This regression model resulted in an $r^2$ change of .12 with a significance level of .01, with the predictors in this model responsible for explaining 21% of the variance in the dependent variable burnout.

The third block of variables added into the regression model was the Humor variable from the COPE Inventory, and the following Humor Style Questionnaire variables: Self-Enhancing Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, Humor, Affiliative Humor, and Aggressive Humor. This model
resulted in an $r^2$ change of .10 with a significance level of .01, with the predictors in the whole model responsible for explaining 31% of the variance in the dependent variable burnout.

The ANOVA table (Table 4-9) supports the significant findings reported in Table 4-8. Both the second and third model showed that the blocks of independent variables are significantly predicting the variance in the dependent variable burnout. The high residual values found in this table indicate that despite the significance found for the predictors in model 2 and model 3, much of the variance is not explained by the predictors in the model. This could be a result of: the limitation of the small sample size of this study, the removal of some of the scales from the study, the limitation of possible inaccuracies in self-reporting found in social science research, and the limitation of other predictors not easily measured.

Collinearity information is presented in Table 4-10. “Collinearity refers to the situation in which there is a high multiple correlation when one of the independent variables is regressed on the others (i.e., when there is a high correlation between independent variables) (Norusis, 1990, p. 50). After finding collinearity in the regression, several scales that provided similar information were combined, resulting in higher alphas (Table 4-4). The COPE Inventory scale Positive Reinterpretation and Growth ($\alpha = .70$) was joined with the scale Planning ($\alpha = .68$), resulting in a higher alpha ($\alpha = .76$). The COPE Inventory scale Independent Social Support ($\alpha = .72$) was joined with the scale Emotional Social Support ($\alpha = .82$), resulting in a higher alpha ($\alpha = .84$). After combining the scales, a principal components regression was performed.

The tolerance of the variables is used to measure collinearity. Small tolerance measures indicate linear combination of other independent variables. The variance inflation factor (VIF) is the reciprocal of the tolerance. High variance inflation factor measures indicate linear combination of other independent variables. The variance inflation factors supported combining
the COPE Inventory scales: Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning; and Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Social Support.

The beta value indicates the relative ability to predict the amount of change in the dependent variable based on one standard deviation of change in an independent variable. The beta value of statistically significant variables in Table 4-10 was used to determine the relative importance of each variable in the regression model. The individual dimensions of Humor, Affiliative Humor, and Aggressive Humor were not found to be significant based on the beta value, however, Self-Enhancing Humor and Self-Defeating Humor were shown to be significant in predicting burnout. Self-Enhancing Humor was found to be the strongest variable in predicting burnout, $\beta = -.28$. The prediction made by this independent variable indicates that as Self-Enhancing Humor is used a coping mechanism, burnout level scores are predicted to decrease. The second strongest variable in predicting burnout is Focus on and Venting of Emotions, $\beta = .26$. The prediction made by this independent variable indicates that as Focus on and Venting of Emotions is used as a coping mechanism, burnout level scores are predicted to increase. The third strongest independent variable in predicting burnout was Self-Defeating Humor, $\beta = .19$. The prediction made by this independent variable indicates that as Self-Defeating Humor is used as a coping mechanism, burnout level scores are predicted to increase.

Correlations between the independent variables in the regression model were presented in Table 4-11. Significant correlations were found between the demographic variables and the other variables in the regression model: Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Free/Reduced Population, Religious Coping, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning, Restraint, Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, and Aggressive Humor. Significant correlations were found between the COPE Inventory variables in the regression model and the other variables:
ESE Population, Free/Reduced Population, Gender, LEP Population, Years as an Educator, Self-Enhancing Humor, Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, Aggressive Humor, and Affiliative Humor. Significant correlations were found between the Humor Styles Questionnaire variables in the regression model and the other variables: Gender, Degree, Years as an Educator, Student Population, Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Support, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, and Religious Coping.
Table 4-1. Means and standard deviations for the Maslach Burnout Inventory dimensions with the demographic variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Depersonalization</th>
<th>Personal Accomplishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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<td>15.55</td>
<td>10.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>30</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>12.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>15.54</td>
<td>10.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14.96</td>
<td>11.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.68</td>
<td>12.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
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<td>15.00</td>
<td>8.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Population</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>20.32</td>
<td>15.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>9.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>751 to 1,000</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14.47</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001 to 1,500</td>
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<td>16.94</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 to 10 years</td>
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<td>15.38</td>
<td>10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15.41</td>
<td>11.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.29</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
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<td>11.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as an Educator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 years</td>
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<td>13.40</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.38</td>
<td>12.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.89</td>
<td>10.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEP Population</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% to 25%</td>
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<td>15.82</td>
<td>11.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26% to 50%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14.45</td>
<td>9.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51% to 75%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>12.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76% to 100%</td>
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<td>8.50</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESE Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% to 25%</td>
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<td>14.47</td>
<td>9.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26% to 50%</td>
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<td>20.18</td>
<td>13.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51% to 75%</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Population</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>0% to 25%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>30</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51% to 75%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15.28</td>
<td>10.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76% to 100%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>12.96</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 4-2. Descriptive statistics for the Maslach Burnout Inventory dimensions, the Humor Styles Questionnaire dimensions, and the COPE Inventory dimensions

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<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Maslach Burnout Inventory Dimensions</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.55</td>
<td>10.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depersonalization</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Accomplishment</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.85</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor Styles Questionnaire Dimensions</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative Humor</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.47</td>
<td>8.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Enhancing Humor</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.90</td>
<td>7.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive Humor</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.77</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Defeating Humor</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.71</td>
<td>9.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE Inventory Dimensions</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Reinterpretation and Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.66</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Disengagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on and Venting of Emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Social Support</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Coping</td>
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<td>Denial</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Coping</td>
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<td>10.65</td>
<td>4.67</td>
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<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Social Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
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<td>4.30</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppression of Competing Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 4-3. Correlations among burnout and demographic variables, Humor Styles Questionnaire variables, and COPE Inventory variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESE Population</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Population</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Enhancing Humor</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.01**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive Humor</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Defeating Humor</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Disengagement</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on and Venting of Emotions</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Disengagement</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table 4-4. Cronbach alphas for the Maslach Burnout Inventory dimensions, the Humor Styles Questionnaire dimensions, and the COPE Inventory dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>α</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maslach Burnout Inventory Dimensions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depersonalization (^a)</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Accomplishment (^b)</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humor Styles Questionnaire Dimensions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Affiliative Humor</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Enhancing Humor (^c)</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive Humor (^d)</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Defeating Humor (^e)</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COPE Inventory Dimensions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Reinterpretation and Growth (^f)</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Disengagement (^d)</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on and Venting of Emotions</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Social Support</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Coping (^d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denial (^d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Coping</td>
<td>.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral Disengagement (^d)</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restraint</td>
<td>.71</td>
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<td>Emotional Social Support</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance (^d)</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppression of Competing Activities (^d)</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Reinterpretation and Growth</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>joined with Planning (^g)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Social Support joined with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Social Support (^h)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(^a\)Scale reduction removed items 5, 15, and 22; \(^b\)Scale reduction removed items 4, 7, and 21; \(^c\)Scale reduction removed items 2 and 22; \(^d\)Scale was removed from further analysis due to the reliability indicated by the alpha level; \(^e\)Scale reduction removed items 16 and 28; \(^f\)Scale reduction removed items 29 and 38; \(^g\)Combined the two scales. Scale reduction removed item 29. \(^h\)Combined the two scales. Scale reduction removed item 14.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressive Humor</td>
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### Table 4-8. Regression model summary for dependent variable Burnout (Emotional Exhaustion + Depersonalization)

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<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of Estimate</th>
<th>R Square of Change</th>
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<th>df2</th>
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Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). aPredictors: (Constant), Free/Reduced Population, Degree, Gender, ESE Population, Years as a Principal, Student Population, LEP Population, Years as an Educator. bPredictors: aPredictors combined with Substance Use, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Restraint, Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Social Support, Religious Coping. cPredictors: bPredictors combined with Self-Enhancing Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, Humor, Affiliative Humor, Aggressive Humor.

### Table 4-9. Regression ANOVA for dependent variable Burnout (Emotional Exhaustion + Depersonalization)

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Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). aPredictors: (Constant), Free/Reduced Population, Degree, Gender, ESE Population, Years as a Principal, Student Population, LEP Population, Years as an Educator. bPredictors: aPredictors combined with Substance Use, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Restraint, Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Social Support, Religious Coping. cPredictors: bPredictors combined with Self-Enhancing Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, Humor, Affiliative Humor, Aggressive Humor.
Table 4-10. Regression analysis coefficients for dependent variable Burnout (Emotional Exhaustion + Depersonalization)

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Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table 4-11. Correlation matrix for regression model variables

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Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Numbers represent the following variables: 1 is Self-Enhancing Humor (n=136); 2 is Focus on and Venting of Emotions (n=136); 3 is Self-Defeating Humor (n=136); 4 is ESE Population (n=135); 5 is Substance Use (n=136); 6 is Aggressive Humor (n=136); 7 is Humor (n=136); 8 is Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Support (n=136); 9 is Religious Coping (n=136); 10 is Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning (n=136); 11 is Student Population (n=135); 12 is Years as a Principal (n=135); 13 is Gender (n=135); 14 is Free/Reduced Population (n=135); 15 is Restraint (n=136); 16 is Degree (n=135); 17 is Years as an Educator (n=135); 18 is LEP Population (n=135); and 19 is Affiliative Humor (n=136).
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of humor compared to other coping mechanisms in relation to Maslach’s (1982) theory of burnout. Because of the rapid changes in society, the school principal’s job has become more challenging and demanding (Shumate, 1999). Schools are performing more tasks than in past decades. It is important for organizations to understand burnout because its effects could seriously impact individuals and organizations (Waugh & Judd, 2003). The ability to identify the level of burnout in administrators could provide advance warning, signaling a developing problem. Principals experiencing high stress levels reduce productivity throughout the school and contribute to a negative work environment (Pahnos, 1990). When demands and pressure at work become overwhelming and exceed the ability to cope, an individual is likely to reach a breaking point (Pines & Kafry, 1978).

This study provided knowledge that will help principals determine the relationship between the use of humor as a coping mechanism and the level of burnout being experienced. Promoting the well-being of employees should increase organizational productivity and profitability (Keyes, Hysom, & Lupo, 2000). People who report higher levels of well-being are more productive, are less prone to using leave time, and have a higher rate of employee retention.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is recognized as the leading burnout measure. High scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, along with low scores on the personal accomplishment subscale, show a high degree of burnout. Low scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, along with high scores on the personal accomplishment subscale, reflect a low degree of burnout. Average scores on all three subscales indicate an average degree of burnout.
The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was developed to assess four dimensions of the function of humor in daily life. Two of the dimensions are considered to be positively related to well-being; the two other dimensions are considered to be negatively related to well-being.

The dimension of Affiliative Humor is associated with making funny comments and telling jokes which facilitate relationships while reducing tension among others. The dimension of Self-Enhancing Humor is associated with having a humorous outlook on life, showing amusement to incongruities in life and using humor as a coping mechanism. The dimension of Aggressive Humor is related to the use of humor to show superiority over others by ridicule, put-downs, and disparagement. The dimension of Self-Defeating Humor is identified with the use of humor at an individual’s own expense through excessive humorous self-ridicule.

The COPE Inventory measures 15 coping strategies. They include: (a) active coping, (b) planning, (c) suppression of competing activities, (d) restraint coping, (e) seeking social support--instrumental, (f) seeking social support--emotional, (g) focus on and venting of emotions, (h) behavioral disengagement, (i) mental disengagement, (j) positive reinterpretation and growth, (k) denial, (l) acceptance, (m) religion, (n) alcohol-drug disengagement, and (o) humor.

Active Coping is a problem-focused strategy that involves taking direct action to remove the stressor. Planning is a problem-focused strategy that involves thinking about the stressor and how to cope with it. Suppression of Competing Activities is a problem-focused strategy that involves putting aside or avoiding other tasks to be able to deal with the stressor. Restraint Coping is a problem-focused strategy that involves holding back for a more appropriate opportunity to deal effectively with the stressor. Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons is a problem-focused strategy of seeking outside assistance to deal with the stressor.
Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons is an emotion-focused strategy that involves support from others to cope with the stressor. Positive Reinterpretation and Growth is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual manages emotional distress rather than the stressor itself. Denial is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is ignored altogether. Acceptance is an emotion-focused strategy where the stressor is accepted. Turning to Religion is an emotion-focused strategy where the individual turns to religion as a means of coping with a stressor.

Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub (1989) found the following three coping strategies appear to be less useful as coping strategies: Focusing on and Venting of Emotions, a strategy whereby an individual focuses on the stressor, and vents his emotions; Behavioral Disengagement, a strategy that involves one reducing effort to deal with the stressor; and Mental Disengagement, a strategy involving the use of mental distractions and activities to distract an individual from thinking about the stressor, such as daydreaming or escaping through television.

Alcohol-Drug Disengagement is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on escaping the stressor. Humor is a strategy whereby an individual focuses on relief from the stressor.

**Summary of Findings**

The results of this study indicate that participants perceive themselves to use the positive dimensions of humor (Affiliative Humor, Self-Enhancing Humor) more than the negative dimensions of humor (Self-Defeating Humor, Aggressive Humor). While the individual humor scales showed low significance univariately, the block of humor scales together was significant, with an $r^2$ change indicating that humor was responsible for 10% of the variance in the dependent variable burnout. Humor in general was found to be significant in predicting burnout.

Mean scores reported by participants in this study suggest coping mechanisms in the COPE Inventory were used in the following order from most to least frequent: Planning, Positive
Reinterpretation and Growth, Active Coping, Instrumental Social Support, Restraint, Acceptance, Religious Coping, Suppression of Competing Activities, Emotional Social Support, Humor, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Mental Disengagement, Behavioral Disengagement, Denial, and Substance Use, which shows some similarities to the study conducted by Phelps and Jarvis (1994).

The following scales were reduced through scale reduction: Depersonalization, Personal Accomplishment, Self-Enhancing Humor, and Self-Defeating Humor. Positive Reinterpretation and Growth was combined with the Planning scale. The Instrumental Social Support scale was joined with the Emotional Social Support scale. The scales Mental Disengagement, Active Coping, Denial, Behavioral Disengagement, Acceptance, and Suppression of Competing Activities were eliminated from further analysis and not used in the regression model because of the reliability indicated by the Cronbach alpha levels.

In addition to Humor, Self-Enhancing Humor, Self-Defeating Humor, Aggressive Humor, and Affiliative Humor, the following demographic variables were included in the regression calculation: Free/Reduced Lunch Population, Degree, Gender, ESE Population, Years as a Principal, Student Population, LEP Population, and Years as an Educator. The following COPE Inventory variables were included in the regression calculation: Substance Use, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Restraint, Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Social Support, and Religious Coping.

The COPE Inventory scale Positive Reinterpretation and Growth was joined with the scale Planning after finding collinearity between these two variables in the regression calculation. Both scales provided similar information, so the scales were combined. The COPE Inventory
scale Independent Social Support was joined with the scale Emotional Social Support after finding collinearity in the regression calculation.

The beta value indicates the relative ability to predict the amount of change in the dependent variable based on one standard deviation of change in an independent variable. The beta value of statistically significant variables in Table 4-10 was used to determine the relative importance of each variable in the regression model. Self-Enhancing Humor and Self-Defeating Humor were shown to be significant in predicting burnout. Self-Enhancing Humor was found to be the strongest variable in predicting burnout, $\beta = -.28$. The prediction made by this independent variable indicates that as Self-Enhancing Humor is used a coping mechanism, burnout level scores are predicted to decrease. The second strongest independent variable in predicting burnout is Focus on and Venting of Emotions, $\beta = .26$. The prediction made by this independent variable indicates that as Focus on and Venting of Emotions is used as a coping mechanism, burnout level scores are predicted to increase. The third strongest independent variable in predicting burnout was Self-Defeating Humor, $\beta = .19$. The prediction made by this independent variable indicates that as Self-Defeating Humor is used as a coping mechanism, burnout level scores are predicted to increase.

This study had some limitations. Weak correlations could have been caused by the small sample size of the study. The removal of some of the scales could have weakened the study. There could have been possible inaccuracies in self-reporting that could affect the study. Other predictors that are not easily measured could affect the study.

**Conclusions**

Data presented in the principal components regression resulted in the development of a theoretical model for predicting burnout (Figure 5-1). A doughnut graph was created in Microsoft Excel using the beta value data found in Table 4-10. Each independent variable is
represented by a proportional section based on the beta value measure. The center of the doughnut graph is represented by the dependent variable, burnout, which was formulated through the sum of the Emotional Exhaustion scale and the Depersonalization scale. The Personal Accomplishment dimension has an inverse relationship to the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization dimensions. Maslach’s theory indicated that all three dimensions are part of the burnout construct. The model in Figure 5-1 proposes a revision in Maslach’s theory: Increasing burnout as measured by the combination of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization leads to a decline in Personal Accomplishment; decreasing burnout as measured by the combination of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization leads to an increase in Personal Accomplishment.

Each independent variable has an arrow pointing either toward the center or away from the center. Arrows pointing away from the center indicate those variables that predict decreasing burnout scores based on the use of those variables as coping mechanisms. Arrows pointing toward the center indicate those variables that predict increasing burnout scores based on the use of those variables as coping mechanisms.

Self-Enhancing Humor is associated with having a humorous outlook on life, showing amusement to incongruities in life and using humor as a coping mechanism. Self-Enhancing Humor was the independent variable having the most significance in the regression model in predicting decreasing levels of burnout. This study supports the use of Self-Enhancing Humor as an effective coping mechanism.

Affiliative Humor is associated with making funny comments and telling jokes which facilitate relationships while reducing tension among others. Affiliative Humor was found to
have a slight impact in predicting increasing levels of burnout. This study did not support the use of Affiliative Humor as an effective coping mechanism.

Aggressive Humor is related to the use of humor to show superiority over others by ridicule, put-downs, and disparagement. Aggressive Humor was found to predict increasing levels of burnout. This study did not support the use of Aggressive Humor as an effective coping mechanism.

Self-Defeating Humor is identified with the use of humor at an individual’s own expense through excessive humorous self-ridicule. Self-Defeating Humor was found to predict increasing levels of burnout. This study did not support the use of Self-Defeating Humor as an effective coping mechanism.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. In this study, the sample size for males was small. Males reported higher means for burnout levels than females. Replication of this study with a larger sample size including more males could be conducted to determine if burnout levels are different between males and females. If so, why?

2. In this study, participants holding a specialist degree reported higher means for burnout levels than those with a master’s or doctorate degree. Research is needed with a larger sample size to determine if degree type is related to burnout levels. If so, why?

3. In this study, principals with 16 to 20 years of principal experience reported the lowest means for burnout levels, and those principals with 11 to 15 years of educator experience reported the highest means for burnout levels. Research is needed to determine the variables responsible for decreasing the likelihood of burnout as experienced educators become experienced principals.

4. In this study, principals working in schools with 51% to 75% of their entire student population identified as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) reported higher means for levels of burnout than those in schools with less than 51% or more than 75% of their students identified as LEP. Research is needed to determine factors related to levels of burnout in Limited English Proficiency schools.

5. In this study, principals working in schools with 26% to 50% of their entire student population identified as Exceptional Student Education (ESE) reported higher means for levels of burnout than those in schools with less than 26% or more than 50% of their
students identified as ESE. Research is needed to determine factors related to levels of burnout in Exceptional Student Education schools.

6. In this study, principals working in schools with 76% to 100% of their entire population qualifying to participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch program as determined by the percent of students enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch program reported higher means for levels of burnout than those in schools with less than 76% of their students identified as Free/Reduced Population. Research is needed to determine the factors related to levels of burnout in this setting.

7. This study was conducted with the following assumptions: participants had a common understanding of the terminology used in the survey instruments; and, participants accurately self-rated on all of the survey instruments. Replicate this study to determine if the data collected shows similar results in the correlations among variables.

8. The small sample size of this study could have affected the data analysis results. Replication of this study with a larger sample size could be conducted to confirm or disprove the results of this study.

9. Humor was shown to be significant in predicting burnout. Conduct this study with a larger sample size using only the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Humor Styles Questionnaire to confirm or disprove the significance of the use of humor in predicting burnout.

10. Humor was found to be significant in predicting burnout. Conduct a study to ascertain if a maximum limit in the use of humor exists, and, if reaching or surpassing that limit, determine if the linear correlation between the use of humor and the prediction of burnout ceases to show linearity.

11. A new theoretical model was presented in this study. Conduct a study using the Maslach Burnout Inventory and other instruments to test the relationship of principal burnout to Personal Accomplishment.

12. Conduct a study to determine if the use of humor is more prevalent in some personality types over other personality types.
Figure 5-1. Theorized regression model of burnout
Note. Predictors: Self-Enhancing Humor, Focus on and Venting of Emotions, Self-Defeating Humor, ESE Population, Substance Use, Aggressive Humor, Humor, Instrumental Social Support joined with Emotional Social Support, Religious Coping, Positive Reinterpretation and Growth joined with Planning, Student Population, Years as a Principal, Gender, Free/Reduced Population, Restraint, (Constant), Degree, Years as an Educator, LEP Population, and Affiliative Humor.
DATE: February 21, 2007

TO: Drew A. Hawkins
427 Woodcrest Street
Winter Springs, FL 32708

FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair
University of Florida
Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol #2007-U-0164

TITLE: The Use of Humor Compared to Other Coping Mechanisms in Relation to Maslach's Theory of Burnout

SPONSOR: None

I am pleased to advise you that the University of Florida Institutional Review Board has recommended approval of this protocol. Based on its review, the UFIRB determined that this research presents no more than minimal risk to participants. Given your protocol, it is essential that you obtain signed documentation of informed consent from each participant. Enclosed is the dated, IRB-approved informed consent to be used when recruiting participants for the research.

It is essential that each of your participants sign a copy of your approved informed consent that bears the IRB approval stamp and expiration date.

If you wish to make any changes to this protocol, including the need to increase the number of participants authorized, you must disclose your plans before you implement them so that the Board can assess their impact on your protocol. In addition, you must report to the Board any unexpected complications that affect your participants.

If you have not completed this protocol by February 14, 2008, please telephone our office (392-0433), and we will discuss the renewal process with you. It is important that you keep your Department Chair informed about the status of this research protocol.

ISF:cl

An Equal Opportunity Institution
APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT
Department of Educational Administration and Policy  
College of Education  
University of Florida  
PO Box 117049  
Gainesville, FL 32611-7049  
Phone: (352) 392-2391

Informed Consent

Dear School Principal:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida, and as part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a research study on the use of humor compared to other coping mechanisms in relation to Maslach’s theory of burnout.

A random sample of 400 principals in schools across Florida was generated. Each participant will be asked to complete the demographic sheet, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Humor Styles Questionnaire, and the COPE Inventory. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Each participant will be assigned a random code that will be printed on the return envelope included with the survey instruments. This random code will be used to track survey responses. The random codes will be stored separately from the survey responses to maintain the participants’ confidentiality and anonymity. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list and codes will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

The time required to complete participation in this study is 20 minutes. There are no anticipated risks or potential benefits that you will receive as a result of participating in this study. No compensation will be provided for participation in this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

If you have questions about the study, you may contact me directly at: Drew A. Hawkins (Graduate Student, University of Florida), 427 Woodcrest Street, Winter Springs, FL 32708, or you may contact Dr. Phillip A. Clark, (Professor, Doctoral Committee Chairperson) at University of Florida, 200B Norman Hall, PO Box 117049, Gainesville, FL 32611. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in the study, you can contact: University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; ph 352-392-0433.

Agreement:
I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: ___________________________ Date: ____________
Principal Investigator: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2007-U-0164  
For Use Through 02/14/2008
APPENDIX C
PERMISSION TO USE THE HUMOR STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE
Hi Drew,

Here is the HSQ, along with scoring instructions. Feel free to use it in your research. All the best in your research! Hopefully we'll meet at a future ISHS conference.

Best regards,

Rod

On Mon Jan 15 15:49:26 EST 2007, Rod Martin <ramartin@uwo.ca> wrote:

Dear Drew,

Glad to hear about your doctoral dissertation on humor! Your research sounds interesting and worthwhile. I'm happy to give you permission to use the CHS in this study at no cost, as long as the website is accessible to the participants only, and is not available to the general public.

However, as an alternative to the CHS, I would strongly recommend that you consider a newer measure that we've developed, called the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ). This measure contains 4 subscales, one of which is essentially the same as the CHS, but with much better reliability (there were some problems with low internal consistency on the CHS). In addition, there are 3 other scales measuring other humor styles of daily life. Two of the 4 scales are considered to be potentially beneficial to well-being, and two are potentially detrimental. So it gets at negative as well as positive aspects of humor. My guess is that some styles of humor may actually be positively associated with burnout. I'm attaching a copy of the article in which we first published this measure. In my own research, I'm no longer using the CHS, and am using the HSQ instead. Let me know if you'd like to use this measure, and I'll send you a copy of it.

In case you're not aware of it, I have recently written a book on the psychology of humor, which covers the research and theory in all areas of this topic. If you're doing your dissertation on humor in psychology, you will likely find this to be helpful. Here's the publisher's website for this book:


Finally, you might also want to consider joining the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS), a scholarly society of humor researchers. (One small perk of joining is that members can get my book at a reduced price!) This summer the annual ISHS conference is in Newport, Rhode Island. It would be great if you could come and perhaps present a paper on your research and meet many others studying in this field. Here's the ISHS website: http://www.hnu.edu/ishs/

Good luck with your research!
- Rod Martin

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Rod A Martin, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Psychology
University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5C2
Dear Drew: You have my permission to use the CHS as stated. You might also try contacting Dr. Martin who is at the University of Western Ontario. Good luck with your research. There is no cost involved but I would like to know if you find anything of interest. Cordially, H Lefcourt

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APPENDIX D
PERMISSION TO USE COPE INVENTORY ON COPE INVENTORY WEBSITE
COPE (complete version)

The COPE Inventory was developed to assess a broad range of coping responses, several of which had an explicit basis in theory. The inventory includes some responses that are expected to be dysfunctional, as well as some that are expected to be functional. It also includes at least 2 pairs of polar-opposite tendencies. These were included because each scale is unipolar (the absence of this response does not imply the presence of its opposite), and because we think people engage in a wide range of coping during a given period, including both of each pair of opposites.

The items have been used in at least 3 formats. One is a "dispositional" or trait-like version in which respondents report the extent to which they usually do the things listed, when they are stressed. A second is a time-limited version in which respondents indicate the degree to which they actually did have each response during a particular period in the past. The third is a time-limited version in which respondents indicate the degree to which they have been having each response during a period up to the present. The formats differ in their verb forms: the dispositional format is present tense, the situational-past format is past tense, the third format is present tense progressive (I am ...) or present perfect (I have been ...).

You are welcome to use all scales of the COPE, or to choose selected scales for use (see below regarding scoring). Feel free as well to adapt the language for whatever time scale you are interested in. Be sure to adapt the instructions for completion, as well as the items themselves. An abbreviated version of the COPE has also been created, if you have time constraints or high response burden.

If you are interested in assessing in Spanish, the abbreviated version was translated into (western hemisphere) Spanish by our research group, and can be found here. The full COPE has been translated (independently) into Spanish Spanish by Dr. Esther Calvete, of the University of Deusto in Bilbao, Spain. It can be found here. I believe that the COPE has been translated by at least one team into French. Contact Dr. Lise Fillion at the University Laval in Quebec: Lise.Fillion@fsi.ulaval.ca

DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

Please check one response for each category:

Gender:
_____ Male
_____ Female

Level of highest completed degree:
_____ Master
_____ Specialist
_____ Doctorate

Number of students in the school where you are principal:
_____ Less than 500
_____ 501 to 750
_____ 751 to 1,000
_____ 1,001 to 1,500
_____ 1,501 or more

Number of years you have been a principal:
_____ Less than 5 years
_____ 5 to 10 years
_____ 11 to 15 years
_____ 16 to 20 years
_____ More than 20 years

Number of years in the education profession:
_____ Less than 5 years
_____ 5 to 10 years
_____ 11 to 15 years
_____ 16 to 20 years
_____ More than 20 years

Percentage of students at your school that are ESOL/LEP:
_____ 0% to 25%
_____ 26% to 50%
_____ 51% to 75%
_____ 76% to 100%

Percentage of students at your school that are ESE/Exceptional Students:
_____ 0% to 25%
_____ 26% to 50%
_____ 51% to 75%
_____ 76% to 100%

Percentage of students at your school that are enrolled in the Free/Reduced Lunch Program:
_____ 0% to 25%
_____ 26% to 50%
_____ 51% to 75%
_____ 76% to 100%
REFERENCE LIST


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Drew A. Hawkins was born in Orlando, Florida, and has lived in central Florida for 45 years. He attended school in the Orange County Public School system, including Azalea Park Elementary School, Stonewall Jackson Jr. High School, and Colonial High School. While earning his associate of arts degree at Valencia Community College, he worked at the St. Stephens Presbyterian Church School, coaching children and working in the daycare center. It was there he decided he wanted to become a teacher. Upon completing his degree at Valencia, he then attended the University of Central Florida, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in elementary education. While working on his degree, he substituted in classrooms to gain teaching experience and to meet school administrators.

Upon completion of his degree in 1984, he taught at Riverside Elementary School in Orange County, where he gained experience teaching different grade levels, worked with different principals, and learned different administrative styles. It was also where he met his wife, Phyllis. They have two children, Jay and Sarah.

While serving as a teacher, he earned his master’s degree from the University of Central Florida in 1988. In 1998, he was promoted to the position of assistant principal, and served at Waterford Elementary School until 2003. He was then transferred to serve as assistant principal at Little River Elementary School, where he is currently employed.

In August 2000, Mr. Hawkins started his doctoral program at the University of Florida and received a Specialist degree in Education in 2002. In May 2008 he was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Florida.