

BIOGRAPHICAL, WORK, FAMILY, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT VARIABLES
RELATED TO BURNOUT IN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS IN GEORGIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Charlotte R. Wallinga)

ABSTRACT

Burnout in Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H County Extension agents was studied. Biographical, work, and family variables as well as social support were examined in relation to three aspects of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Correlational analyses were conducted to determine relations between variables. Emotional exhaustion in this sample was comparable to other human service professionals. Depersonalization was exceptionally low and personal accomplishment exceptionally high, indicating low burnout. Burnout was related to being young in age, fewer years of experience on the job, nights spent away from home due to work-related travel, and low supervisor support. Co-worker support and general social support were related to high personal accomplishment. The results indicate that County Extension agents have demanding, but rewarding, jobs. Furthermore, agents, especially those who are young and who are new on the job, may benefit from intervention or training programs targeted at preventing burnout.

INDEX WORDS: Cooperative Extension Service, Burnout, Social support

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Professional burnout is often a significant difficulty for people who have social services careers. While careers in human service professions remain popular at the entry level, often organizations have difficulty retaining competent and motivated individuals in the work of directly helping others (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Teachers, nurses, social workers, counselors, psychologists and others in human service roles work with people with some kind of need. Human service work is emotionally intensive, potentially exhausting, and can lead professionals to the point where they no longer feel a sense of accomplishment in the work that they do. Any person who works in a human service profession might experience burnout (Maslach, 1982).

According to several researchers (Golembiewski, Boudreau, Munzenrider, & Luo, 1996; Maslach & Leiter, 1997), professional burnout is a predicament that has reached epidemic proportions. While there is still conflict among scholars about the precise definition of the burnout construct, there is agreement that the presence of burnout is destructive to human service professionals, the organizations for which they are employed, and the families to whom they go home (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Maslach and Leiter (1997) assert that professional burnout “represents a major setback on the road toward a better work life” (p. 1).

Numerous scholars have been interested in understanding the correlates of burnout among different human service professionals (see Lee & Ashforth, 1996 and

Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998 for reviews). Researchers have noted that several biographical, work, and family variables are related to burnout. Some of the variables associated with burnout include little job experience (Martin & Schnicke, 1998; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), low salary (Holloway & Wallinga, 1990; Martin & Schnicke, 1998), heavy workload (Cherniss, 1980; Pines, 1993; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Winnubst, 1993), being single (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), and not having children (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Pines, 1993).

Of the variables that influence the presence of burnout in a professional, social support is one that has received much attention (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Social support has been found to be a positive resource for individuals undergoing a variety of stressful situations (Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993). Empirically, social support received from co-workers (Burke & Richardson, 1993) and social support received from family members (Ray & Miller, 1994) is related to low experiences of burnout for human service workers. Social support is an important variable in the study of burnout for all human service professionals.

One human service worker whose experience of burnout has been studied sparingly is the County Extension agent (CEA). CEAs are employees of land-grant universities whose professional responsibilities include educating community members about topics that are relevant to them (White & Burnham, 1995). Agents perform assessments to identify areas in which community members need more knowledge and help them meet these educational needs by providing seminars, preparing literature, answering questions, and organizing volunteers (Ramussen, 1989). Agents interface directly with the public and help people solve problems pertaining to such issues as child

development, parenting, community development, and nutrition (Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, 2001). Clearly, they are human service professionals and thus have the potential to experience burnout as a result of their work.

Burnout in CEA's in Georgia has not been examined since 1988 (Bower, 1989); hence, the present levels of burnout in these professionals are unknown. Furthermore, the biographical, work, and family characteristics that are related to burnout in CEA's in Georgia are also unknown. Finally, the relation between general support, support in the workplace, support in the family and burnout in CEA's in Georgia is also not known.

Understanding more about the relation between specific variables, social support, and burnout in CEA's has the potential to help prevent or lessen the experience of burnout in some professionals. Prevention or intervention programs may be instituted or new policies adopted that help lessen job-related stressors for agents and reduce burnout for Georgia agents. Additionally, empirical findings related to burnout in this population may be able to be generalized to CEA's in other states and other human service professionals.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relation between biographical, family, and work variables and burnout in CEA's in Georgia. The second purpose is to examine the relation between general social support, social support in the workplace, and social support in the family and burnout in CEA's in Georgia.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following is a review of the research on professional burnout in human service professionals. The problem of professional burnout and the most common paradigm of burnout will be presented. Biographical, work, and family variables that are empirically related to burnout will be explored. Social support also will be examined in relation to burnout. As social support may be conceptualized in a number of ways, general social support, social support within the workplace, and social support within the family will be reviewed. A brief description of the Cooperative Extension Service and the varied job responsibilities of County Extension agents will follow to illustrate the potential for burnout in the employees within this organization. Because the Cooperative Extension Service varies from state to state, the Cooperative Extension Service and County Extension agents in the state of Georgia will be examined. Finally, the hypotheses for the study will be presented.

The Problem of Professional Burnout

Professional burnout is broadly defined as physical or emotional exhaustion that occurs as a result of long-term emotional stress on the job (Maslach, 1982). Burnout is often used to describe the stressful situation experienced by human service professionals such as social workers, counselors, nurses, and teachers as a result of the interpersonal nature of their work (Maslach, 1982). A plethora of research has been conducted examining burnout in human service professionals (see Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998 for review).

The effects of burnout are not limited to the unpleasant symptoms that characterize the syndrome (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach, 1982). Individuals who are affected by burnout have the potential to face a variety of related personal problems that may be physical, psychological, or emotional in nature (Cherniss, 1980; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Work organizations are affected by the burnout experience of employees, which can result in low job productivity and high employee turnover (Jones, 1982; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Families may be affected by the burnout experience of a family member with such consequences as marital dissatisfaction and family conflict (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach, 1982; Ray & Miller, 1994; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Paradigms of Burnout

Burnout has been conceptualized in a number of ways by various researchers (e.g., Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger, 1980; Golembiewski, Munzenrider, & Stevenson, 1986; Maslach, 1982). Freudenberger (1980) first identified the construct of “burn-out” in relation to human professionals at work. Cherniss’ (1980) model of burnout focused on the process and development of burnout over time. Maslach (1982) developed a model of burnout that focused on three distinct symptoms of burnout. Golembiewski, Munzenrider, and Stevenson (1986) developed a “Phase Model” of burnout that synthesized Cherniss’ (1980) and Maslach’s (1982) concepts of burnout development and symptomatology into eight types of burnout.

Maslach’s (1982; Maslach, et al., 1996) conceptualization of burnout and corresponding measure of burnout are currently the most widely accepted (Maslach, et al., 1996; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Thus, for the present study, Maslach’s paradigm of burnout will be utilized.

Maslach's Paradigm of Burnout

Burnout remains a broad, diffuse, and sometimes disjointed construct as it is described in the academic literature (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). At the focus of Maslach's (1982; 1993) conceptualization of burnout is the notion that burnout is interpersonal and relational in nature and results from continuous and stressful social interactions with clients. Maslach grouped the reactions that professionals have in response to these interpersonal stresses into three main components: presence of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of clients, and a decrease in the sense of personal accomplishment perceived in one's work. She named this collection of symptoms "psychological burnout" (Maslach, 1982).

The three components of burnout are conceptually distinct from one another. Emotional exhaustion refers to a feeling of being emotionally overwhelmed. This feeling results from bearing the emotional demands of many people without relief. According to Maslach (1982), emotional exhaustion is at the center of the experience of professional burnout. The second component of burnout, depersonalization, involves distancing oneself from those who seek assistance. This symptom is characterized by viewing clients in a reductionistic or stereotyped way rather than in a personal way (Maslach, 1982). The third symptom of burnout is a decrease in the sense of personal accomplishment a professional experiences in his or her work. Reduced personal accomplishment as a symptom of burnout refers to "a decline in one's feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work" (Maslach, 1993, p. 21).

Maslach and her colleagues created an instrument, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, et al., 1996), which is one of the most widely used measures of professional

burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The inventory consists of three subscales that measure each component of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. “High” burnout is defined as the presence of high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and a low score on the Personal Accomplishment subscale (Maslach et al., 1996).

Burnout From a Systems Theory Perspective

Thorough understanding of a human service professional’s experience of burnout must occur within the context of the system or systems in which he or she is embedded. Examples of such “systems” include a family, work environment, social network, or any other social network (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1994).

Systems Theory researchers (e.g., Klein & White, 1996; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1994) propose a holistic examination of people and social phenomena. There are two major concepts that define this theory. The first is the idea that all parts of the system are interconnected (Klein & White, 1996). Thus, the activities of one individual within a system affect other members of that system. For example, the absence of an employee from work due to illness affects the co-workers who must compensate for the responsibilities of the person who is missing.

A second major concept in Systems Theory is that of hierarchy, referring to the interrelations among smaller and larger systems (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1994). According to Whitchurch and Constantine (1994), “...any given system consists of smaller systems called *subsystems*, and is embedded within larger systems called *suprasystems*” (p. 332). For example, a family system has within it a marital subsystem consisting of the relationship between the husband and wife within the family. A family

is also located within a community suprasystem outside of the family. A work group can also be interpreted as a system. It is made up of smaller individual relationships such as supervisor-worker subsystems and co-worker subsystems. It is also located within an organizational suprasystem. The individual who is a worker and a family member connects the family system and the work system. Thus, factors that affect one at work may affect the family system and vice versa.

The variables that are related to burnout may be present within different subsystems or spheres within a person's life. Biographical, work, and family characteristics may be related to the presence of burnout (e.g., Boyle, Grap, Younger, & Thornby, 1991; Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Dollard, Winefield, & Winefield, 2001; Duquette, Kerouac, Sandhu, Ducharme, & Saulnier, 1995; Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Holloway & Wallinga, 1990; Martin & Schnike, 1998; Maslach, et al., 1996; Pines, 1993; Ray & Miller, 1994; Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; van Wijk, 1997). For the present study, biographical, work, and family variables associated burnout will be explored from a Systems Theory perspective.

The variables related to burnout in a human service professional are complex and multi-faceted. Nevertheless, discerning those variables leads to both sharpened understanding of the phenomenon and potential prevention of the problem. For the present study, biographical variables related to burnout will be studied first. Work variables related to burnout will be considered second. Finally, family variables related to burnout will be examined.

Biographical Variables Related to Burnout

The most basic human system is the self system (Nichols, 1987). An individual has certain characteristics that he or she brings to the work situation that are independent of the system, including one's gender, age, job experience, educational attainment, and other personal characteristics. Such biographical characteristics have been found to be correlated with the experience of burnout in professionals (Boyle, et al., 1991; Duquette et al., 1995; Holloway & Wallinga, 1990; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Some characteristics are related to low burnout experiences while other characteristics are related to high burnout experiences (Boyle, et al., 1991; Burisch, 1993; Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Dollard et al., 2001; Duquette et al., 1995; Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Holloway & Wallinga, 1990; Martin & Schnike, 1998; Maslach, et al., 1996; Pines, 1993; Ray & Miller, 1994; Russell, et al., 1987; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; van Wijk, 1997).

Empirical findings regarding differences in burnout scores between men and women are mixed. Russell et al. (1987) found that gender was related to experiences of burnout in a sample of public middle school teachers; however, they did not report the direction of the relation. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) reported that the relation between burnout and gender is ambiguous. While it is more often reported that men are more likely to suffer from burnout than women, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) report findings where women score higher on emotional exhaustion than men, and men score significantly higher on depersonalization than women.

Researchers have found age effects related to burnout to be relatively consistent (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Younger human service professionals often experience

burnout more than professionals over age 30 years (Martin & Schnike, 1998; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). For example, Russell et al (1987) reported the decline of burnout symptoms with age for public middle school teachers as did van Wijk (1997) for military nurses. In fact, burnout symptoms often decline with age or work experience for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and increase over time for personal accomplishment (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The influence of age on the experience of burnout is well-supported across human service professions and may be related to job experience (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Experience on the job may give individuals the opportunity to develop proficiency on the job and leave them less susceptible to experiencing burnout than individuals without the same experience. Martin and Schnike (1998) found that tenure was negatively correlated with burnout for family and children's service workers. They found the same pattern for psychiatric workers. In a recent review, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) reported that experience on the job was negatively related to burnout across human service professions. Thus, job experience is a factor related to low burnout in human service professionals.

Educational attainment is an individual demographic characteristic that has been examined in relation to burnout. Like gender, the evidence for the relation between educational attainment and burnout is still inconclusive. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) report that human service professionals with a higher level of educational attainment are more likely to experience burnout than are professionals with lower educational achievements. Maslach et al. (1996), however, report mixed results. They find that more highly educated professionals experience more depersonalization than professionals with

lesser education, whereas less educated professionals experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion than their highly-educated counterparts. Such results are difficult to interpret and merit further research examining the relation between educational attainment and burnout.

It is important to note that several researchers have found no relation between individual demographic variables (e.g., age, educational attainment, ethnicity, years in current position) and burnout (Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Holloway & Wallinga, 1990; Ray & Miller, 1994). Holloway and Wallinga (1990) found that number of years in current position, age, and education did not correlate with burnout in child life specialists. Burke and Greenglass (1993) found that individual demographic characteristics had little correlation with the presence of psychological burnout in a sample of school-based educators. Finally, Ray and Miller (1994) reported that job tenure was not an influential variable in predicting perceptions of work stress or reports of burnout for nursing home nurses.

Other biographical variables that have been found to be related to burnout include personality (Boyle et al., 1991; Duquette et al., 1995; Holloway, & Wallinga, 1990; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) and motivation (Pines, 1993), but will not be included in the present study. While these are established correlates of burnout, they are not within the scope of the present study.

Work Variables Related to Burnout

Variables in a person's work environment are often correlated with employee's experiences of burnout. Some of the work-related variables studied in relation to burnout include salary (Holloway & Wallinga, 1990; Martin & Schnike, 1998), workload and

work pressure (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Winnubst, 1993). Work variables are commonly studied in relation to burnout, as management in work organizations often has the most control over these variables (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

The salary one earns can be a factor that influences the development of burnout for an employee. Empirical evidence supports the obvious notion that individuals who have higher salaries and those who perceive their salaries to be adequate compensation for their work are less likely to experience burnout than their lower paid counterparts. Holloway and Wallinga (1990) found that perceived adequacy of salary was related to experiences of burnout for child life specialists who work with hospitalized children; if a child life specialist perceived her salary to be adequate, she was less likely to report experiencing burnout. More recently, Martin and Schnike (1998) found that for social workers a higher salary was negatively correlated with burnout. Thus, perceived adequate pay or higher pay in general may influence professionals' experiences of burnout.

Heavy workload and work pressure are also studied in relation to burnout. Researchers have reported a correlation between heavy workloads, long working hours, and burnout in human service workers (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Winnubst, 1993) including social workers (Cherniss, 1980; Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Pines, 1993; van Wijk, 1997). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) reported that human service professionals experience more burnout when they work overtime, have a high level of direct client contact, and have a high caseload. Pines (1993) suggested that work pressure, as defined as not having enough time or resources to do the work adequately, contributed to burnout in nurses.

Family Variables Related to Burnout

The influence of family variables on burnout in human service professionals has not been widely studied. Typically, burnout is studied in relation to the specific work environment. Nevertheless, human service professionals are embedded in a family system; variables within that system might then be related to the worker's experience of burnout. Of the many possible family variables that might be associated with burnout, marital status and having children in the home are two that have been studied (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Holloway & Wallinga, 1990; Ray & Miller, 1994; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Numerous researchers have found a correlation between marital status and presence of burnout. In a review of several studies of home and work stress and burnout in County Extension agents, Fetsch and Kennington (1997) note that individuals who experience burnout are more likely to be single than married. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) similarly report a positive correlation between being unmarried and experiencing burnout. Furthermore, human service professionals who are divorced tend to experience less burnout than those who have never been married (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Parenting children in the home is another factor that has been examined in relation to burnout with mixed findings. For instance, Ray and Miller (1994) found that mothers experienced more stress related to balancing work and home than did nonmothers for nursing home nurses. Conversely, in a study examining County Extension agents, Fetsch and Kennington (1997) found that agents who have families with children in the home tended to report less burnout than those who did not have

children. Thus, while children may produce an added burden in a person's life, they may also provide an important source of meaning, which may help protect human service professionals from burnout (Pines, 1993).

The link between family variables including marital status, number of children, ages of children, and psychological burnout for human service professionals remains inconclusive. Many researchers studying burnout in human service professionals have not reported familial demographic information in their publications. Furthermore, the relation between burnout and age of children, having children living at home, having other family members who require care, and time spent in caregiving activities have not been examined (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

The positive relation between presence of family and children and low experiences of burnout in human service workers may result from the social support that those family members provide to the employee. Social support has been studied extensively in relation to burnout (see Burke & Richardson, 1993; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998 for reviews). Like other variables that are related to burnout, social support may be examined from a Systems Theory perspective.

Social Support and Burnout From a Systems Theory Perspective

Many experts on burnout including Maslach (1982) and Cherniss (1980) have promoted social support as a variable that helps the problem of burnout. A supportive social structure has been consistently related to low levels of job stress and burnout among many different types of human service professionals in empirical studies (e.g., Boyle et al., 1991; Davis-Sacks, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1985; Duquette et al., 1995; Etzion, 1984; Fong, 1993; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Ogus, 1990; Russell

et al., 1987; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Shinn, Rosario, Mørch, & Chestnut, 1984).

Hallsten (1993) proposes that if work conditions are stressful and a human service professional lacks social support, burnout is likely to occur. Conversely, if an employee has social support under the same stressful working conditions, burnout is not as likely to occur (Pines, 1993)

Social support may be conceptualized in various ways, as individuals may have supportive social networks in more than one area of their lives. Social support may be conceptualized in a general fashion, encompassing all the supportive people in an individual's life (Cultrona & Russell, 1987; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Social support also may be conceptualized by focusing on social support specific to a particular environment, such as work or family (e.g., Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, and Pinneau, 1980).

General Social Support

Social support is often conceptualized as a general resource that individuals have in varying degrees from high to low (Caplan et al., 1980; Cultrona & Russell, 1987) and has been examined in relation to burnout in human service workers (Boyle et al., 1991; Burke & Greenglass, 1993; 1995; Etzion, 1984; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Shinn et al., 1984). Social support has been correlated empirically with low professional burnout for human service professionals in a variety of roles (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Numerous empirical studies support the correlation between social support and burnout. In a meta-analysis of the correlates of the three dimensions of job burnout, Lee and Ashforth (1996) showed that social support was significantly negatively correlated

with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and positively correlated with personal accomplishment across 61 studies. Thus, individuals who reported having high levels of social support also reported low levels of burnout. Boyle et al. (1991) found that low social support predicts burnout for critical care nurses. Burke and Greenglass (1995) reported low social support to be related to burnout in school-based educators. In a recent review of factors affecting burnout, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) reported that deficient social support accounts for a small, but significant portion of the variance of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Although effect sizes are sometimes small, over time and across human service professions, social support has consistently been correlated with burnout in human service professionals (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Social Support in the Workplace

Social support within the workplace is claimed to be one of the most influential factors related to burnout in human service professionals (Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Pines, 1993; Russell et al., 1987). Pines (1993) asserts that a supportive work environment can enable human services professionals to achieve their goals and expectations by maintaining the motivation and meaning necessary to engage in the emotional work that their jobs entail. Conversely, if a professional lacks social support in the workplace, he or she may be likely to experience the work stress more acutely and experience burnout (Winnubst, 1993).

The empirical relation between social support in the workplace and burnout is substantiated by evidence. In a study conducted by Russell et al. (1987), teachers who had a perception of high support from supervisors reported lower burnout than teachers

who had a perception of low support from supervisors. Similar findings have been reported for schoolteachers (Burke & Greenglass, 1995), social workers (Koeske & Koeske, 1989), and critical care nurses (Boyle et al., 1991). Winnubst (1993) reported findings among nurses, welfare workers, and psychologists that showed low social support from co-workers was consistently related to reports of burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Similar findings have been reported for nurse educators (Fong, 1993), military nurses (van Wijk, 1997) and psychiatric hospital staff (Corrigan, Holmes, & Luchins, 1995). As recently as 2001, Dollard et al. reported that support from colleagues has the potential to reduce levels of stress and strain, which are known to influence the development of burnout. Evidently, social support within the workplace, either from supervisors or co-workers, is consistently related to low experiences of burnout with human service professionals.

Social Support in the Family

Social support received from family members is not often studied in relation to professional burnout experienced by human service professionals. Some authors have examined the influence that family support has on the presence or absence of burnout in human service professionals (Bower, 1989; Davis-Sacks et al., 1985). The results of these studies are thus few and conclusions are mixed. The family can be a source of great meaning and support for individuals, which might explain a negative relation between burnout and presence of supportive families (Pines, 1993). Additionally, a lack of family support may add stress to an individual's life and influence the development of worker burnout (Drory & Shamir, 1988).

Social support from family members empirically has been empirically correlated with burnout. Ray and Miller (1994) found that family support was negatively related to the emotional exhaustion aspect of burnout for nursing home nurses. Davis-Sacks, et al. (1985) reported that support from one's spouse was a variable that was associated with low levels of burnout in social workers. In their chapter reviewing causes and consequence of burnout, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) cite mixed results for lack of support within the family. While some researchers have found a relation between lack of support within the family and employee burnout, others have found no such relation.

The relation between family support and burnout at work seems a likely one and has been supported by a few empirical studies, however, it has not been widely studied and thus the relation between family support and burnout remains speculative. Further research is needed to determine the nature of the relation or lack of relation between family social support and burnout.

County Extension Agents and Burnout

It is evident that burnout has been examined extensively in such professions as nursing, elementary and middle school teaching, and social work. One human service profession in which burnout has not been widely studied is community education. The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) is the outreach arm of land-grant universities. The state CES's work to educate community members about the research generated in the university setting. These educational programs are designed to make meaningful improvements in communities. Most state CES's have program areas in which to focus their work, including agriculture, family and consumer sciences, and youth development (Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, 2001).

County Extension agents (CEA's) are the professionals who generally deliver educational community programs for the state CES. They are among the most widely organized and diverse community educators (Warner & Christenson, 1984; Rasmussen, 1989). They serve diverse populations and teach on wide varieties of topics. Their work entails both human service and teaching work. Limited research has been conducted examining burnout in County Extension agents (Bower, 1989; Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). As the role of community educators such as CEA's continues to expand, more knowledge is needed to understand the stressful nature of their work and potential for burnout.

County Extension Agents

CEA's are the primary service providers and educators of the CES. They are assigned to a territory within a state and are responsible for providing services to that area (Bartholomew & Smith, 1990). The community programs and services they create and deliver are specific to their own area of specialization and are a combination of teaching and human services. Examples of specializations include agriculture, community development, family and consumer sciences, and youth development (Rasmussen, 1989). Only Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) and 4-H Youth Development (4-H) County Extension agents focus on children and families as their primary concern (Warner & Christenson, 1984). Thus, only these two specializations will be discussed further.

FACS agents have a range of areas of expertise and provide education and service on such broad topics as child development, foods and nutrition, and consumer economics (Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, 2001). FACS agents develop and implement programs that are a combination of teaching and human service work. For instance, a

current initiative in the Georgia Cooperative Extension is a program that educates child care providers and parents about infant brain development through educational workshops and print media (Bales, 2000). An example of more human service oriented work is a program to reduce consumer debt through informational brochures and counseling (Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, 2001).

Arguably, the most well known division of the Cooperative Extension Service is the 4-H Youth division (Rasmussen, 1989). These agents develop programs for youth ages 5 to 19 years that focus on rural or agricultural topics, family and consumer sciences, environmental education, plants and animals, science and technology, and leadership development (Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, 2001; Ramussen, 1989). Like FACS agents, the services that 4-H agents employ are both teaching and human service oriented. They both teach youth about specific subject areas and help them with such issues as problem solving, leadership, and healthy lifestyle choices (Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, 2001).

The Stresses of County Extension Agents and the Potential for Burnout

County Extension agents often report having demanding and sometimes stressful job roles and responsibilities (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). Pressures at work, heavy workload, organizational change, and difficulty in balancing work and family are often realities for CEA's (Bartholomew & Smith, 1990). Stresses such as these listed are potential related to burnout in CEA's.

CEA's have a number of pressures at work. The state CES's are undergoing budget cutbacks (Acker, 2001), thus creating larger districts for agents (Bartholomew & Smith, 1990). CEA's are also receiving increased encouragement from higher levels of

government to institute programs aimed at specific audiences (Betts et al., 1998).

Consequently, agents are required to perform more work with fewer resources (D.

Bower, personal communication, November 5, 2001).

Partly as a consequence of the budgetary and policy changes taking place, CEA's have a heavier workload. Furthermore, the nature of their work requires them to balance multiple demands (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). Additionally, working long hours and work-related travel are common in the work of CEA's (J. Hubert, personal communication, February 13, 2002).

Organizational change itself may be stressful for workers, especially as it can bring about role conflict and ambiguity, which are correlates of burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Cooperative Extension is constantly evolving as the needs of communities change over time. Furthermore, CEA's must balance community needs with the requests, policies, and initiatives of policy makers at the local, state, and federal level (Ramussen, 1989).

The nature of their work can make balancing home and family life difficult for CEA's. In a 1987 study, Thomson, Kiernan, St. Pierre, and Lewis reported that Cooperative Extension staff members in Ohio believed that the demands of their jobs affected their home and family lives more negatively than positively. Thus, the demands that accompany a career as a CEA might negatively affect one's home life and produce stress.

One of the difficulties with stressful work is the burnout that can result. Some studies have examined burnout in CEA's. Igodan and Newcomb (1986) reported that only 12% of agents reported experiencing high levels of burnout. The agents who

experienced the highest levels of burnout were 4-H agents, agents who were young (between ages 20 and 30), and agents who were single. Additionally, agents with higher workloads were more likely to report experiencing burnout.

Summary of Literature Review

Burnout is a problem for people who work in human service professions. It is a predicament that affects not only the person experiencing it, but his or her co-workers, clients, family, and the work organization for which the person is employed (Cherniss, 1980). Numerous variables are related to a human service professional's experience of burnout in his or her career. These variables may be biographical aspects of the professional, aspects of his or her work, or aspects of his or her family. One of the most powerful variables to influence burnout, social support, may be conceptualized similarly. All of these factors may be related to burnout in human service professionals.

County Extension agents are human service professionals who work in community education and outreach. The teaching and human service nature of their work leads CEA's potentially to experience burnout. Little empirical research has been conducted studying burnout in this population. Further research would help give insight into the experience of burnout in CEA's.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature and research discussed, this study will examine the biographical, work, and family variables that are related to burnout in CEA's. Additionally, general social support, social support in the workplace, and social support in the family will be examined in relation to burnout in CEA's. The following hypotheses will be examined:

1. Burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), is negatively related to biographical variables including gender (being female), being young in age, and fewer years of experience on the job.
2. Burnout, as measured by the MBI, is related to educational attainment, however, the direction of the relation is unclear.
3. Burnout, as measured by the MBI, is positively related to organizational variables including low salary, high number of hours worked per week, number of nights spent away from home in a month, and the size of the population served.
4. Burnout, as measured by the MBI, is positively related to family variables including marital status (being single), having children, number of children, number of children living at home, the age of the youngest child, and the presence of another person, such as an elderly family member who requires caregiving.
5. Burnout, as measured by the MBI, is positively related to the number of hours spent per week engaged in caregiving activities, either for a child or for another person, such as an elderly family member, who requires care.
6. Burnout, as measured by the MBI, is negatively related to general social support, as measured by the Social Provisions Scale (SPS).
7. Burnout, as measured by the MBI, is negatively related to environmentally specific social support, as measured by the Social Support Scales (SSS).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The following chapter contains descriptions of the participants in this study and the instruments that were used to assess biographical, work, and family variables, social support, and burnout. The procedures that were used to conduct the present study and data analyses are presented.

Participants

All of the Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) and 4-H Youth County Extension agents (CEA) in Georgia were asked to participate in the present study. Fifty-three FACS and 96 4-H CEA's in all of the five Extension districts in Georgia were included in the study.

Of the 149 questionnaires sent to FACS and 4-H agents in Georgia, 112 were returned for an overall response rate of 75%. Forty-five of the FACS agents responded (85%) and 67 of the 4-H agents responded (70%). Two participants were excluded from data analyses, as one respondent was an Agriculture CEA and the other submitted an incomplete questionnaire packet. Demographic information was obtained, including biographical, work, and family variables. Please see Tables 1 and 2 for this demographic information.

Measures

Participants completed a questionnaire packet (see Appendix A). The questionnaire contained a measure of burnout, a measure of general social support, and a

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Categorical Demographic Variables for CountyExtension Agents (N = 110)

Variable	<u>n</u>	%
Individual variables		
Gender		
Female	98	87.5
Male	14	12.5
Education		
Bachelors	53	47.3
Masters	57	50.9
Doctorate	1	.9
Other	1	.9
Work variables		
District		
North	27	24.1
Central	22	19.6
West	21	18.8
South	20	17.9
East	22	19.6
Primary assignment		
FACS	45	40.2
4-H	67	59.8
Annual salary		
\$20,000 to 29,000	14	12.5
\$30,000 to 39,999	43	38.4
\$40,000 to 49,999	33	29.5
\$50,000 to 59,999	15	13.4
\$60,000 and above	4	3.6

Table 1 Continued

Frequencies and Percentages of Categorical Demographic Variables for CountyExtension Agents (N = 110)

Variable	<u>n</u>	%
Work variables continued		
Nights away from home per month		
Zero to one	23	20.5
2 – 3	57	50.9
4 – 5	24	21.4
6 or more	8	7.1
Family variables		
Current marital status		
Single	22	19.6
Married	82	73.2
Divorced	7	6.3
Children		
Yes	67	59.8
No	45	40.2
Another person who requires care		
Yes	15	13.4
No	93	83.0

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Continuous Demographic Variables for CountyExtension Agents (N = 110)

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Individual variables		
Age	38.6	10.42
Years worked for CES	10.1	8.47
Work variables		
Number of hours per week	50.2	8.17
Number of people in population ^a	93875.1	133589.10
Family variables		
Number of children	2.6	2.88
Age of youngest child	11.2	9.95
Number of children in home	1.4	1.20
Hours spent with child care	34.9	43.88
Hours spent with other care	5.9	4.31

^a*Note:* The population of the territories that agents served exhibited a broad range ($R = 500 - 665,865$), accounting for the large standard deviation.

measure of co-worker, supervisor, and family social support. Participants were also asked to complete demographic questions developed by the author.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) Third Edition

The items of the MBI (Maslach et al., 1996) measure three components of professional burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The MBI consists of 22 items, which are statements about an individual's attitudes or feelings about his or her work. The items are rated on a 0 – 6 frequency continuum in which respondents' answers range from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). The scale is divided into three subscales, Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). The MBI is scored within these subscales and does not include an overall burnout score. A high score on the Emotional Exhaustion subscale means high emotional exhaustion and indicates burnout. A high score on the Depersonalization subscale means high depersonalization in social interactions and indicates burnout. The Personal Accomplishment subscale is reversed-scored so scores from this subscale are easily compared with scores on the other two subscales. Thus, a high score on the Personal Accomplishment subscale means a low sense of personal accomplishment in one's work and indicates burnout (Maslach et al., 1996).

The MBI is both a reliable and valid measure of burnout. As reported in the MBI Manual (Maslach et al., 1996), internal subscale consistency for the MBI subscales are $\alpha = .90$ for Emotional Exhaustion, $\alpha = .79$ for Depersonalization, and $\alpha = .71$ for Personal Accomplishment. Test-retest reliability has been demonstrated and coefficients ranged from .60 to .82.

Convergent and discriminant validity have been demonstrated for this instrument. Convergent validity was established through others' reports of a person's burnout, aspects of the job likely to result in burnout, and outcomes of burnout including intention to quit. The MBI was found to be a distinct construct from job satisfaction, depression, and occupational stress (Maslach et al., 1996). This instrument is one of the most widely used instruments used to examine burnout and has been for almost 20 years (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Social Provisions Scale

The Social Provisions Scale (SPS) (Russell & Cultrona, 1984) is a measure of general social support. This instrument was developed to measure social support in relation to stress experienced on the job. The SPS is made up of six subscales that measure different aspects of social provisions in one's life. These subscales include Attachment, Social Integration, Reassurance of Worth, Guidance, Reliable Alliance, and Opportunity for Nurturance. This scale consists of 24 items with each subscale consisting of four items. The SPS has a Likert-type response format with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Each subscale has two items that are worded in the negative and are reversed scored when computing the overall scale score. An overall scale score is computed by summing the responses to all 24 items. The total score can thus range from 24 to 96. For the present study, the overall score for the scale was used.

Reliability and validity for the SPS have been substantiated. Cultrona and Russell (1987) report Cronbach's alphas for each of the six subscales are as follows: Attachment, $\alpha = .75$; Social Integration, $\alpha = .67$; Reassurance of Worth, $\alpha = .67$; Guidance, $\alpha = .76$;

Reliable Alliance, $\alpha = .65$; and Opportunity for Nurturance, $\alpha = .66$. The Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was reported as $\alpha = .92$.

Cultrona and Russell (1987) have demonstrated this instrument's validity.

Predictive and discriminant validity have been demonstrated in relation to loneliness.

Social support as measured by the SPS, predicts emotional and social loneliness as measured by the UCLA Loneliness Scale, yet is a distinct construct (Cultrona & Russell, 1987). Convergent validity has been demonstrated, as the SPS has high correlations with four other instruments that measure social support (Cultrona & Russell, 1987).

Additionally, the construct of social support was distinct from number of stressful events and had very low correlations with measures that assessed such constructs as social desirability, depression, and personality characteristics such as introversion-extroversion, and neuroticism (Cultrona & Russell, 1987).

Social Support Scales

Caplan et al. (1980) developed a questionnaire to assess the level of social support an individual receives from his or co-workers, supervisor, and wife in relation to work stress. Ray and Miller (1994) modified the scale, adding more items to the measure and changing "wife" to "family." Additionally, they added a Home/Work Stress scale, a Support from Administration scale, an Emotional Exhaustion scale, and a Personal Accomplishment scale. For the present study, only the Support from Supervisor, Support from Co-Workers, and Support from Family scales were utilized.

The Support from Supervisor and Support from Co-workers scales consist of six items each and the Support from Family scale has four items for a total of 16 items.

Responses are indicated on a 5-point Likert scale. Each question asks how much one's

supervisor, co-workers or family is available to give support. Responses range from 0 (*Don't have any such person*) and 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very much*). A total score is computed for each scale individually by summing the answers to each question within the scale. Scale scores range from 0 to 24 for the Support from Supervisor and Support from Co-Workers scales and 0 to 16 for the Support from Family scale.

The reliability of this modified measure has been reported as very strong (Ray & Miller, 1994). The original version of the indices was reported to give consistently reliable assessments of each of the three types of social support measured with Cronbach's alpha's reported as $\alpha = .87$ overall for the three indices (Jayaratne, Chess, & Kunkel, 1986). For the modified measure, Cronbach's alphas have been reported for the Support from Supervisor scale as $\alpha = .92$, Support from Co-Workers scale as $\alpha = .90$, and Support from Family scale as $\alpha = .92$ (Ray & Miller, 1994).

Validity for this measure is demonstrated as well. Each of the three scales load onto different factors in factor analysis, with factor loadings ranging from .70 to .89 for the Support from Supervisor scale, .63 to .90 for the Support from Co-Worker scale, and from .79 to .93 for the Support from Family scale. The factor analysis demonstrates that the scales assess different aspects of social support, indicating discriminant validity. Furthermore, aspects of social support, as measured by the modified scales, have been shown to predict lower levels of all three aspects of burnout as measured by the MBI (Ray & Miller, 1994), illustrating predictive validity. Others have found that only the decreased personal accomplishment aspect of burnout is predicted by social support, as measured by the original instrument (Burke & Greenglass, 1993).

Discriminant validity has been demonstrated additionally through indications of divergent and convergent validity with distinct and related constructs. The constructs measured by the original instrument have been shown to be distinct from depression and irritation (Davis-Sacks et al., 1985). The original indices of social support are correlated with low self-esteem, which demonstrates convergent validity; individuals with low self-esteem often have social networks that are not as large or as supportive as individuals with high self-esteem (Davis-Sacks et al., 1985).

Demographic Questions

Nineteen biographical, work-related, and family-related questions were asked of participants. The biographical questions included items concerning age, gender, years of service, highest level of education, and current salary. Work-related questions included number of hours worked per week, amount of work-related travel, average number of weekends worked per month, and number of people in the territory in which an agent works. Family questions included marital status, number of children, number of children living at home, and whether there is another family member who requires regular care. Caregiving aspects of family life were assessed by asking how many hours per week are spent giving child care and how many hours per week are spent giving care to another family member.

Procedure

Approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Georgia. Following their approval, a proposal of the present study was presented to the five District Extension Heads for the Georgia CES. Upon their approval,

participants were sent an introductory letter via electronic mail informing them of the purpose of the study and requesting their participation (Appendix B).

Questionnaires were then mailed to FACS and 4-H CEA's approximately two weeks after the electronic correspondence was sent. A cover letter from the agent's District Extension Head was included in the questionnaire packet explaining the purpose of the research and requesting their participation (see Appendix C). A second letter that included instructions was also sent (see Appendix D). A stamped, addressed envelope was enclosed and the agent was instructed to return his or her questionnaire in the envelope.

Four weeks following the mailing, a reminder postcard was sent to all CEA's, thanking those agents who participated and requesting those who had not yet sent their questionnaires to do so as soon as possible (see Appendix E). Six weeks following the first mailing, questionnaires were no longer accepted.

Analysis of Data

The data was analyzed by computing correlation coefficients between each of the demographic questions and scores on each of the three MBI subscales to determine which variables were related to burnout. Correlation coefficients were also computed between the Social Provisions Scale and the three subscales of the MBI to determine whether these measures of social support were related to burnout in CEA's. Finally, correlation coefficients between the Social Support Scales and the three subscales of the MBI were computed to determine whether these measures of social support were related to burnout in CEA's.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the relations between demographic variables, social support and burnout among County Extension agents in Georgia. Correlation coefficients were calculated between each variable tested and each of the three components of burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach et al., 1996). After descriptions of the measures used, the results for this study are presented in the order of the hypotheses detailed in Chapter 2.

Description of Measures

Participants in the present study completed the MBI. The means and standard deviations for this sample were generally comparable to norms established in other human service professions (see Table 3). However, Personal Accomplishment scores were remarkably low for CEA's, indicating very high personal accomplishment, as this subscale is reverse-scored.

Maslach et al. (1996) delineate categories of burnout for each of the three subscales. Burnout scores may be classified as "low," "medium," or "high" for each subscale. Table 4 displays the categorizations for the present sample. The few number in the "high" depersonalization category and the virtual absence of agents falling into the medium or low personal accomplishment categories are both remarkable. Clearly, while this sample did experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization was

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of the MBI Subcales for County Extension AgentsCompared to Other Human Service Professionals

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
<hr/>		
Present Study County Extension Agents (<u>N</u> = 110)		
Emotional Exhaustion	23.59	11.35
Depersonalization	4.65	4.71
Personal Accomplishment	11.10	6.44
Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter (1996) Social Services Professionals (<u>N</u> = 1538)		
Emotional Exhaustion	21.35	10.51
Depersonalization	7.46	5.11
Personal Accomplishment	32.75	7.11
Teaching Professionals (<u>N</u> = 4163)		
Emotional Exhaustion	21.25	11.01
Depersonalization	11.00	6.19
Personal Accomplishment	33.54	6.89
<hr/>		

Table 4

Sample Distribution of High, Medium, and Low Scores for County Extension Agents on the Subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (N = 110)

Subscales	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional Exhaustion	High (27+)	37	33.3
	Moderate (17-26)	45	40.2
	Low (0-16)	29	25.9
Depersonalization	High (13+)	9	8.0
	Moderate (7-12)	11	9.8
	Low (0-6)	91	81.3
Personal Accomplishment	High (0-31)	110	98.2
	Moderate (32-38)	1	0.9
	Low (39+)	0	0

not often experienced, and anything other than high personal accomplishment, virtually unseen.

Participants in the present study also completed the Social Provisions Scale (SPS) (Cultrona & Russell, 1987) and the Social Support Scales (SSS) (Ray & Miller, 1994). Means and standard deviations for the SPS for the present sample are generally comparable to the findings of Cultrona & Russell (1987) and are presented in Table 5. The means and standard deviations for the SSS for the present sample are presented in Table 6. There are no published norms for the SSS.

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis stated that CEA's experiences of burnout, as measured by the three subscales of the MBI, would be negatively correlated with the demographic variables gender, age, and experience on the job. A significant correlation was found between the Depersonalization score and gender. For the present study, female gender was dummy coded as 1 and male gender was dummy coded as 2. Thus, this correlation reveals a slight correlation with Depersonalization and being male ($r = .190, p < .05$). No significant correlations were found between gender and the Emotional Exhaustion or Personal Accomplishment subscales.

A significant negative correlation was found between the Emotional Exhaustion subscale and age ($r = -.207, p < .05$) and the Depersonalization subscale and age ($r = -.319, p = .001$) (see Table 7). No significant correlation was found between the Personal Accomplishment subscale and age. A significant negative correlation was found between experience on the job and the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the MBI ($r = -.203, p < .05$). However, no significant correlations were found between experience

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of the Social Provisions Scale for County ExtensionAgents Compared to Other Human Service Professionals

Measure	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Present sample (<u>N</u> = 110)	81.61	11.23
Cultrona & Russell Sample (<u>N</u> = 1183)	82.45	9.89

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of the Social Support Scales for County ExtensionAgents (N = 110)

Measure	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Social Support Scales		
Support from Supervisor	17.39	5.21
Support from Co-Workers	18.57	4.04
Support from Family	12.91	3.66

Table 7

Correlations Between Biographical Variables and the Three Subscales of the MaslachBurnout Inventory

Variable	<u>Maslach Burnout Inventory</u>		
	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Gender	.038	.190*	.180
Age	-.207*	-.319*	-.169
Years worked	-.203*	-.143	-.076
Education	.058	.094	-.010

* $p < .05$.

on the job and the Depersonalization subscale or Personal Accomplishment subscale.

The hypothesis that burnout would be related to several demographic variables was, thus, partially supported.

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis stated that CEA's experiences of each of the three aspects of burnout, as measured by the MBI, would be related to educational attainment. A prediction about the direction of the relation was not made.

This hypothesis was not supported. No significant correlations were found between burnout and educational attainment. Please see Table 7.

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis stated that CEA's experiences of each of the three aspects of burnout, as measured by the MBI, would be positively related to work variables including low salary, the number of hours worked per week, the number of nights spent away from home in a month, and the size of the population served.

Correlation coefficients were computed for each of the pairs listed above. A significant, positive correlation was found between the number of nights spent away from home in a month and the Depersonalization subscale of the MBI ($r = .259$, $p < .01$). A significant, negative correlation was found between the number of people in the territory and the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the MBI ($r = -.212$, $p < .05$). No significant correlations were found between salary and hours an agent worked per week, and any of the three MBI subscales (see Table 8). The hypothesis that burnout was related to the organizational variables specified above was partially supported.

Table 8

Correlations Between Work Variables and the Three Subscales of the Maslach BurnoutInventory

Variable	<u>Maslach Burnout Inventory</u>		
	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Salary	-.092	-.042	-.106
Hours per week	.142	.138	.001
Nights away	.084	.259**	.002
Number in population	-.212*	-.163	-.194

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis Four

The fourth hypothesis stated that CEA's experiences of each of the three aspects of burnout, as measured by the MBI, would be related to family variables. Those family variables include marital status, having children, number of children, number of children in the home, age of youngest child, and the presence of another person, such as an elderly family member, who requires caregiving.

Correlation coefficients were computed for each of the pairs of variables listed above. No significant correlations were found between any of the family variables and burnout (see Table 9). Thus, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis Five

The fifth hypothesis stated that CEA's experiences of each of the three components of burnout, as measured by the MBI, would be related to caregiving variables. Caregiving variables tested were the number of hours per week spent providing care to children, and the number of hours per week spent giving care to another person, such as an elderly family member.

Correlation coefficients were computed for both of the pairs listed above. No significant correlations were found between any of the caregiving variables and burnout (see Table 9). Thus, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis Six

Correlation coefficients were computed between each of the three MBI subscales and the SPS. The SPS was significantly correlated with the Personal Accomplishment subscale of the MBI ($r = -.245, p < .01$). However, the SPS was not significantly

Table 9

Correlations Between Family-Related Variables and the Three Subscales of the Maslach
Burnout Inventory

Variable	<u>Maslach Burnout Inventory</u>		
	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
General family variables			
Marital status	-.034	.052	-.062
Having children	.145	.127	.091
Number of children	-.131	-.153	-.137
Number of children at home	.003	.053	.049
Age of youngest child	.012	-.159	-.158
Other persons who need care	-.115	-.023	.091
Caregiving variables			
Hours providing care to child	-.120	.042	.148
Hours providing care to other	-.029	-.272	-.242

correlated with the Emotional Exhaustion ($r = -.058$) or Depersonalization ($r = -.052$) subscales.

Because the Personal Accomplishment subscale is reversed scored for consistency with the other two scales, these negative correlations indicate a negative relation with burnout. Thus, the overall SPS score is negatively correlated with low personal accomplishment. The correlations found between the SPS and the Personal Accomplishment subscale of the MBI are in the expected direction, so this hypothesis was partially supported.

Hypothesis Seven

The seventh hypothesis stated that CEA's experiences of each of the three aspects of burnout, as measured by the MBI, would be negatively related to environmentally specific social support as measured by the Social Support Scales (SSS).

Correlation coefficients were computed for each of the three MBI subscales and the SSS. The Emotional Exhaustion subscale and Social Support from Supervisor scale were found to be significantly negatively correlated ($r = -.191$, $p < .05$). The Social Support from Supervisor score was not significantly correlated with either of the other two burnout subscales. A significant negative correlation was found between Personal Accomplishment and Social Support from Co-Workers ($r = -.196$, $p < .05$). However, no significant correlation was found between Social Support from Co-Workers and Emotional Exhaustion or Depersonalization. No significant correlations were found between burnout and Social Support from Family (see Table 10). Thus, this hypothesis was only partially supported.

Table 10

Correlations Between the Social Support Scales and the Three Subscales of the MaslachBurnout Inventory

Social Support Scales	<u>Maslach Burnout Inventory</u>		
	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Supervisor	-.191*	-.063	.016
Co-Workers	-.091	-.108	-.196*
Family	.116	-.084	.005

* $p < .05$.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The present study is an empirical examination of correlates of burnout in County Extension agents in Georgia. A discussion of the results will be presented as follows: (a) sample characteristics (b) biographical correlates of burnout; (c) work-related correlates of burnout; (d) family correlates of burnout; (e) social support and burnout; (f) limitations; (g) recommendations for future research; and (h) implications.

Sample Characteristics

The present sample of FACS and 4-H CEA's in Georgia exhibited an unusual pattern with regard to burnout scores, which differs from burnout in other human service professionals (Maslach et al., 1996). While emotional exhaustion scores in this sample remain relatively typical of other human service professionals, depersonalization scores are very low, and personal accomplishment, extremely high.

The work of the CEA is demanding, as indicated by a range of emotional exhaustion scores. Yet, agents do not appear to depersonalize their clients. Furthermore, they appear to have work that is extremely rewarding. The experiences of CEA's might serve those in other human service professions well as a role model for effective human service work avoiding the downfalls of burnout.

Biographical Correlates of Burnout

Several biographical questions were asked of CEA's in order to determine their relation to burnout. Below, gender, age, years of work experience, and level of educational attainment will be examined.

Gender

It was hypothesized that burnout would be correlated with gender for the present sample of CEA's. The results of this study partially support this hypothesis. The correlation indicated that depersonalization was slightly more likely to occur in men than in women. However, only 12.5% ($n = 14$) of the participants were men; thus, the findings must be interpreted cautiously. Gender was only moderately correlated with depersonalization and not significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion or personal accomplishment.

The relation between burnout and gender is tenuous, with equivocal results across multiple studies (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). In line with the present findings, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) found in reviewing published articles examining burnout, men were more likely to report experiencing burnout than women. Other findings in the literature indicate that women are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, while men are more likely to experience depersonalization (Ogus, Greenglass, & Burke, 1990). In a single study examining burnout in CEA's, researchers reported no gender differences in burnout scores (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997).

Interpretations for gender differences in professional burnout are available within the academic literature (Ogus et al., 1990; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Ogus et al. (1990) explain the difference as relating to sex-role stereotypes, specifically, that women

are generally more emotional and men more instrumental in general. Consequently, it follows that women's experiences of burnout would be more emotionally-based and men's experiences of burnout would be less relational. Alternatively, it has been proposed that working women experience higher workloads in general when compared with working men. Thus, the emotional exhaustion is a result of the pile up of stress from both work and home (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

For the present study, the results regarding gender are difficult to interpret. The small proportion of men in the present sample may lead to inaccurate conclusions. While the single correlation that was found between gender and burnout was in the expected direction, it was a very small correlation. Thus, CEA's who are men may tend to experience depersonalization of clients more than women. Additionally, these results may indicate that gender is not an important or significant correlate of burnout for CEA's in Georgia.

Age

It was hypothesized that burnout would be negatively correlated with age for this sample of CEA's. The results of the present study support this hypothesis. Age was negatively correlated with both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. This finding replicates the findings of others studying CEA's (Bower, 1989; Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). Bower (1989) found that age was negatively related to burnout in CEA's in Georgia. Fetsch and Kennington (1997) reported that young age was related to burnout in CEA's across several states.

Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) maintain that "of all biographical characteristics, age is the most consistently related to burnout" (p. 76) across human service professions.

Scholars have reported negative correlations between age and burnout in samples of human service professionals (Martin & Schnike, 1998), public middle school teachers (Russell et al., 1987), and military nurses (van Wijk, 1997).

Some explain the age difference in burnout by hypothesizing that burnout occurs early in a professional's career and that with time, new professionals mature, gain more experience, and may grow out of their burnout (Maslach et al., 1996). An alternative explanation is that employees who experience burnout as new hires may also leave their jobs so that the employees who remain are those with low burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The findings of the present study replicate the findings of many others (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Martin & Schnike, 1998; Maslach et al., 1996; Russell et al., 1987; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Years of Work Experience

Age and work experience are so closely related that it is unclear whether one is associated with burnout more than the other, or if the effect is cumulative (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The finding in the present study, that years of experience is related to the emotional exhaustion aspect of burnout, is not surprising. This finding is similar to results reported by Martin and Schnike (1998) who found burnout to be negatively correlated with work experience for family and children's service workers and psychiatric workers. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) confirm that the relation between experience and burnout holds across multiple studies.

It is interesting to note that years of work experience was related only to emotional exhaustion and not to depersonalization, as age was. Like age, work experience was not related to personal accomplishment. These findings lead to a

potentially sharper image of the role of age and maturity versus the role of experience on the job in relation to burnout. Perhaps for CEA's, with age and maturity, depersonalization is less likely to be experienced in response to job-related stress. Other findings do not support the distinction between age and experience on the job. For example, Maslach et al. (1996) report in the MBI Manual that both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization decrease in relation to experience on the job. The effect in the present study may be unique to the profession of the CEA or to this sample.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment was not found to be related to agents' reports of burnout in the present sample, which was relatively evenly divided between those with a bachelor-level education and a master-level education. The results of other studies regarding educational attainment and burnout are equivocal; some authors have reported significant relations between the two variables (Maslach et al., 1996; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) while others have not (e.g., Holloway & Wallinga, 1990). Consistent with the findings of the present study, Holloway and Wallinga (1990) found that educational attainment was not related to burnout in a sample of child life specialists. However, their sample consisted of professionals who were educated at least at the bachelor's level with less than one-third of the sample reporting attaining a master's degree. Thus, possibly the sample was fairly comparable in terms of educational attainment.

Conversely, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) and Maslach et al. (1996) have reported finding significant differences in burnout related to level of education. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) report results that workers with post-secondary education

experience more burnout than their counterparts who have not attended college.

Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) assert that employees who have a higher education also have higher expectations of their job and more responsibility, which may lead them to experience burnout.

Maslach et al. (1996) have reported that higher education is related differentially to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. While they find depersonalization is related to higher educational attainment similar to Schaufeli and Enzmann's (1998) reports, Maslach et al. (1996) report that emotional exhaustion is related to educational attainment in a u-shaped pattern. Emotional exhaustion is highest in those with no or some college education and in those with postgraduate work. Personal accomplishment is highest for those who have finished undergraduate education.

In the present sample, level of education was not significantly correlated with burnout; however, there was not much variability in this sample. All participants achieved at least a bachelor's degree and approximately half earned a masters degree. Thus, it may be that more variability in educational attainment is necessary for educational attainment to be related to burnout.

Work Correlates of Burnout

The participants in this study were also asked several questions about their work experiences in order to determine their relation to agents' experiences of burnout. Below, salary and employee workload will be discussed.

Salary

Salary was a work-related variable tested and it was not correlated with burnout in this sample. While salary is not often studied in relation to burnout, the present findings contrast with the few studies that found salary to be a correlate of burnout for samples in other human service populations. For instance, Martin and Schnike (1998) reported that higher pay was negatively correlated with burnout for family and children's service workers as well as psychiatric workers. Relatedly, Holloway and Wallinga (1990) reported that salary contributed to experiences of burnout in child life specialists.

Because this variable is studied so rarely and because findings are from other human service professions, interpretations about the lack of relation between salary and burnout in the present sample of CEA's remain speculative. Perhaps for this sample, the salary that each receives is considered fair and adequate pay for the work that is completed. Consequently, salary may play little role in agents' experiences of job stress, frustration, and ultimately burnout. An alternative explanation is that individuals who experience burnout related to their salary may have already left their position for another, higher-paying position.

Employee Workload

Employee workload is often studied in relation to burnout. It is unexpected that only one of the workload variables examined would be related to burnout for County Extension agents in the present study. The number of nights spent away from home because of work-related travel positively correlated with scores on the Depersonalization subscale of the MBI for the present sample. Other variables intended to be an indication of a CEA's workload, including the number of hours worked per week and the number of

people in the counties in which the CEA works were not correlated with any of the three MBI subscales. Thus, the present hypothesis was generally unsupported by the data. This finding contradicts the findings of other scholars reporting strong relations between workload and burnout (Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). A relation between workload and burnout has been established for social workers (Cherniss, 1980; Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Pines, 1993), teachers (Etzion, 1984), and military nurses (van Wijk, 1997).

The finding that nights spent away from home due to work-related travel was only related to the depersonalization aspect of burnout is difficult to interpret. Perhaps the strain that a large amount of work-related travel places on an agent leads to depersonalize the recipients of their services. It would be expected, however, that the strain of work-related travel would also lead agents to feel emotionally exhausted, a hypothesis that was not supported in the present study.

Also difficult to interpret is the negative correlation between number of people in the population served and emotional exhaustion. While it was anticipated that agents with larger territories would experience more demands and thus more burnout, agents with larger territories actually experienced less emotional exhaustion. Larger areas may require that work be less personal. In smaller areas, agents may have more personal relationships with their clientele, who in turn make more requests of the agent.

One explanation for the general lack of relation between the questions asked about workload and burnout is that the members of this sample may be satisfied in their jobs. They might manage their time and stress well, and their workload does not produce a large amount of difficulty in their lives. While CEA's are expected to work hard and

often have stressful jobs (Thomson, Kiernan, St. Pierre, & Lewis, 1987), it is possible that these stressors are expected among employees and do not contribute to burnout. Finally, it is possible that programs to help manage or prevent burnout (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Fetsch & Pergola, 1991) present effective strategies that work for CEA's.

Family Correlates of Burnout

The hypothesis that burnout in CEA's is related to family factors, including caregiving, was not supported by any of the measures taken. The present sample was relatively homogenous with regard to marital status, as only 20% of the sample was single, and single marital status has been reported as being correlated with burnout (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). An even smaller number reported being divorced (6.3%); being divorced was reported to be correlated with burnout for CEA's (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997) and other human service professionals (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Most of the agents surveyed did not have young children, as the mean age of the youngest child in the sample was 11.2. Consequently, the characteristics of the sample with regard to their family life may limit the interpretation of the results.

The present findings add to the ambiguity of the relation between experiences of burnout and family variables. These findings are not inconsistent with the research of others. For example, in their meta-analysis of the correlates of burnout, Lee and Ashforth (1996) reported no significant correlation between family factors and burnout across 21 studies. Bower (1989) found that few family factors were related to burnout in his sample of CEA's.

Interpreting the present results leads to several possible explanations. One explanation is that two career households are more common than they have been in the past. Over time, families may become better at balancing the demands of work and family. Perhaps this sample of CEA's balances work and home life well, resulting in little spillover from one realm to the other. Possibly the training and coursework of CEA's has provided ways for them to help themselves, as well as others, find better ways of coping with the everyday demands of work and family.

Social Support and Burnout

Social support is a variable studied often in relation to burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach et al., 1996); however, this variable has been studied relatively little with regard to CEA's experiences of burnout. For the present study, general social support, social support at work, and social support from family were examined in relation to burnout.

General Social Support

Social support, as measured by the SPS, was significantly negatively correlated with the Personal Accomplishment subscale of the MBI. This finding partially supports the original research hypothesis, as this subscale of the MBI is reverse-scored, resulting in low scores indicating high personal accomplishment.

These findings add to the large body of literature that indicates that social support is negatively related to burnout for human service professionals. Such findings include Lee and Ashforth's (1996) meta-analysis of the correlates of burnout across 61 studies and Schaufeli and Enzmann's (1998) review of research on burnout. Lee and Ashforth (1996) report negative correlations between social support and all three aspects of

burnout; however, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) and Maslach et al. (1996) report that social support correlates most often with the personal accomplishment aspect of burnout, which is replicated in the present study. Others have reported similar results relating social support to burnout including Boyle et al. (1991) with a sample of critical care nurses and Burke and Greenglass (1995) with a sample of school-based educators.

Social support is a known buffer for stress across many situations (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). It is, therefore, not surprising that social support is related to low burnout in the present sample. CEA's who experience situations on the job that might lead to burnout may have those negative experiences off-set by the positive role of their support systems (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach et al. 1996). Another interpretation of this result is that CEA's who handle stress well and have a sense of personal accomplishment in their lives and jobs may also choose and maintain healthy and supportive relationships (Ogus, 1990). Furthermore, they may be more likely to find work that is a good fit and meaningful to them, thus being more likely to find personal accomplishment in the work that they do.

Work Social Support

The hypothesis that social support received in one's workplace, as measured by the Social Support Scales (SSS) (Ray & Miller, 1994), would be related to burnout was partially supported. CEA's who reported support from their supervisors were less likely to report feeling emotionally exhausted on the job and CEA's who reported support from their co-workers were more likely to report feeling a sense of personal accomplishment on the job.

The present findings regarding work-related support were similar to other findings in the negative direction of the relation between social support from both supervisors and co-workers and burnout. They were somewhat different, however, as the consensus among other researchers is that work-related support is related to all three aspects of burnout (Boyle et al., 1991; Corrigan et al., 1995; Duquette et al., 1995; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Russell et al., 1987). Alternatively, some authors have reported no significant relation between social support from co-workers and burnout in samples of school teachers (Cheuk & Wong, 1995; Russell et al., 1987).

Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter's (1996) found the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization aspects of burnout to be related to job demands, such as workload. Personal accomplishment, however, was related to resources that professionals have to help them on the job. Thus, the negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and support from supervisor found in the present sample may be interpreted as occurring because lack of social support from supervisors places a demand on CEA's. Congruent with this model, social support from co-workers may be construed as a resource that agents have in their lives, which, in turn, may explain the correlation between co-worker support and personal accomplishment.

Often, researchers do not distinguish between supervisor social support and co-worker support. Numerous scholars have researched this construct under terms such as "work-related social support" (Etizon, 1984; Ogus, 1990). Clearly, in the present population, different sources of social support were related to different aspects of burnout. This finding gives further credence to the idea that social support is specific to particular situations (Boyle et al., 1991), illustrating the presence of "subsystems" with a

system, as described by Systems Theory. Consequently, it appears to be more precise to examine different sources of support within a system, such as the workplace, in addition to different systems in which one lives.

Family Social Support

It was hypothesized that family social support would be negatively related to burnout in County Extension agents. This hypothesis was not supported. No significant correlations were found between the Support from Family scale of the SSS and any of the three MBI subscales.

Only a few scholars have published findings about family support and job burnout (Bower, 1989; Drory & Shamir, 1988; Etzion, 1984; Golembiewski, Bower, & Kim, 1993; Ogus, 1990; Ray & Miller, 1994). Reported linkages between family support and burnout have been dubious and not replicated by other research examining related constructs. In congruence with the findings of the present study, Bower (1989) examined family social support and burnout in Georgia CEA's and also found no correlation between the two constructs. Outside of the Extension Service, Ogus (1990) and Etzion (1984) similarly report no relation between family social support and burnout among nurses and Israeli human service professionals, respectively.

The evidence for a relation between family support and job burnout in CEA's or other samples of human service professionals is lacking. While the relation seems intuitive—that strong family support would be related to lower job burnout, and its converse, that a lack of family support would be related to higher job burnout—in the present study, this relation is not exhibited. Perhaps the potential resource that family support might provide is not large enough to make an impact for CEA's or other human

service professionals. Furthermore, family support may be too distal to exert any noticeable effect on the work life of CEA's. Perhaps, then CEA's and others do not have substantial crossover between the worlds of work and home.

Limitations

The present study has several limitations that affect its generalizability to other studies investigating burnout in CEA's and in other human service professions. First, the sample consisted only of FACS and 4-H CEA's. Agricultural agents, who are also CEA's, were not surveyed; thus, results may not be reflective of their experiences of burnout. Second, while all FACS and 4-H agents in the state of Georgia were asked to participate in this study, 25% did not return their surveys. Consequently, there may be a response bias and the characteristics and experiences of those who did not return a survey may be significantly different from those who did return their surveys. Third, when agents were asked about their supervisors, they were not asked to distinguish between their County Extension Coordinators (CEC's) and their District Extension Heads (DEH's). Thus, the results reflect the agents' perceived supervisor and not a particular supervisor. Fourth, only agents in Georgia were surveyed so the results may not be generalizable to CEA's in other states. A fifth consideration is the homogeneity of this sample of CEA's. While the results may be reflective of the actual diversity within this group, the ability to interpret some of the results that pertain to men, single agents, and married agents who do not have children is limited due to low numbers. Generalizing these results to other human service fields must be made cautiously. Finally, it is important to note that the present study is correlational in nature and causal determinations cannot be made from the results found.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is needed to determine the nature of burnout in CEA's, how it is different from and similar to burnout in other human service professions, what causes burnout in this group, and methods for prevention. CEA's are important community leaders and educators. Their well-being affects their work and has the potential to affect their communities. Clearly, in the present sample, the CEA's overwhelmingly experienced high personal accomplishment in their work. Other human service professionals might learn from the role model of the CEA, if the process was more clearly understood.

Research that directly examined CEA's burnout in comparison with other human service professionals would help confirm or explain the differences found in the present study. Replicating the present study with agricultural CEA's would broaden the scope of understanding about burnout in agents in general as well as help to distinguish differences in burnout patterns. Performing research on those individuals who left the Extension Service for other employment might help to enhance the knowledge about the qualities of the people who stay.

Longitudinal research designs that examined possible causes of burnout, especially emotional exhaustion, would be helpful in understanding what causes burnout in CEA's. Measures of such variables as role conflict and ambiguity, personality, workload and demands, and family role conflict might help shed further light on the specific variables and characteristics that lead agents to experience burnout. This methodology would allow one to examine the changes in burnout and related variables

that take place over time. Examining burnout in CEA's with a qualitative methodology might give further insight into their work experiences.

Implications

The findings from the present study provide FACS and 4-H CEA's and other employees of the Cooperative Extension Service with empirical information on the correlates of burnout. While causal relations remain speculative, there remain some implications for CEA's, the CES, and other professionals. Knowledge about burnout in CEA's and other human service professionals is essential in facilitating their work and the contribution that they make to society. Policies and interventions that help to support agents and the work that they do may have numerous positive effects.

Policies that provide opportunity and encourage CEA's to interact with one another may provide a fertile ground for further developing social support networks. Given that a correlation was found between supervisor support and emotional exhaustion, providing supervisors with strategies that assist them in supporting CEA's might help agents in their work. As workplace support is a correlate of personal accomplishment in this sample, fostering supportive relationships might help agents in their work and keep experiences of burnout low.

The Georgia CES might consider limiting the amount of work-related overnight travel that CEA's must perform each month, as overnight travel was found to be a correlate of burnout in this sample. While the causal relation is still speculative, reducing overnight travel might help to reduce some feelings of depersonalization that agents experience. The CES might consider examining alternative solutions for those agents whose location in the state necessitates considerable travel.

An intervention that Georgia CES might take into consideration is a strong mentorship and support program for new CEA's, especially those who are young. As burnout is related to youth and inexperience in this sample, having an older, more experienced, supportive colleague to help the new agent navigate the difficult first few years of Extension work might help to reduce some of the burnout experienced. Mentors might help provide not only social support, but also a positive role model for new agents and advice and guidance for performing this new job role. A less-intensive mentoring program for new agents who are not new to the workforce might also be helpful.

The findings of this study might also serve as a resource for preparing workshops or seminars for CEA's about burnout and its prevention. Teaching CEA's about burnout and what the variables that are related to burnout might help them find positive ways of managing their work-related stress. It is important to have agents continue to attend such workshops throughout their careers to keep burnout under control.

On the whole, this sample of FACS and 4-H agents reported remarkably high personal accomplishment in their work and low depersonalization in relation to the people they serve. As none of the family variables measured were correlated with burnout in this sample, there appears to be little spillover between work and home. CEA's in Georgia perform their jobs with little burnout, as compared with other human service professionals. Perhaps other state CES's and other human service professions can learn from the role model of the Georgia CES and CEA's.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE PACKET

Demographic and Work Questions

Please complete the following general information.

1. What is your age? _____ years
2. What is your gender? F M
3. How long have you worked for the Cooperative Extension Service?
_____ years
4. In what district do you work? N C W S E
5. What is your primary assignment? FACS 4-H
6. Please check your highest level of education
 - ☐ Bachelor's
 - ☐ Master's
 - ☐ Doctorate
 - ☐ Other
Please specify _____
7. What is your current salary?

<input type="checkbox"/> Below 20,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 40,000 to 49,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 20,000 to 29,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 50,000 to 59,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 30,000 to 39,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 60,000 and above
8. What is your current family income?

<input type="checkbox"/> Below 30,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 90,000 to 109,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 30,000 to 49,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 110,000 to 129,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 50,000 to 69,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 130,000 to 149,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 70,000 to 89,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 150,000 and above
9. Approximately how many hours per week do you work for CES? _____
10. On average, how many nights do you spend away from home in a typical month because of work-related travel?

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 – 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 – 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 or more

11. What is your current marital status?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married | <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed |

12. Do you have children? Y N

If so, how many ? _____

What are the ages of your children? _____

How many are currently living with you? _____

Approximately how many hours per week do you spend providing care for your children?

_____ hours.

13. Are there any other persons for whom you are responsible for care (e.g., parent, grandparent, grandchild, etc.)?

Y N

If yes, approximately how many hours per week do you spend providing care for that/these individual(s)? _____

14. Approximately how many people are in the county/counties you serve?

13. Is there any other person for whom you are responsible for care? Y N

If yes, how many? _____

THE MASLACH BURNOUT INVENTORY (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) was used in this study. See Copyright, 1996 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.

Social Support Scales (Ray & Miller, 1994)

Listed below are 16 statements about people with whom you interact in your work and home life. Please circle the appropriate number that relates best to how you feel about each statement. Please use the following key when answering the questions:

0 = Don't have any such person

1 = Not at all

2 = Somewhat

3 = Often

4 = Very much

1. My supervisor goes out of his/her way to make my life easier	0	1	2	3	4
2. It is easy to talk with my supervisor.	0	1	2	3	4
1. My supervisor can be relied on when things get tough for me at work.	0	1	2	3	4
2. My supervisor is willing to listen to my personal problems.	0	1	2	3	4
3. My supervisor respects me.	0	1	2	3	4
4. My supervisor appreciates the work that I do.	0	1	2	3	4
5. My co-workers go out of their way to make my life easier.	0	1	2	3	4
6. It is easy to talk with my co-workers.	0	1	2	3	4
7. My co-workers can be relied on when things get tough for me at work.	0	1	2	3	4
8. My co-workers are willing to listen to my personal problems.	0	1	2	3	4
9. My co-workers respect me.	0	1	2	3	4

0 = Don't have any such person

1 = Not at all

2 = Somewhat

3 = Often

4 = Very much

10. My co-workers appreciate the work I do.	0	1	2	3	4
11. My family goes out of its way to make my life easier for me.	0	1	2	3	4
12. It is easy to talk with my family.	0	1	2	3	4
13. My family can be relied on when things get tough for me at work.	0	1	2	3	4
14. My family is willing to listen to my personal problems.	0	1	2	3	4

Social Provisions Scale
(Cultrona & Russell, 1987)

Please circle the appropriate number that relates best to how you feel about each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it.	1	2	3	4
2. I feel that I do not have any close personal relationships with other people.	1	2	3	4
3. There is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress.	1	2	3	4
4. There are people who depend on me for help.	1	2	3	4
5. There are people who enjoy the same social activities I do.	1	2	3	4
6. Other people do not view me as competent.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. I feel personally responsible for the well-being of another person.	1	2	3	4
8. I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs.	1	2	3	4
9. I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities.	1	2	3	4
10. If something went wrong, no one would come to my assistance.	1	2	3	4
11. I have close relationships that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being.	1	2	3	4
12. There is someone I could talk to about important decisions in my life.	1	2	3	4
13. I have relationships where my competence and skill are recognized.	1	2	3	4
14. There is no one who shares my interest and concerns.	1	2	3	4
15. There is no one who really relies on me for their well-being.	1	2	3	4
16. There is a trustworthy person I could turn to if I were having problems.	1	2	3	4
17. I feel a strong emotional bond with at least one other person.	1	2	3	4
18. There is no one I can depend on for aid if I really need it.	1	2	3	4
19. There is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with.	1	2	3	4
20. There are people who admire my talents and abilities.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. I lack a feeling of intimacy with another person.	1	2	3	4
22. There is no one who likes the things I do.	1	2	3	4
23. There are people I can count on in an emergency.	1	2	3	4
24. No one needs me to care for them anymore.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B
INTRODUCTORY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Memo

To: Selected Extension agents

From: District Extension Heads

Within the next two weeks you will be receiving a questionnaire packet in the mail. Leanna Thomas, a Masters student in the department of Child and Family Development at UGA, is conducting a research study that is a requirement for her degree. It is entitled "Individual, Work, Family, and Social Support Variables Related to Burnout in County Extension Agents." Dr. Don Bower serves on her committee. The study is looking at factors that influence job-related stress in County Extension Agents. Please consider completing the questionnaire that you receive. The results of this study may be a benefit in understanding what contributes to agent's stress and stress management. A good response rate will help to assure the accuracy of the results.

Sincerely,

District Extension Head

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER FROM DISTRICT EXTENSION HEADS

Date: December 6, 2002

To: Selected County Extension Faculty

From: District Extension Head

RE: Stress Research

Attached is a survey being conducted by Leanna Thomas, a graduate student in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Georgia. Her research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Charlotte Wallinga and Dr. Don Bower, University of Georgia, Department of Child and Family Development, 706-542-4930. All FACS and 4-H Agents in Georgia are receiving this questionnaire.

This research will help us understand better the factors that are related to agents' experiences of job-related stress. The survey is anonymous and participation is voluntary. Your answers to these questions will be pooled with the responses from other respondents. Please do not write or attach your name or county to the questionnaire form.

I highly encourage your participation in this research study. Especially in these times of trying to do more with less, we need new insights into the stressors in your work and their implications for management. More specific information about the study and instructions for completing the questionnaire appear on the following page. Please return your completed survey form to Leanna. If you have any questions, please call or write:

Leanna Thomas
Graduate Student in Child and Family Development
Dawson Hall
The University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602
706-542-4905

Dr. Charlotte Wallinga
Associate Professor
Department of Child and Family Development
FSC II, House D
The University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602
706-542-4930

APPENDIX D
INSTRUCTIONAL/INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

December 6, 2003

Dear Extension Service Agent,

Working for the Cooperative Extension Service can be a rewarding and challenging experience. Like many other professionals who work closely with people helping them to improve their lives, County Extension agents sometimes experience stress related to their job. While much research has been conducted examining job-related stress in professions such as social work, nursing, and teaching, little has been done regarding Extension agents. To help shed more light onto this area, we are conducting a study on Extension agents perceptions of job-related stress and other factors that might affect those perceptions.

While you will not benefit directly from this research, remember that the results of this study will benefit Extension Service professionals as it increases the knowledge about factors that affect burnout in this field. Your participation is very important to us, as the accuracy of our findings depend on maximum responses.

All FACS and 4-H Agents in the state of Georgia have been asked to participate in this study entitled "Individual, Work, Family, and Social Support Variables Related to Burnout in Cooperative Extension Agents." If you agree to participate in this study, you will need to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the enclosed addressed, stamped envelope. Please return the questionnaire by January 15, 2003.

The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to fill out. Please complete the questionnaire privately so that you are able to answer the questions honestly and as accurately as possible. Please do not discuss your answers with your co-workers until you have returned your questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your participation is completely anonymous. There is no way of identifying you from your questionnaire. Your responses will be pooled with the results of other agents in the state and analyzed. Please do not attach your name to the questionnaire.

Also remember that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Do not return the questionnaire if you do not wish to participate.

There are no foreseen risks, discomforts, or stresses in participating in this study. Should you have questions or concerns at any time, please contact Leanna Thomas at 706-542-1524 (lthomas@uga.edu), Charlotte Wallinga at 706-542-4930 (cwallinga@fcs.uga.edu).

Thank you for your assistance. Your time and effort are essential to making this study possible. Remember, please return the questionnaire by January 15, 2003.

Sincerely,

Leanna M. Thomas
Masters Candidate
Department of Child
and Family Development

Charlotte Wallinga, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Child
and Family Development

For questions or problems about your rights, please call or write: Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX E

THANK YOU/REMINDER POSTCARD

Dear County Agent,

A week ago, a questionnaire about your perceptions of job-related stress and personal relationships was mailed to you. You were asked to complete this questionnaire and place it in the addressed, stamped envelope and mail it back. If you have already done so, thank you! Your participation is very much appreciated. If not, please complete it as soon as possible. The more people respond, the more accurate our findings will be. The questionnaire should only take about 20 minutes for you to complete.

If you did not receive a questionnaire or have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to call me at (706) 542-4905. I will be happy to mail you another questionnaire or answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you,

Leanna Thomas