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A Comparison of Teacher-directed Versus Self-directed Learning Preferences of Students at Five Selected Community Colleges: Exploring the Relationships Among Age, Gender, and Academic Majors

Huiming Wang
East Tennessee State University

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Jackie Chesnutt Walker
May 1997
APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Graduate Committee of

JACKIE CHESNUTT WALKER

met on the

1st day of April, 1997

The committee read and examined her dissertation, supervised her defense of
it in an oral examination, and decided to recommend that her study be submitted to
the Graduate Council, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education.

Signed on behalf of
the Graduate Council

Interim Dean, School of Graduate Studies
ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE

by

Jackie Chesnutt Walker

Teaching is reported to be a stressful occupation and social support is thought to mediate stress. The purpose of the study was to identify relationships between the level of professional burnout and social support of high school teachers in Northeast Tennessee.

In this correlational study, a sample of 228 secondary school teachers in Northeast Tennessee completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Teacher Support Network Inventory (TSNI). Respondents’ satisfaction with support and amount of support were ascertained from the TSNI. Data presentation included a demographic description of the sample and a description of teachers’ work support, personal support, and recreational support networks. The support networks were described by the number of relatives, teachers, principal/supervisors, and network members not in education-related work. Relationships were shown between the dimensions of burnout and each of these variables: size of the network, respondents’ satisfaction with support received, and the amount of perceived support. Gender and age were also found to be factors that were related to both network structure and professional burnout.

Conclusions of the study indicated that relationships exist between social support and burnout. The variable most closely related to burnout was a teacher’s satisfaction with social support. Size of the personal support network was positively related to personal achievement. Principal support and support from males was inversely related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in work networks. Female support was inversely related to personal achievement in work networks. Differences in levels of professional burnout indicated that females had more emotional exhaustion than males. Teachers who were younger than 45 years had more emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than teachers older than 45.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

This is to certify that the following study has been filed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of East Tennessee State University.

Title of Project: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE

Principal Investigator: Jackie Chesnutt Walker

Department: Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Date Submitted: November 28, 1984

Institutional Review Board, Chair
THIS DISSERTATION IS:

Dedicated to
Kelly, Mary Ann, and Adam
who are the joy of
my life;

😊

In Honor of
my mother, Edith Chesnutt,
for her total support,
care and
love;

In Memory of
my father, Jack B. Chesnutt,
whom I miss
dearly.

v
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Thank you Kelly, Mary Ann, and Adam for your love, tolerance, encouragement, and dedication to your studies, so that I could also concentrate on mine. I am proud of you. Thank you Mother, Mary Jo Weaver, and Janette Chesnutt, for your faith in me and the help that was forthcoming anytime it was needed. You have all been a source of constant, unwavering support and love for me in all my educational and personal endeavors.

Thanks to my committee chairman, Dr. Russell West, for patience, encouragement, and technical advice. Thanks for going that extra mile when I needed assistance. Thanks also to other committee members....Dr. Hal Knight, for teaching me about educational philosophy and encouraging me to think about and question my own; and Dr. Cecil Blankenship, for your example of a cheerful optimistic outlook on the future, a ready smile, a listening ear, and practical advice. Dr. MacKay, thanks for coming on board to see me through the final stages of this project.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the largest and most visible occupations in the United States. It has been and continues to be a very stressful profession. Teachers are under increased "pressure by society to correct social problems, educate students in academic and skill areas, provide enrichment activities, meet the individual needs of students with a wide range of abilities, and encourage students' moral and ethical development" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 27). In attempts of politicians, corporate executives, and educational experts to solve the ills of society, teachers have found their credibility waning. Often blame is placed upon teachers for the problems of education today. These pressures are causing many educators to leave the profession, suffering consequences of job-related stress. Stress is the tension caused by psychological conditions of work, home, and relationships that can threaten one's feelings of mental and physical well-being. High levels of unrelieved stress can lead to the experience of "burnout," a major problem faced by teachers.

Burnout is a psychological condition that lessens the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, increases risk of illness, and lowers feelings of personal worth (Hamann, 1992). Burnout is reported to impact the education system, the quality of instruction received by students, and the self-esteem of the teacher (Hamann, 1992; Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

Some factors that were reported to cause stress and have been linked to teacher
burnout were low salaries, heavy workloads, isolation from other faculty members at school (Starnaman & Miller, 1992); working with non-motivated and unruly students and demanding, or uncooperative parents (Huston, 1989); administrative pressures, lack of career advancement (Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987); and dealing with the pressures of student testing and career ladder advancement (Schlechty, 1990).

Burnout has also been correlated with depression, physical illness, insomnia, low self-esteem, over-eating, and increased use of alcohol and drugs (Hamann, 1992; Friedman, 1991; Rosse et al., 1991; Maslach, 1982).

Johnson and Indivk (1990) have shown that burnout also was related to job turnover, absenteeism, and low morale in education. They noted that estimates of the annual cost of stress-related absenteeism and reduced productivity for the national economy reached as high as $150 billion by 1990.

Burnout has also been cited as a cause of the high dropout rate of new teachers. Gold, Roth, Wright, and Michael (1991) studied burnout among beginning teachers and reported that the dropout rate for first-year teachers was 15%, for second-year teachers 15%, and for third-year teachers the rate was 10%. There is concern among administrators and policy makers about the effects of burnout upon education and educators.

One factor that may play a significant roll in reducing stress related outcomes among teachers is the amount of interaction and social support available to them. Schlechty in Schools for the Twenty-First Century (1990) stated that teachers needed both professional adult companionship and interaction if they were to prosper and grow.
He added that merit pay plans and career ladders often promoted intense competition and rivalry among teachers. According to Schlechty those changes were originally designed to promote cooperation and support but fell short of administrative expectations.

In a 1985 survey conducted by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 80% of the teachers surveyed identified the lack of time to share notes and ideas with other teachers as being a limitation in their efforts to improve instruction (Mann, 1989). This may seem strange given the opportunities that exist today for increasing knowledge and forming collaborative relationships with other teachers of similar interests, even from separate parts of the world. Such connections are now possible through computer networks and satellite transmissions (Holland, Clift, Veal, Johnson, & McCarthy, 1992).

Although opportunities for interaction among teachers may seem endless, the lack of support among colleagues has been noted by Hamann (1992) as a primary factor in teacher burnout. Colleague support involved opportunities for teachers to listen to each other, to receive feedback about their concerns, and to have a cooperative work environment. This gave teachers a sense of shared experience and unification at the workplace (Hamann, 1992).

Ensor (1983) also pointed out that listening among colleagues, sharing a social reality, and offering emotional and technical support were important factors in reducing levels of stress for teachers. Russell et al. (1987) also found evidence that a lack of social support was predictive of teacher burnout.

Studies concerning job stress and causes of burnout have identified the need for further research in the area of support (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Johnson & Indvik,
1990; Freidman, 1991; Starnaman & Miller, 1992). The investigation of support networks of teachers could be beneficial in determining effective strategies for alleviating the effects of stress that often lead to burnout (Russell et al., 1987; Ensor, 1983).

Arnold (1990) stated that one of the most effective long-term personal management strategies for dealing with stress was to develop an emotional support network that could provide positive attention and personal appreciation of one’s efforts on a consistent basis. Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992) also agreed that creating supportive networks among teachers was a strategy that would be effective, if supported by educational leaders. Colleagues experiencing the same types of stress would appreciate the hardships endured while offering help and support to each other.

Statement of Purpose

Although teaching is reported to be a stressful occupation and social support is thought to mediate stress, limited information exists about the social support networks of public school teachers. Researchers who have studied job stress and burnout have not fully explored whether there are significant relationships between the composition of teacher support networks and burnout.

The purpose of this research is to determine if the independent variables of social network size, network support, and network composition are related to professional burnout among teachers. Since limited information exists about the social support networks of public school teachers, patterns of communication showing the support or the lack of support related to work will be explored.
Research Questions and Hypotheses

A review of literature led to several questions concerning relationships between professional burnout and social support. The researcher sought to answer the following questions and to test the associated null hypotheses.

Research Question One

What level of professional burnout is expressed by public secondary school teachers?

\( H_{01} \): There is no difference in burnout scores for the sample and burnout scores in the norm group of educators.

Research Question Two

What is the relationship between social support and professional burnout among public secondary school teachers?

\( H_{02a} \): There is no significant relationship between the amount of work support and the level of professional burnout.

\( H_{02b} \): There is no significant relationship between the amount of personal support and the level of professional burnout.

\( H_{02c} \): There is no significant relationship between the amount of recreation support and the level of professional burnout.

\( H_{02d} \): There is no significant relationship between the total amount of social support and the level of professional burnout.
Research Question Three

Is there a relationship between the satisfaction with network support and professional burnout?

$H_{03a}$: There is no relationship between satisfaction with work support and professional burnout.

$H_{03b}$: There is no relationship between satisfaction with personal support and professional burnout.

$H_{03c}$: There is no relationship between satisfaction with recreation support and professional burnout.

$H_{03d}$: There is no relationship between satisfaction with total network support and professional burnout.

Research Question Four

Is the size of social support networks that are identified by public secondary school teachers related to burnout?

$H_{04}$: The size of the social support network is not related to the level of burnout scores.

Research Question Five

What parts of the composition of social support networks of public secondary school teachers are related to professional burnout?

$H_{05}$: There is no relationship between network composition and burnout.
Research Question Six

Is there a relationship between supervisor support, male support, and female support in the work support network and professional burnout?

$H_{o6a}$: There is no relationship between the amount of supervisor support in the work support network and professional burnout.

$H_{o6b}$: There is no relationship between the amount of male and female support in the work support network and professional burnout.

Research Question Seven

Are there differences in levels of professional burnout between the personal factors of gender, age, or marital status?

$H_{o7a}$: There is no significant difference in burnout levels of males and females.

$H_{o7b}$: There is no significant difference in burnout levels of younger and older public secondary teachers.

$H_{o7c}$: There is no significant difference in the burnout levels of married and unmarried public secondary school teachers.

Research Question Eight

Is there a relationship between professional burnout and years of teaching experience, highest educational degree, and years taught in the present school?

$H_{o8}$: There is no relationship between professional burnout and years of teaching experience, highest educational degree, and the number of years taught in the present school.
Limitations

This study was limited to approximately 410 teachers from the 33 secondary schools served by the First Tennessee Regional Office of the State Department of Education in East Tennessee. The data were representative of information for a specific time, the study was limited to the months of February through April in the 1995-96 school year.

Assumptions

For the completion of the study the following assumptions were made: first, studies dealing with stress in the review of literature were relevant because professional burnout is caused by high levels of stress. Second, respondents of the survey answered questions fully and truthfully.

Definition of Terms

Alters. Persons cited as being members of an individual’s network are called alters (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982). The alters are those whom the teachers list as someone they communicate with concerning problems at work, family matters, and recreation.

Burnout. For this study burnout will be defined in terms of high emotional exhaustion, high depersonalization, and low feelings of personal achievement that result in a loss of interest in the persons with whom one works (Maslach, 1982). This loss of interest is sometimes called the “extinction of energy, motivation, or incentive” and is a psychological condition, produced by stress (Barnhard & Barnhard, 1986, p. 267). The stress is a result of claims on a persons energy, personal resources, and spiritual strength (Freidman, 1991).
**Depersonalization.** Depersonalization represents the feelings of cynicism and negative attitudes about the students or clients with whom one works. It is one of the three dimensions of burnout described by Maslach and Jackson, (1986). A high score for depersonalization indicates increased levels of stress that are indicative of burnout.

**Ego-centered network.** An ego-centered network is made up of the direct contacts between ego (the central actor) and others called alters (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982). Secondary teachers who respond to the survey are the central actors for this study.

**Emotional Exhaustion.** Feelings of being emotionally drained and unable or unwilling to give of oneself anymore on the job is emotional exhaustion. It is the first dimension of professional burnout in the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Emotional exhaustion is usually the first indication of burnout.

**Network.** A network is a specific type of relation linking a defined set of persons, objects, or events (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982). Relationships between secondary teachers and the persons they seek for social support make up the personal communication networks for this study.

**Network size.** The network size is the number of persons that a respondent names for a particular network. Knoke & Kuklinski, (1982) define network size as the number of persons, objects, or events in a network.

**Personal accomplishment.** The third aspect of burnout is indicated by a low score on the personal accomplishment dimension of the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Burnout is indicated when a low score shows that one feels his or her personal achievements are inadequate, that effort makes little difference, and that self-
esteem is diminished (Friesen & Sarros, 1989).

**Range.** The range of a social network is the measure of the number of different status groups represented by the direct relations between an individual and others. Burt (1983) stated that the amount of access to diverse information and social support was related to the number of different status groups to which one had access.

**Social support.** Social support is assurance of approval one receives from others concerning his or her efforts. It gives the receiver of the support the feeling that he or she is understood and accepted. Johnson & Indvik (1990) identified four types of social support as emotional support that shows caring, instrumental support which gives assistance, informational support that fosters coping, and appraisal support that encourages self-evaluation.

**Social support network.** Social support networks are the groups of people and their interactions that offer support that helps to mediate stress (Mitchell & Trickett, 1980).

**Stress.** Stress is a factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be related to causes of disease. Those factors may be physical, chemical, or emotional in nature and tend to alter one's existing equilibrium (Webster's Medical..., 1986). In other words, stress can be caused by physical and psychological conditions of work, home, and relationships that threaten one's mental and physical feelings of well-being. Stress can be a positive force (eustress) to energize and motivate one to action or a physically and emotionally draining force (distress) when the situation is unresolved (Selye, 1976).

**Support network.** The specific relations linking persons to others which give...
them feelings of being cared for and approval related to work problems, personal
development, and to professional development opportunities. These contacts or links
usually include: family members, friends, colleagues, staff members, supervisors, and
others with whom a person is in frequent contact (Russell et al., 1987).

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to our understanding of the professional stress
experienced by teachers and the possible effects that social support can play in reducing
the effects of this stress. Knowledge of teachers’ social networks composition may help
make administrators and policymakers aware of the weaknesses and strengths of the
informal communication systems among teachers and of the social support needs that
could reduce levels of burnout where they exist.

Procedures

After the approval of the study by the Graduate Committee, the proper releases
from the university were completed. A randomly selected sample of public secondary
school educators in Northeast Tennessee were asked for their assistance in a letter briefly
explaining the project. The self-administered survey instrument and a stamped,
addressed envelope was also enclosed.

Data from the returned surveys were entered into a computer file using SPSS/
PC+ (Norusis, 1988). Regression statistics were used to compare components of the
networks to the levels of burnout experienced.

The results were analyzed and chapters four and five were written to complete the
process by interpreting the data, reporting the conclusions and making recommendations.

Organization of the Study

The introduction and statement of purposes for the study are contained in Chapter 1. Research questions and hypotheses precede limitations, assumptions, and identification of terms. The significance of the study, general procedures, and the organization of the study conclude Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 includes a theoretical review of literature about occupational stress that can lead to professional burnout in the teaching career. Relevant literature was reviewed to examine factors that were related to burnout. Personal factors and social support factors that may be related to professional burnout were studied. Research questions and hypotheses were drawn from the review of literature.

Chapter 3 is an account of the methods used to complete the study and information concerning sampling and the validity and reliability of instruments used.

Chapter 4 includes a demographic description of respondents, their levels of professional burnout, social support network characteristics, findings of the research questions, and the results of the tested hypotheses.

A summary of the research project is given in Chapter 5, followed by conclusions that were reached and recommendations concerning the findings.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Occupational stress is an important issue that often leads to the condition called burnout. Theoretical discussion of occupational stress, professional burnout and social support is presented to show how they may be related.

Professional burnout has been correlated with many factors. Among them are factors of social support and personal demographic factors. These traits of individuals have been related to levels of stress or to professional burnout. The social support networks of teachers were investigated to complete the review of literature.

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is an important concern to employers since the costs of stress affect business operations and also the national economy (Spraque, 1992). Stress management workshops are conducted in many businesses to help employees deal with the stressful conditions of their jobs (Ensor, 1983). Johnson and Indvik (1990) reported that the annual cost of stress-related absenteeism and reduced productivity was placed at $150 billion. Growing numbers of workers were suing their employers for mental stress claims to get workman’s compensation (Ensor, 1983).

A definition of occupational stress will often include terms such as worry, tension, anxiety, and nervousness induced by the demands of work (Veenman, 1984). Stress is “a state of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an
existent equilibrium" (Webster’s Medical..., 1986, p. 680). In other words tension from psychological conditions of work, home, and relationships that can threaten one’s mental and physical feelings of well-being can be defined as stress.

Often stress is thought of as a negative thing, but stress itself is not negative or positive. Stress results from an imbalance between demands made through the environment and an individual’s capacity to respond. Selye (1974), sometimes called the father of stress theory, pointed out that stress can be energizing to some while being debilitating to others. It is generated by the individual’s own emotional and physical reaction to internal or external stimuli.

The adrenal glands are a part of the endocrine system that helps an individual deal with stress. They are found near the anterior medial border of the kidneys and serve as the body’s regulator by secreting hormones in response to stressful situations (Cooley, 1978).

Events that cause individuals to react with a stress response may be viewed by that individual as positive or negative. The extent and duration of the nonspecific responses the body undergoes is determined by the perception of the person dealing with the situation and whether that situation is successfully resolved. Stress can be a positive force to energize and motivate one to action (eustress) or a physically and emotionally draining force (distress) when the situation is unresolved (Selye, 1974).

Stress causes the body to react in three stages called the General Adaptation Syndrome (Selye, 1974). The stages are: 1) Alarm Reaction, 2) Stage of Resistance, and 3) Stage of Exhaustion.

The alarm reaction is triggered when a threat is perceived to challenge the body’s
equilibrium. It is the initial response to a stressor. The mouth becomes dry; the heart beats faster; digestion stops; the lungs work harder; blood coagulates faster; and more blood containing extra sugar and oxygen is pumped to the muscles (Cooley, 1978). The physiological changes follow the same pattern each time the alarm reaction is triggered, but the response may vary in force because of the strength and importance of the challenge. The body’s resistance is diminished.

The resistance stage occurs if the exposure to the stressor continues. The body’s resistance rises above normal and it no longer shows signs of alarm. During this stage, an individual functions above his or her original level to deal with the stressor (Selye, 1974). At this stage one can fight, flee, or cope.

The stage of exhaustion occurs after exposure to the same stressor has continued for a long period of time. The first sign is physical tiredness because the adaptive energy used in the resistance stage is eventually used up. Under conditions of prolonged stress, the body continues to activate more defense systems until a state of chronic chemical imbalance occurs. Stress can trigger chemical changes that stimulate the release of neuropeptides that adversely affect the operation of the immune system (McKinsey, 1993).

McKinsey (1993) stated that chronic, unrelieved stress was probably the most severe threat to an individual’s immune system. Feelings of irritability and a loss of confidence are evident. The body’s adaptive energy becomes exhausted and resistance to disease is diminished. This can result in the development of serious illness when the body cannot meet the challenge of continued resistance against stress (McKinsey, 1993).
The strong influence of Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome helped to shape the development of research about stress (Selye, 1974). His model defined stress as a demand from the environment made upon an individual organism. Since stress was an environmental demand it seemed logical that it could be measured by keeping track of stressful events. Holmes and Rahe (1967) developed the widely used Social Readjustment Rating Scale as a tool to measure the level of stress felt by individuals based upon particular life events that had recently occurred.

Holmes and Rahe (1967) found significant positive relationships between the amount of change experienced in recent life events and the onset of illness. An arbitrary value was assigned to 43 life events including such things as divorce, moving, changing jobs, getting married, and experiencing the death of a family member. The sum value of the life events that had occurred was considered evidence of a person’s stressfulness.

Studies that used the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scales and variations like the Schedule of Recent Experiences became known as life events research. Eckenrode and Gore (1981) stated that the life events approach to measuring stress was too simple because the only measure of stressfulness to an individual was the occurrence of particular events. The amount of stress due to the adjustment required for each change in events was set arbitrarily by judges instead of by those affected by the changes.

Life events research evolved to the point that change itself was not universally considered the attribute that made the events stressful. Eckenrode and Gore (1981) indicated that an individual’s choice for being exposed to a certain event made a difference in the amount of stress generated by that event.
Everyday annoyances were also found to add to the level of stress (Lazarus, 1981). Individual differences in the ability to adjust, one's mental attitude, and the conditions under which events occurred were also important factors to consider in the amount of stress generated (Eckenrode & Gore, 1981). Johnson and Indvik (1990) reported that emotionally draining events surrounding communication difficulties between persons could have more impact on stress than major life changes. Lazarus (1981) also found that the day to day irritating and frustrating events such as losing items, arguments, and getting stuck in traffic jams had as great an effect upon individual moods and health as life's major misfortunes.

Stress affected every aspect of a person's life from minor annoyances to major life crises. Most of today's stressors could not be resolved by a simple fight or flee response. Now, the build-up of an individual's tolerance for stress could be pushed to his or her threshold level indefinitely. When that tolerance level was maintained or exceeded it became detrimental to one's physical and psychological well-being that resulted in physical illness, mental illness, nervous-system disorders, and in many cases to a highly stress-related condition known as burnout.

**Professional Burnout**

The loss of ability to cope effectively with clients involving increased feelings of emotional exhaustion, cynical attitudes about work and clients, and a tendency to evaluate one's own job accomplishments negatively was referred to as burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Technological advances, perceptions of the work to be done, the
structure of the workplace, and recent changes in education put tremendous stress upon educators making professional burnout a very serious problem for teachers.

High levels of stress were reported in persons who had lost the ability to cope effectively with clients in the service-related professions such as teaching, nursing, social work, and police enforcement; yet, they had not necessarily been victims of some drastic life crisis (Ensor, 1983). In the 1970s those people who developed problems relating to their clients were said to be suffering from professional burnout.

Maslach and Jackson (1986) showed that professional burnout was not a condition that one either had or didn’t have; but, it was experienced as a degree of feelings about clients that could range from low to high in three major areas of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal achievement. Burnout occurred as a final step when unsuccessful attempts to cope with negative stress conditions over time became overwhelming to the individual.

Emotional exhaustion was characterized by a feeling of being emotionally and physically drained with little enthusiasm for work. Persons experiencing emotional exhaustion felt that they had nothing left to give on the psychological level to their students or clients.

Depersonalization was the term given for negative feelings and attitudes expressed about the people with whom one worked. Persons who felt depersonalized often wished to be alone. Effectiveness of personal interaction was diminished and cynical feelings were common. Those experiencing depersonalization no longer appeared to care about their clients or students.
Low personal achievement was demonstrated by negative evaluation of oneself and by reduced personal accomplishments. Personal accomplishments seemed to be unimportant. Chronic unhappiness and dissatisfaction resulted when the amount of effort put into the job no longer seemed to make a difference in the outcome.

Hamann (1992) described persons experiencing a high degree of burnout as having an internal psychological experience involving feelings, attitudes, motives, and expectations. A person experiencing burnout was also having a negative individual experience that involved distress, discomfort, dysfunction, and negative consequences.

Hamann (1992) determined the seriousness of a person’s burnout by the level of dysfunction and the degree and number of symptoms experienced. He categorized symptoms as physical, job- and achievement-related, social, and enjoyment-related. In the following list Hamman focused on specific characteristics that were obvious signs of problem areas associated with burnout and levels of high stress:

**Physical Symptoms**
- Colds or bouts of flu
- Muscle tension
- Chronic physical exhaustion
- Increased smoking, drinking, or eating
- Ulcer symptoms
- Marked weight loss or gain
- Chronic sleeplessness
- Increased blood pressure, temperature, pulse

**Job- and Achievement-Related Symptoms**
- Lack of interest in going to work for more than two weeks in a row
- Boredom and/or frustration with the job
• Desire to do another job, although undecided about what that job might be
• Lack of feeling personal accomplishment—what one does seems meaningless
• Feeling the need to do more—but getting no fulfillment when more is done

**Social Symptoms**

• Depersonalization
• Unwillingness to help others

**Enjoyment-Related Symptoms**

• Inability to enjoy simple pleasures of life
• Inability to cope with daily minor problems
• Quickness to feel anger, irritation, or frustration
• Increased cynicism, worry, and/or a sense of hopelessness

The ability to handle the everyday stresses of life, family relationships, and work were important to each individual as well as to society. When coping mechanisms were overloaded and burnout occurred every aspect of an individual’s life was affected. Burnout increased feelings of entrapment and reduced the level of commitment to the profession of teaching (Hunter, 1989).

Teaching involved interaction with students and parents, colleagues, supervisors, and other staff members. Burnout affected the teacher, but also the quality of interaction with persons in contact with the burned out teacher.

**Burnout and the Teaching Career**

Teaching, one of the largest professions in the United States, was found to be a highly stress-related occupation in which burnout often occurred. Demands placed upon
the education system challenged teachers to meet the varying educational needs of each student, to encourage moral and ethical development, to provide enrichment and remediation, and to help correct social problems of our society (Schwab, 1986).

Teachers' levels of stress and burnout increased with the amount of contact they had with groups of students. Stress and burnout also grew with the frequency and intensity of those encounters that caused teachers to change their behavior to handle the situation or to develop coping strategies (Lazarus, 1981). The workload had a substantial impact upon burnout (Stammam & Miller, 1991).

Teachers dealt with problems related to discipline, student apathy, overcrowded classrooms, excessive paperwork, inadequate salaries (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978), demanding or unsupportive parents, and a lack of administrative support (Russell et al., 1987). In addition to these, a lack of support from colleagues, students, and the teacher's family and friends also related to more stress and burnout (Hamann, 1992). The emotional drain of these elements led to burned-out and worn-out teachers.

Hamann (1992) noted that there was a difference between worn-out and burned-out teachers was that the worn-out teachers had made a conscious decision to give up trying to be effective. The burned-out teachers, on the other hand, were generally high achievers who ended up trying to do too much; or, they were too hard on themselves. They had high expectations for themselves and others, so when expectations were not met they felt a sense of failure or depression.

A causal model of communication and burnout in the teaching profession by Stammaman and Miller (1992) emphasized that principals were a key component in helping to eliminate burnout, although they could provide only limited support. Teachers
needed support from others who shared the same kinds of problems and experiences to help them to deal with stressors in their daily work (Starnaman & Miller, 1992; Russell et al., 1987).

Educators experienced variable levels of stress in their lives. When dealing with higher levels of stress, burnout was more likely to occur. At some time during their professional careers, many teachers experienced burnout in various degrees. Some with lower levels of burnout tended to work through the symptoms for themselves (Hamann, 1992). Others experienced many of the symptoms that have been associated with burnout and suffered from the results.

Since stress is a part of everyone's life to some extent, the literature leads the researcher to ask a question for study:

Research Question One: What level of professional burnout is expressed by public secondary school teachers?

Some researchers believed that the differences among individuals in dealing with symptoms of stress and burnout rested in the realm of social support.

Social Support

Social support was the belief or perception that others were available to provide emotional comfort or practical assistance when they were needed (Lepore, Evans, & Schneider, 1991). Researchers found that social support affected an individual's ability to manage stress (Hamann, 1992; Lepore et al., 1991; Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Indvik, 1990; Cobb, 1976). It also helped individuals to cope with crisis and to adapt to change as the challenges of life were met (Hirsh, 1981; Cobb, 1976).
Cobb (1976) classified social support as three types of information that individuals generally conceived as being social support. First, knowledge that one was cared for and loved was called emotional support. It involved mutual trust in an intimate relationship between two individuals and filled the needs of both for succorance, nurturance, and affiliation.

Second, esteem support was information that caused an individual to feel valued. Public affirmation that one had precise significance helped an individual to sense personal worth and to increase feelings of self-esteem (Cobb, 1976). Recognition or rewards for one's efforts and listening without offering judgments were examples of some of the functions of social support offered by Ensor (1983).

A third type of social support was information that an individual belonged to a network of mutual obligation that was common and shared. Shared history of an individual with a group gave him or her access to certain tangible goods, services, technical information, and mutual defense procedures that were available to its members (Cobb, 1976). It also gave one a sense of where he or she belonged in society. Other functions of support were described as sharing social reality and having emotional challenge from others who care enough to question defense mechanisms and excuses (Ensor, 1983).

The emotional comfort and practical assistance referred to as social support came from members of the family, neighbors, friends, peers at work, peers at play, and from members of the helping professions (McCallister & Fischer, 1983; Wellman, 1981; Cobb, 1976). It offered a means of relieving the effects of stress resulting from work, physical impairment, aging and difficult life events. The need for social support began at birth.
when a baby was held and nurtured by parents and continued in varying degrees throughout his or her life (Cobb, 1976).

**Social Support and the Stress/Burnout Relationship**

Social support was identified as having a positive effect upon those dealing with stressful situations (Russell et al., 1987). Persons with supportive social relationships were able to rely upon those individuals to offer aid and moral support which defused the negative physical and psychological effects of stress. A New Hampshire study found that lower levels of teacher burnout were associated with higher levels of social support from colleagues (Russell et al.). There was evidence that increasing social supports available to teachers could be an effective strategy for coping with stress and preventing burnout.

Cook (1982) found that social support acted as a moderator for coping with stressful life events in the public school environment. She believed that support received was the major factor affecting the level of stress in the school setting because teachers that received a high degree of support for coping with particular events reported significantly lower levels of stress on all events than teachers receiving little or no support.

Ensor (1983) studied the impact of social support functions upon teachers in an experimental study of 159 participants in Oakland, California in burnout workshops. The findings in a study this small could not be generalized, but several of the conclusions supported earlier research. In a multiple regression analysis six functions of a social support system accounted for about 13% of the variance that was associated with burnout.
Of six social support functions associated with burnout, the most significant support system predictor of burnout was having someone to share the teacher's social reality. The second was technical challenge, and the third predictor of burnout was listening (Ensor, 1983).

Significant negative correlations with burnout were found for listening and for emotional challenge (Ensor, 1983). Listening meant hearing without offering judgments or giving advice. Emotional challenge meant caring enough to question defense mechanisms and excuses.

Ensor (1983) speculated that the number of people providing a person social support may have an effect upon experienced burnout. She further questioned the role that various relationships between family members, co-workers, and friends had in relation to burnout and whether there were differences between male and female support systems.

The study of Russell et al. (1987) also supported the previous research of an inverse relationship between social support and burnout. Increased social support was associated with lower levels of teacher burnout.

Russell et al. (1978) found that the number of stressful events experienced and the amount of social support were predictive of teacher burnout. The methodology used a stratified random sample of public school teachers in Iowa who were sent questionnaires. There was a 53% rate of return that was representative of teachers in Iowa (Russell et al.).

Two social support measures were utilized for the study. One developed by House and Wells in 1978 focused on the support a person received from members of his
or her social network concerning job-related stress. It gave indexes of social support from supervisors, co-workers, spouses, and friends or relatives then the respondents rated how helpful each of those persons was in regard to work-related stresses. Alpha coefficients reported a range from .75 to .92 for the subscales which validated its reliability.

A second social support measure called the Social Provisions Scale by Russell and Catering in 1986 was given. It assessed the extent to which relationship provisions of attachment, social integration, reassurance of worth, guidance, reliable alliance and nurturance were met by the person's current social relationships.

Examples of social support functions were explained by the relational provisions. Attachment was provided by intimate relationships in which the person received a sense of security and safety. Social integration involved relationships in which individuals shared interests and concerns. Reassurance of worth meant the person's skills and abilities were acknowledged in the relationship. Guidance was provided by trust-worthy and authoritative individuals who gave advice. Reliable alliance came from relationships in which a person could count on others for assistance under any circumstances. The last one was an opportunity for nurturance when a relationship allowed the person to be responsible for the well-being of another.

The reliability and validity of the Social Provisions Scale indicated that scores on the scale were predictive of adaptation to stressful situations and that they were related to depression, independent of many other variables (Russell et al., 1987).

The results of the study led the authors to conclude that intervention programs to help prevent teacher burnout should focus on the supervisors within each school. They
should emphasize that each teacher is a valuable resource whose worth to the system could not be compromised. Future research concerning the design and evaluation of the effects of social support intervention programs in preventing teacher burnout was a recommendation (Russell et al., 1987).

Haman's (1992) findings showed that a lack of support from colleagues, administrators, students and their parents, and the teachers' family and friends was positively related to burnout for teachers. Support from colleagues was the primary factor in alleviating stress for teachers with support from the administration following second.

The previous studies showed an inverse relationship between social support and the levels of stress or burnout reported. The Lepore et al. (1991) research also shows the relationship, but it is a longitudinal study that detected changes in social support effects over time.

Lepore et al. (1991) studied the effects of support upon college students that were subjected to the stress of overcrowded conditions. They found support to be both a buffer and a moderator of stress. Persons who were perceived as having social support coped better with the stress of overcrowding. As time passed, however, the buffering effect of social support upon stress changed to a mediating effect between the stressor and the psychological distress (Lepore et al.).

Over an eight month period the perceived social support was diminished. This indicated that long-term stressors could have an adverse effect upon perceived support. It also indicated that social support was not constant, but dynamic and changing.
The previous studies reported an inverse relationship between the amount of social support and the level of stress or burnout experienced. Based upon that evidence the following research question was stated:

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between social support and professional burnout among public secondary school teachers?

Cobb (1976) indicated that social support was demonstrated by three types of information that an individual received, but there was variety in the measurement of it. Ensor (1983) and others measured functions of social support by asking, for example, the extent that a person experienced someone to listen or to give emotional challenge. Hamann (1992) used types of social support to refer to the classification of its providers. Others discussed support in terms of satisfaction with or the adequacy of support received from various groups of persons. The mere presence of a person did not necessarily determine that support would be forthcoming. Presence of some could even induce stress.

McIntosh (1991) noted problems in the measurement and specificity of the concept of support. She attempted to clarify the problem by identifying three conceptually specific properties of social support for measurement. Those properties were the number of providers of support, the amount of support available, and the perceived adequacy of support.

McIntosh found measurement of social support difficult. She sought to measure the adequacy of support in addition to the amount or the number of supporters. Other factors of social support should be considered. Could social support adequacy be determined by a measure of satisfaction with the network support? Is satisfaction related
to professional burnout? This concept led to the development of the third research
question.

Research Question Three: Is there a relationship between the satisfaction with
network support and professional burnout?

Social Support Factors

Through social interaction individuals gained information and assistance, got
feedback about their efforts and ideas, felt loved and supported, and gained a feeling of
value about themselves in society (Dean & Lin, 1977; Gottlieb, 1981). In other words
social support was received through social interaction with others. By looking at the ties
or relationships that exist between individuals and groups of individuals and by asking
questions about the content of those relationships more information may be gained about
the nature of social support. The study of social networks and social support systems
became the focus of many researchers because networks offered a way to explain
connections between individuals. The set of all persons in contact with ego (the focal
person) make up the network (Wellman, 1981).

Network Size

Network size is the number of supporters in a network. Macintosh (1991)
identified network size as a way of measuring social support. Because the size of a
particular network could be a measure of social support, it can be used to compare
whether a relationship exists between social support and other measurable factors.

Research Question Four: Is the size of the social support networks that are
identified by public secondary school teachers related to professional burnout?
Composition of Support

Research concerning personal networks revealed that composition and structural characteristics concerning support may be related to age (Hirsch, 1981), gender (Moore, 1990), educational and socioeconomic levels (Wellman, 1981).

Moore (1990) found that although personal networks of men and women were similar in size, they differed in network composition. Men’s networks were composed of more non-kin ties and more coworkers. Women’s networks were composed of more family ties.

Social support was information or knowledge that one was significant, cared for, and a member of society. The parents and family members, spouses and in-laws, friends, neighbors, and fellow workers generally made up social support networks. Daughtery, Salloway, and Nuzzarello, (1988) determined that the people that are regularly seen, visited, and talked to gave needed feedback about one’s behavior.

Persons who influenced the support teachers felt most in reducing stress leading to burnout included colleagues, members of the administration, students and their parents, and the teachers’ family members and friends (Hamann, 1992). Research question five concerned the composition of teachers’ social support networks and the relationship to burnout.

Research Question Five: What parts of the composition of social support networks of public secondary school teachers are related to professional burnout?

Support from Administrators. In a study of 1032 public school teachers and administrators, Hunter (1989) found that support from administration did not provide a
buffering effect upon burnout, although administrators seemed to be a key factor for initiating and facilitating support programs that met the needs of individual teachers. The most promising approach for increasing support among teachers was a collaborative effort that encouraged teachers and administrators to work cooperatively.

Stamaman and Miller (1992) also investigated the role of principals in reducing stress and burnout among their teachers as they developed a casual model of the relationships among burnout, communication, organizational stressors and their outcomes in an educational setting. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (1981), the Job Descriptive Index (an adaptation of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire), and a survey instrument developed by Pettegrew and Wolf in 1982 to measure job satisfaction, occupational commitment, load, role conflict, and roll ambiguity were used to collect data.

Social support from the principal was measured by items used by Caplan et al in 1975 that were revised for the educational setting (Stamaman & Miller, 1992). A stratified random sample of 880 employees including 538 teachers in an urban district of the Midwest were surveyed. Stamaman and Miller defended the relatively low rate of respondent participation (34%) by stating that the respondents were representative of the district as a whole.

Their research confirmed that supportive principals were receptive to teachers' ideas, showed an interest in teachers' work, and demonstrated affective support by letting teachers participate in decision-making. Principal support was related to decreases in role ambiguity and role conflict, but principal support was positively, not negatively, related to depersonalization (Stamaman & Miller, 1992).
Their final model determined through factor and path analysis (.71) included three specific strategies for dealing with stress in educational settings. The first concluded that the workload had a substantial impact on burnout and role stress. Second, social support from the principal was instrumental for reducing role conflict and role ambiguity, and the third strategy emphasized the depersonalization of students as being a central variable in the burnout process (Starnaman & Miller, 1992).

Lack of support from administration was the second link that Hamann found between teachers and burnout. When support from administration was lacking, the incidence of burnout increased. Evidence of a lack of support was indicated by unrealistic or unclear expectations from supervisors, unrealistic work loads, insufficient or inappropriate recognition or rewards for teaching, a negative working environment, inadequate physical facilities, and insufficient funding (Hamann, 1992).

The aspects of the social support received by teachers that involved support from their supervisor were reassurance of worth, and reliable alliance. Those were found to be predictive of burnout by Russell et al., (1987).

The literature seemed to be mixed concerning the impact of support from the principal or supervisor in reducing stress or burnout for teachers. Hunter found that support from administration did not buffer the effect of burnout for teachers. Starnaman and Miller found evidence that principal support was positively related to depersonalization which was a dimension of burnout, and Haman found that a lack of support from principals was related to an increase in burnout of teachers. There is conflicting evidence of a relationship between support of the principal or supervisor and
burnout among teachers. Research question six inquires about the relationship between supervisor support and professional burnout.

Research Question Six: Is there a relationship between supervisor support, male support, and female support in the work support network and professional burnout?

Cook (1982) reported that the amount of support provided seemed to be more important than the source of the support. For example, a close relationship could outweigh support from those who were formally designated the responsibility for assistance (Cook, 1982). Teachers looked for needed support from those in the school setting with whom they felt most comfortable. This was not necessarily an administrator.

Support from Colleagues. Support from colleagues was the primary factor in studies of burnout conducted by Hamann (1992) shown to alleviate stress for teachers in a cooperative working environment. A sense of unification among teachers, and having other teachers listen seemed to be the important characteristics of support from colleagues.

When teachers feel a lack of support from their students and students' parents it can add to sources of burnout. Through positive responses, recognition, and appreciation from colleagues and others, teachers get feedback that what they are doing is important and appreciated (Hamann, 1992).

Support from Family and Friends. Relationships outside the workplace may also play a role in assisting teachers in coping with job-related stress (Russell et al., 1987,
The source of the support was probably not as important as the fact that support was readily available when needed according to Cook (1982).

Hamann noted that support from family and friends was needed by teachers. He stated that when the committed, motivated, and idealistic teacher did not feel that his/her family gave support for the teaching effort, the disappointment they experienced led to symptoms of burnout. (Hamann, 1992).

A study investigating the social networks of women returning to college (20 young widows and 14 mature women) showed the strongest effect of support was the nuclear family friendship. Even though family support was strongest the nonfamily socializing seemed to be critical in providing relief from stress. Hirsch (1981) noted that for the majority of women studied, socializing outside the family was typically the only support they actively sought out when troubled.

Dean and Lin (1977) recognized that the social environment is in constant flux adapting and adjusting to the cultural, interpersonal, and psychological systems of persons related in their complex structural web of networks. A social support system thought to buffer or moderate stress may actually induce stress if a person’s expectations within the system are not met (Dean & Lin, 1977).

McCallister and Fischer (1983) studied personal networks basing their understanding upon the assumption that people are influenced and socially integrated through their social network interactions. They wanted to know how communities that people lived in affected aspects of supportiveness, homogeneity cohesiveness and geographical dispersal in their social environments. They also investigated effects of social environment attributes on psychological well-being (McCallister & Fischer).
Research by McCallister and Fischer (1983) indicated that people who were sources of rewarding interactions would be important in shaping the attitudes and behavior of respondents in their study. For that reason, the questions posed to determine the social networks of respondents did not ask them to list friends, kin, colleagues, and intimates in categories.

Instead, McCallister and Fischer (1983) looked at the specific behaviors involving interactions. The interactions were used to determine the respondents' networks. An exchange theory defined relationships between network members where the actions of each directly affected the outcomes of the other.

The interviewer asked respondents to name persons whom they would ask for assistance, discuss personal problems, or talk about work decisions (McCallister & Fischer, 1983). From 10 questions that identified network members from a wide range of social contexts, respondents named as many people as they wanted for each question. Only the first eight names were listed for each question by the interviewer, then they were compiled into a single list.

After compiling the list, a respondent checked to see if there were any other persons who were important to them that did not appear on the list. Most respondents named between 10 and 30 persons. The responses showed the types of exchanges that took place with each individual named. Further questions examined the attributes of those persons named by each respondent concerning gender, place of residence, employment status, age, and others. Asking both kinds of questions enabled McCallister and Fischer (1983) to conduct analysis of the networks at two distinct levels.
The first type of analysis involved descriptions of the relational level and of characteristics of the respondents ties for each kind of exchange elicited. The second type of analysis involved the total network environment (McCallister & Fischer, 1983).

**Personal Factors Related to Burnout**

Studies have been conducted in an effort to determine the causes of professional burnout so that steps could then be taken to prevent or alleviate the problem. Researchers have found that relationships exist between burnout and many factors. Among those are various personal attributes or demographic factors of age, gender, marital status, years of teaching experience, and grade level taught (Cook, 1982). Social support factors describe some attributes of individual social support networks.

**Relationship of Gender and Burnout**

Depersonalization was related to the teacher's sex. Schwab found in 1986 that males reported higher levels of depersonalization than females. Russell et al. (1987, p. 271) were also in agreement. Huston (1989), found that male teachers were significantly more depersonalized than female teachers (.03 level of significance).

Male and female differences in two samples showed that the correlation between emotional exhaustion and self-esteem was stronger for women, but was not significant in the police group surveyed by Maslach & Jackson, (1981). Sex differences were studied by Neufeld & Davidson (1974) concerning the stress response. Further research concerning gender was also a recommendation of Rosse et al. (1991) when their results were inconclusive.
Relationship of Age and Burnout

"Age has been shown to be a significant predictor of Emotional Exhaustion... Younger teachers tend to score higher than older teachers." (Schwab, 1986, p. 20). This would indicate that younger teachers tend to have a higher level of emotional exhaustion indicating a higher level of burnout on that dimension. Emotional exhaustion is one dimension of burnout from the Maslach Burnout Inventory used to determine the level of burnout one experienced at the time of testing. Frieberg (1987) showed the importance of support for first-year teachers to alleviate stress.

Russell et al. (1987) also reported that age was a predictor variable that was significantly related to the number of stressful events experienced by teachers. Younger teachers tended to report more stressful events, and greater emotional exhaustion was also reported to be a significant indicator of high stress and burnout.

Teachers in the 36-45 age range were significantly more depersonalized than younger or older age groups (.04) (Huston, 1989). That indicated higher levels of burnout on the depersonalization scale for the middle age range.

Relationship of Marital Status and Burnout

"Teachers who were married and who taught at the primary level reported greater feelings of personal accomplishment..."; therefore, showing evidence of lower levels of burnout (Russell et al., 1987, p. 271). Then unmarried teachers would be expected to have higher levels of burnout.
Summary of Personal Factors Related to Burnout

Personal factors of individuals have been used to predict the incidence of burnout unsuccessfully. Cook (1982) found that demographic characteristics were not reliable variables for predicting the degree of stress experienced by teachers.

Research Question Seven: Are there differences in levels of professional burnout between the personal factors of gender, age, or marital status?

Professional Factors and Burnout

The following studies investigated relationships between burnout and factors related to work, the school environment, factors relating to the educational experience or the level of educational degree held. Researchers had varying degrees of success finding significant relationships with levels of burnout.

Friesen and Sarros (1989) assessed the extent to which results of the Educators’ Survey, a form of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, were significantly predicted by a second set of variables. The sample of 128 principals and assistant principals and 635 teachers were from a large urban school district in Western Canada. The findings offered support for treating the three dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory as independent measures.

For teachers and administrators depersonalization and personal accomplishment were more closely related to satisfaction with work and the capacity of work to fulfill the individual needs of challenge, recognition, and satisfactory interpersonal relationships. Emotional exhaustion was found to be the only dimension of the MBI that resulted in work stress as the major source of burnout (Friesen & Sarros, 1989).
The results of Friesen and Sarros (1989) revealed that overall work stress, satisfaction with the workload, status and recognition, and satisfaction with salary predicted almost 50% of the variance for emotional exhaustion of teachers. Yet only 27.6% of the variance was explained for administrators.

Less than 15% of the variance was explained for depersonalization of teachers or administrators. The needs for challenging work and satisfaction with status and recognition were factors most closely associated with depersonalization (Friesen & Sarros, 1989).

Finally, factors for the lack of personal accomplishment explained 19.4% of the variance for teachers. The lack of satisfaction with status and recognition and the lack of job challenge were most relevant for teachers. For administrators, low satisfaction with interpersonal relationships (16.2%) in addition to the other factors of satisfaction with security and involvement, satisfaction with advancement, and satisfaction with autonomy account for 27.9% of the variance (Friesen & Sarros, 1989).

Friesen and Sarros (1989) suggested looking for causes and solutions of burnout in areas other than those related to work stress because it was a major source of burnout for only one of the dimensions of burnout in the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Work stress was the major source of emotional exhaustion. The personal satisfaction of having challenging work, getting recognition for one’s efforts, and having satisfactory personal interactions was related to depersonalization and personal achievement, the other two dimensions of burnout.

Friedman (1991) found that teacher profiles were statistically different in the variables of age, sex, level of education, years of experience, and the number of years
teaching in the same school when looking for links between personal variables and burnout. The mean age of teachers was 35.45 years at the high-burnout schools and 33.06 years at low-burnout schools.

There was a higher percentage of male teachers at the high burnout schools (19%) compared to low-burnout schools (4%). Men and women with higher levels of education also had higher degrees of burnout. Nineteen percent of the teachers at high-burnout schools had higher levels of education. In high-burnout schools the average number of years in teaching experience (14.43 years) and average number of years teaching in the same school (7.32 years) were higher than in the low burnout schools’ years of experience (10.67 years) and years teaching in the same school (5.56 years).

Friedman used the factors of educational degree, teaching experience, and association with a particular school type for predictive factors relating to burnout. A research question for this study includes professional demographic factors as predictors of burnout.

Research Question Eight: Is there a relationship between professional burnout and years of teaching experience, educational degree, and years taught in the present school?

**Summary**

The literature investigated led to a determination that teaching was a stressful occupation that could lead to high levels of stress and burnout. Social support was found to have a buffering effect or a moderating effect upon burnout by helping to alleviate stress. Relationships between burnout and personal factors of age, teaching experience,
amount of education, marital status, and gender have been shown. A limited amount of research was found concerning the relationship between the factors of burnout and social support of teachers.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter Three contains a description of the research design, selection of the sample, instruments used, data collection methods, and analysis techniques.

Research Design

Survey research techniques were employed in this descriptive study to show the relationships between the independent and independent variables (Long, Convey, & Chwalek, 1988). Specifically a correlational research design was used to study the relationships between teachers' social support networks and professional burnout. Data were collected through a survey of randomly selected high school teachers from public schools in Northeast Tennessee.

Correlational research designs have limitations that prevent independent variables from being manipulated and subjects from being randomly assigned to treatment groups (Best, 1977). Because the data are manipulated in an “ex post facto” fashion another limitation is that correlational designs make it difficult to analyze (Best, 1977). Causation is ruled out since extraneous sources of variability are not controlled.

Selection of the Sample

Population

Public high school teachers in Northeast Tennessee represented the target
population for study. There were 1482 public high school teachers according to the 1993-94 Update Directory of Public Schools in Northeast Tennessee (Smith, 1993).

Teachers were chosen from public schools where instruction was given to students in grades 9 - 12 because the interest was for secondary teachers. Thirty schools were identified, but only 24 were data accessible. Superintendents from two city school systems and two county systems did not respond to the request for a list of their high school teacher's names. Two of the participating schools offered instruction in grades K-12. Only teachers of high school students from those schools were included in the study. This was determined through inquiries at the two schools.

**Sample**

A random sampling procedure was used to insure a sample that resembled the population of Northeast Tennessee high school teachers. According to Scheaffer and Mendenhall (1986) a sample size of 315 was needed to obtain a sample with an accuracy of +5 or -5 percent. An oversampling procedure was used to obtain the desired sample size of 315. Four hundred ten questionnaires were mailed to teachers in Northeast Tennessee in an attempt to receive the desired number of 315. A sample this large was selected so as to allow generalization of the results to the target population (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1988).

The names of the high school teachers from the 24 participating schools were obtained from each school system. Numbers were assigned. Four hundred ten teachers were selected from a list computer generated random numbers were contacted by mail. Each teacher in the sample was contacted by mail and asked to complete and return the
survey in the addressed, postage-paid envelope provided (see Appendix A).

**Instruments**

**Maslach Burnout Inventory**

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI) was chosen as the instrument for measuring burnout among teachers since it has been widely used and is easily administered. It is a survey instrument designed by Maslach and Jackson (1986) to measure the level of burnout experienced by people in a wide range of service oriented occupations.

The MBI is comprised of three sub-scales that measure emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). It has most often been used with various groups of people who work in the helping professions such as nursing, police work, counseling, and teaching (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Various forms of the MBI have been developed to be more job-specific.

The *Educators' Survey* is the MBI form that is specifically designed for teachers and administrators in education (Appendix B). It consists of 22 statements dealing with feelings and emotional perceptions. The degree to which a respondent has the feeling or perception stated is chosen using a Likert-format scale that ranges from 0, “never” to 6, “every day”. The items are divided into three sub-scales that were determined through factor analysis.

The sub-scales of the MBI are Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA) made up of 9 items, 5 items, and 8 items, respectively. Higher levels of professional burnout are indicated by higher scores on
Emotional Exhaustion (ranging 0 to 54) and Depersonalization (ranging 0 to 30) and for lower scores of Personal Accomplishment (ranging 0 to 48).

Emotional exhaustion is the feeling of being so emotionally drained of energy that nothing is left to give to students. Depersonalization, the second component of burnout, is cynicism and the lack of positive feelings about students and the job (Schwab, 1986). Low Personal Accomplishment, the third component, is a diminished feeling of self-esteem because personal achievements are viewed as inadequate, and the amount of effort given is felt to make no difference in outcomes (Friesen & Sarrow, 1989).

Internal-consistency of reliability has been determined for each of the three scales. Reliability for the Emotional Exhaustion Scale has ranged from .89 to .90. Depersonalization reliability has ranged from .64 to .83. Personal Achievement reliability has ranged from .69 to .76 (Gold et al., 1991).

Teacher Support Networks Inventory (TSNI)

The questions that make up the Teacher Support Networks Inventory were adapted from other social network instruments (West, 1992; Daugherty, Salloway, & Nuzzarello, 1988), and from research conducted by McCallister and Fischer (1983) and Friedman (1991). The purpose of the Teacher Support Networks Inventory was to show the size, composition, perceived support and satisfaction with support received in the work support, personal support, and recreational support networks. Appendix C contains a copy of the TSNI.
Each respondent was asked to provide the following demographic information: gender, age, marital status, number of years with teaching experience, highest educational degree earned, and the number of years taught in the present school.

The second part of the survey asked the respondent to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 their level of satisfaction with the support they were receiving in three different networks; the work/professional network, personal/family network, and recreation/relaxation network. The following question was asked concerning the work network; “I would rate my satisfaction with the support I currently receive concerning my work as ___ (a number ranging from 1 -least satisfied to 10 -most satisfied).” The other two questions asked respondents to rate their satisfaction concerning personal/family and recreation/relaxation networks. These questions were also answered on a scale of one to ten.

The third section dealt with the networks of Work Support, Personal Support, and Recreational Support. In this section respondents were asked to list first names or initials of those who give them support for each network, and to identify their relationship (for example, family member, spouse, friend, or co-worker). They were also asked to identify the gender, and whether the person listed was associated with education as a teacher, principal/administrator, staff member, or other school related position. The question asking about the association of a person with education gave a clearer picture of the network composition since family members or friends could have also been educators.

Finally respondents were asked to rate how often they felt support from each
person listed. The question was “Circle how often you feel support from this person: 5 -
daily, 4 -a few times a week, 3 -once a week, 2 -a few times a month, or 1 -once a month
or less?” A score indicating how often support was felt was then determined by finding
the sum of responses in this column for each network. This score was used to determine
the perceived amount of support in each network.

The composition of support networks was determined by finding the
percentages of network members in three different ways. First, percentages of males and
females determined the composition of networks based upon gender. Second,
percentages of family members (spouse and relatives), friends, coworkers, and others
(everyone else) determined composition of networks based upon relationships stated by
respondents. Finally, composition of the networks was determined based upon the extent
to which network members were associated with education as teachers,
principal/supervisors, school/educational staff members, or not related to educational
employment.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission to complete the study was granted from the Institutional Review
Board of East Tennessee State University. The survey instruments and a letter briefly
explaining the purpose of the study and requesting participation in the project were sent
to the randomly selected teachers. An addressed, stamped envelope was provided for the
return of the completed surveys, and a brochure about symptoms of occupational stress
was included to encourage participation.
Data Analysis Methods

The completed surveys were received for analysis. The data were entered into a computer file and descriptive statistics were calculated to show the composition of networks and levels of burnout.

The z-test for differences between the means of the sample and the norm group of educators was run. The norm group was made up of scores from all teachers (K-12) that had taken the Educator’s Survey form of the MBI.

All hypotheses that refer to professional burnout will address each of the three dimensions of burnout separately since there is no total burnout score for the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Tests will be run for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and for personal accomplishment each time professional burnout is tested throughout the study.

Percentages were calculated to determine the composition of the networks by dividing the number of network members with a particular characteristic by the total number of members in the individual’s network (West, 1992). Proportions that made up the composition of each individual’s network were then ranked and paired with the burnout scores from the MBI for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The Spearman rank order correlation test was performed to find whether the presence of any particular network components was significantly related to the level of burnout scores.

The Mann-Whitney U test of differences was used to compare the means of groups of teachers based upon gender, age, and marital status. This was done to see
whether particular groups may be more prone to higher or lower levels of burnout. The ordinal nature of the MBI scores prevented the use of a t-test for this purpose.

Correlational techniques were used to relate the size, composition, satisfaction, support, and levels of burnout that teachers experienced. These analyses were conducted using the SPSS PC+ (Norusis, 1991) statistical package. Regression analysis showed the effects of the independent variables (network factors) in the level of burnout that was experienced.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between social support and professional burnout among public secondary school teachers of Northeast Tennessee. Data for the study were obtained from the Teacher's Support Network Inventory and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The survey instruments were sent to a random sample of 410 secondary school teachers from 33 schools in Northeast Tennessee that offer instruction to students in grades 9 through 12. Two hundred twenty-eight responded to the survey for a return rate of 56%. The results of the study are presented in this chapter.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Respondents were asked to provide information concerning their gender, age, and marital status. Data representing the frequency distribution and percentages are summarized in Table 1.

Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 78 years (M=45). Of the 228 respondents, nearly 60% were female. As shown in Table 1, over one-third (34.2%) were between the ages of 44 and 51. More than half (61%) of the respondents were over the age of 44. Nearly 27% were within 10 years of retirement age or over and only 16.7% were age 35 or below, probably in the first 10 years of their teaching careers.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their marital status. The frequency
TABLE 1

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF RESPONDENTS’ GENDER, AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>228</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 - 35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 - 51</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 - 59</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 67</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 - 75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>228</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>228</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

distribution in Table 1 shows that most of the respondents were married (74%). The fewest number were widowed (1%). The percentage of married respondents was nearly three times more than the combined percentages of single, divorced, and widowed respondents.

Other information provided by secondary public school teachers of Northeast Tennessee concerning the highest educational degree earned, the number of years
teaching experience, and the number of years the teacher has taught in his/her present school. This information is summarized in Table 2.

The largest number of respondents had master’s degrees (nearly 46%). The number of respondents with master’s and bachelor’s degrees made up 82% of the sample.

### TABLE 2

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF RESPONDENTS’ EDUCATIONAL DEGREE, YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, AND YEARS AT PRESENT SCHOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master +45</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of teaching experience:</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - over</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in present school:</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 9</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - over</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nearly 18% of the respondents held a degree higher than the master's degree, but only 2% of were for the specialist or doctorate degrees.

The respondents' teaching experience ranged from 0 to 52 years ($M=18.5$). Slightly over 50% of the respondents had 20 years or more of teaching experience. The largest group of respondents had between 20 and 29 years of teaching experience, and 11% already had 30 years experience.

Teachers could have been transferred from one school to another several times during their teaching careers. Data for the number of years respondents had taught in their present schools are presented in Table 2. The largest group of respondents had taught in their present schools nine years or less (43%). ($M=12$) The most frequent response was one year (17 responses), and the longest number of years a respondent had taught in his/her present school was 36 years.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

**Research Question One**

What level of professional burnout is expressed by public secondary school teachers?

Professional burnout is indicated by three scales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory which are Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). There is no total burnout score, so each dimension will be addressed separately. The level of burnout for each dimension is indicated by particular responses on the survey instrument. A summary of the burnout levels of respondents based upon the normative groups for teaching (K-12) is presented in Table 3.
TABLE 3
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Depersonalization</th>
<th>Personal Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emotional Exhaustion was determined by the responses on seven questions. Scores are considered low if they are in the lower third of the normative distribution for teaching grades K-12, average if they are in the middle third, and high if they are in the upper third. Low levels of emotional exhaustion are indicated by scores of 0 - 16; moderate levels range between 17 and 26; and high levels of burnout are indicated by a score of 27 and over (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Data in Table 3 show that 37.2% of respondents scores were in the low range for emotional exhaustion. The respondents were pretty evenly distributed for emotional exhaustion.

Depersonalization is determined by responses on five questions of the MBI. The scores indicate low (0 - 8), moderate (9 - 13), and high (14 +) levels of burnout for depersonalization (Maslach et al., 1996). A majority (62.7%) of respondents scored low for depersonalization indicating a low level of professional burnout.
Low Personal Accomplishment scores indicate a higher level of burnout, unlike emotional exhaustion (EE) and depersonalization (DP) where low scores indicate low levels of burnout. Scores of 31 - 36 indicate moderate levels of burnout, and scores of 0 - 30 indicate a high level of burnout for personal achievement (Maslach et al., 1996). Over 60% of the respondents' scores for personal achievement placed them in the lower range for professional burnout.

Table 3 reveals that nearly 63% of the respondents were placed in the moderate to high range for emotional exhaustion. Thirty-seven percent indicated moderate to high levels of depersonalization, and slightly over 39% scored in the moderate to high range of burnout on the scale for personal achievement.

The following null hypothesis was formulated to test Research Question One:

\[ H_0 : \text{There is no difference in burnout scores for the sample and burnout scores for the norm group of educators.} \]

A z-test for single-sample mean (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1988) was performed on the means for Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and for Personal Accomplishment (PA) between the sample and the norm group. The results in Table 4 indicated there was no significant difference between the sample and norm group on the Emotional Exhaustion Scale \( (z=0.16) \). However, teachers from Northeast Tennessee reported lower levels of Depersonalization than the norm group \( (z=-8.96) \) and higher levels of Personal Accomplishment \( (z=8.49) \) indicating lower levels of burnout in those dimensions. Teachers from Northeast Tennessee did not feel as removed from students as the national norm group. They also appeared to evaluate their accomplishments on the job more positively.
TABLE 4

Z-TEST FOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEANS OF SAMPLE AND NORM GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Norm Group</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>z</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>21.37</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>11.01</td>
<td>4163</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>4163</td>
<td>-8.96 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>37.47</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>33.54</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>4163</td>
<td>8.49 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05  Note: EE (Emotional Exhaustion), DP (Depersonalization), PA (Personal Achievement)

Research Question Two

What is the relationship between social support and professional burnout among public secondary school teachers?

A major premise underlying this study was that a relationship existed between social support and levels of professional burnout. Social support was determined for each network by the sum of responses indicating how often support was felt from each of its members. Total support was the sum of support from all network members in work support, personal support, and recreational support networks combined. The relationships between the amount of support and burnout are shown in Table 5 using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficients.

Four null hypotheses were developed and tested to answer question two. Results are indicated in Table 5.
TABLE 5

SPEARMAN RANK ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EE (rs)</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>DP (rs)</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>PA (rs)</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Support</td>
<td>-.136</td>
<td>.042*</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td>.048*</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Support</td>
<td>-.108</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.033*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Support</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>.549</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Support</td>
<td>-.132</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-.088</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.051</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Ho24: There is no significant relationship between the amount of work support and the level of professional burnout.

Significant negative relationships between the amount of work support and the professional burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion (rs = -.136) and depersonalization (rs = -.134) are shown in Table 5. Higher levels of work support were associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The magnitude of these correlations, however, was not high. The positive relationship between work support and personal accomplishment was not statistically significant, although the correlation was in the anticipated direction. The null hypothesis of no relationship was rejected for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but it was retained for personal accomplishment.
**H_{0_2a}**: There is no significant relationship between the amount of personal support and the level of professional burnout.

The null hypothesis was retained for the relationships between personal support and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization although a negative relationship was indicated. The null hypothesis was rejected for the relationship between personal support and the personal accomplishment dimension of burnout ($t_1 = .144$). Those who had higher levels of personal support reported higher levels of personal accomplishment. Positive values for personal accomplishment indicated lower levels of burnout.

**H_{0_2b}**: There is no significant relationship between the amount of recreation support and the level of professional burnout.

No statistical significance was indicated for recreational support and any dimension of professional burnout. The null hypothesis was retained. Therefore, the probability that a relationship existed between the amount of recreation support and the amount of professional burnout is low as indicated in Table 5.

**H_{0_2c}**: There is no significant relationship between the total amount of social support and the level of professional burnout.

There was no statistically significant relationship between total support and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or personal achievement. The null hypothesis was retained for relationships between total support and the three burnout dimensions, although the p-value for emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment approached statistical significance.
In summary, these results indicate that higher levels of work support are associated with less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. More personal support was associated with viewing one’s personal accomplishments more favorably which indicates lower levels of burnout in that dimension. A significant relationship was shown in Table 5 between work support and two dimensions of burnout and between personal support and personal achievement, the third dimension of burnout. No significant relationship was found between professional burnout and recreational support or total support. Although the correlations were not strong, relationships did tend to be in the anticipated directions. It appears that there is a weak, negative relationship between the amount of social support received and professional burnout dimensions. This suggests that increasing social support could have the effect of lowering professional burnout, although there certainly is not a strong linear effect.

Research Question Three

Is there a relationship between the satisfaction with network support and professional burnout?

Under Research Question Two a relationship was shown between social support and burnout based upon a score to show how often support was received from members of the networks. Another way to study social support’s effect on burnout was to determine the respondents’ satisfaction with support, rather than the amount of support felt or the number of supporters listed.

A score for support satisfaction was determined by asking respondents three questions. First, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the support they
currently received concerning work. Second, satisfaction with support concerning personal and family matters was rated. Finally, respondents rated satisfaction with the support currently received for recreation, relaxing or unwinding. Answers were indicated by choosing a number ranging from 1 (least satisfied) to 10 (most satisfied). The total satisfaction with support was the sum of the three responses. Table 6 indicates the levels of network satisfaction that were reported.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Support</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Support</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Support</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satisfaction with support concerning personal and family matters was highest ($M = 7.70$). Satisfaction with work support and recreation support were nearly the same ($M = 6.72$ and $M = 6.73$).

Four null hypotheses were formulated to answer Question Three. Data to support the hypotheses were presented to show correlation coefficients between satisfaction with social support and professional burnout in Table 7.
TABLE 7

SPEARMAN RANK ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN SATISFACTION WITH SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EE</th>
<th></th>
<th>DP</th>
<th></th>
<th>PA</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Wk.Sup.</td>
<td>-272</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>-231</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>.002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Per.Sup.</td>
<td>-072</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>-203</td>
<td>.003*</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Rec. Sup.</td>
<td>-110</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>-100</td>
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<td>Total Sat.</td>
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<td>.003*</td>
<td>-195</td>
<td>.004*</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

$H_{0a}:$ There is no relationship between satisfaction with work support and professional burnout.

Significant relationships were shown in Table 7 between satisfaction with work support and each of the dimensions of professional burnout (EE, $r_s = -.272$) (DP, $r_s = -.231$) (PA, $r_s = .204$). The negative relationships for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization indicated that higher satisfaction with work support coincided with lower levels of burnout. The positive relationship between higher levels of satisfaction with work support and personal accomplishment also indicated a lower incidence of burnout. The null hypothesis was rejected. It appears that a moderate relationship exists between satisfaction with work support and professional burnout.
There is no relationship between satisfaction with personal support and professional burnout.

Significant relationships were found between satisfaction with personal support and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected for the significant relationships found between satisfaction with personal support and depersonalization ($r_s = -.203$) and personal accomplishment ($r_s = .233$). No relationship was found for satisfaction with personal support and emotional exhaustion, although the direction of the correlation was in the anticipated direction.

There is no relationship between satisfaction with recreation support and professional burnout.

The null hypothesis indicating no relationship between satisfaction with recreation support was retained for all all dimensions of professional burnout. There was no significant relationship between recreational support satisfaction and professional burnout. The probability that satisfaction with recreation support was related to burnout was low.

There is no relationship between satisfaction with total network support and professional burnout.

Total satisfaction with support was significantly related to all three dimensions of professional burnout (EE, $r_s = -.197$) (DP, $r_s = -.195$) (PA, $r_s = .192$). The null hypothesis was rejected. Relationships with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were negative, while personal accomplishment had a significant positive correlation.
The analysis indicated that higher scores for total satisfaction with support were associated with lower levels of burnout in each dimension. In practical terms the more satisfied one was with the support received, the less likely he or she was to have a high level of professional burnout.

Support determined by how often it was perceived from network alters and support satisfaction were compared with burnout to see if relationships existed. Another measure of support was the support network size determined by the number of alters listed for each network. Research Question Four addresses the aspect of support network size, and Table 8 presents the descriptive data that reported support network size.

Research Question Four

Is the size of social support networks that are identified by public secondary school teachers related to burnout?

The size of the social support networks was determined by the number of alters that each respondent listed for each support area on the TSNI survey instrument. Eight blanks were provided in each support area for listing the initials of those persons with whom respondents sought encouragement and assistance concerning matters of work, matters of a personal or family nature, and those with whom they had fun or relaxed. The same person's initials could have been listed in more than one support network and in many cases they were. The mean for number of alters in the total social support network was 14 as indicated in Table 8. That number is more than half of the maximum number (24). The work support network had the largest mean (M = 5.2), followed by means for recreation support network (M = 4.3) and personal support network (M = 4.0).
### TABLE 8
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIZE OF WORK SUPPORT, PERSONAL SUPPORT, RECREATION SUPPORT, AND TOTAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

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<th>Network</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>228</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation Support Size</td>
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<td>Total Support Size</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>228</td>
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</table>

The following null hypothesis was related to Question Four:

\[ H_{04} \]: The size of the social support network is not related to the level of burnout scores.

No relationships were found to be significant between depersonalization and network size or emotional exhaustion and network size. The null hypotheses for a significant relationship between size of the work support network, recreation support network, and the total support networks with the dimensions of professional burnout were retained. The size of the personal support network was, however, significantly related to the level of personal accomplishment reported by respondents \( r_s = .151 \).

Results are shown in Table 9. The number of supporters listed for the personal support network indicated a low positive correlation to the level of personal accomplishment. Size of the personal networks were not related to the other dimensions of burnout,
TABLE 9
SPURMAN RANK ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN SUPPORT NETWORK SIZE AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG RESPONDENTS

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<th></th>
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<td><em>p</em></td>
<td><em>r</em></td>
<td><em>p</em></td>
<td><em>r</em></td>
<td><em>p</em></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

The size of a teacher's social support network did not appear to be closely associated with burnout for teachers in Northeast Tennessee. The number of supporters in a network do not reveal information about the amount of support or the actual composition. Very little is known about the composition of the social support networks of teachers in Northeast Tennessee and whether there is a relationship between network composition and professional burnout.

Research Question Five

What parts of the composition of social support networks of public secondary school teachers are related to professional burnout?

The composition of social support networks was determined by asking
respondents to name their relationship with the alters, to list the gender of each, and to check whether each alter’s job was related to education. The question about education-related jobs indicated whether the alters were teachers, principals/supervisors, educational staff members, or not in education-related work. The job-relation questions were needed since relatives, spouses, or friends could also be educators. The work-relationship would otherwise be indicated only for alters listed as co-workers. Table 10 shows the frequencies and percentages of network composition based upon gender, relationship to respondents, and education-related work.

The composition of social support networks based upon gender revealed that there was a higher proportion of females in all networks than males. Since there was only a difference of 4% in the gender of the respondents, this could indicate that both males and females have more women in whom they depend upon for support than men. The personal network indicated the largest difference in gender (19% more females). The work support networks indicated 10% more females than males, and the recreational network indicated 8% more females.

Composition of the support networks based upon stated relationships by respondents indicated that over half (53.8%) of the work support network was made up of coworkers which was expected. Family (relatives and spouses) represented 25.2% of the work support network, followed by friends who represented 17.1%. Analysis indicated that family (48.8%) made up nearly half the supporters in personal support networks with friends ranking next at 30%. Coworkers and others represented 21.3% of the personal support networks. The recreational support networks indicated that friends
TABLE 10

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS AND PERCENTAGES OF THE SUPPORT NETWORKS COMPOSITION OF GENDER, RELATIONSHIP, AND EDUCATORS

<table>
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<th>Recreational Support Network</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>100.1</td>
<td>914</td>
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<td>277</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>92</td>
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<td>297</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>527</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NIE (Not In Education)

(43.6%) made up slightly more than family groups (41.5%). Coworkers (11%) were listed less often than in the other networks. Spouse and relatives were separated from family so that the effect of spouses could be studied. There was only a change of 1.9% or less for spouses across the support networks.

The third measure of network composition was based upon the education-related jobs held by alters. The total number of teachers, principal/supervisors, and educational
staff members in all three support networks was more than the number of co-workers reported by respondents. The difference between co-workers and educators in the work support network was 20.9%. The personal support network had a difference of 26.5% between co-workers and educators, and the recreational network had a difference of 25.2%. This indicated that many of the alters formerly identified as spouses, relatives, or friends were also associated with the education process.

Teachers were predominant in the work support network (47.7%) which was expected. The educators' categories made up nearly 75% of the work support network, while a little more than 25% were not in education. The personal support network on the other hand, had over twice as many alters who were not in education (57.7%). Teachers (30.3%) comprised the next group. The recreational support network indicated that 63.4% of the alters were not in education and 36% of them were working in the school setting.

The following null hypothesis was related to Question 5:

\[ H_0: \text{There is no relationship between network composition and burnout.} \]

A list of the components of the support networks was related to the degree of professional burnout. Results are shown in Table 11.

The composition of the work support network revealed a weak, but significant correlation between males and emotional exhaustion (\( r_s = -.18 \)), depersonalization (\( r_s = -.16 \)), and personal accomplishment (\( r_s = .14 \)). The relationship indicated that the presence of males in the work support network was related to lower levels of burnout. Another significant relationship in the work support network was found in composition between principal/supervisor and lower levels of burnout in emotional exhaustion.
TABLE 11
SPEARMAN RANK ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS
BETWEEN COMPOSITION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AND
PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

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</table>

*p<.5  Note: NIE (Not In Education)
(r = -.15) and depersonalization (r = -.14). This was also a weak negative correlation. No other components of the work support network reached significance.

The composition of the personal support network indicated that significant relationships existed between some elements of composition and the burnout dimension of personal accomplishment. Females (r = .17), spouse (r = .14), relatives (r = .16), and principal/supervisor (r = .16) had significant positive correlations to personal accomplishment. The principal/supervisor also had significant negative correlations with emotional exhaustion (r = -.20) and with depersonalization (r = -.22).

Significant relationships were found between composition showing the presence of the principal/supervisor in teachers’ support networks and burnout. The review of literature indicated contradicting information concerning the relationship between amount of supervisor or principal support and burnout. Differences were also reported between the amount of support received from males and females. Are those differences reflected in levels of professional burnout?

Research Question Six

Is there a relationship between supervisor support, male support, and female support in the work support network and professional burnout?

The following two null hypotheses were related to Research Question Six. The test results are presented in Table 12.

H₀₆₆: There is no relationship between the amount of supervisor support in the work support network and professional burnout.
TABLE 12

SPEARMAN RANK ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN THE COMPOSITION OF SUPPORT IN THE WORK SUPPORT NETWORK AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>EE</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$r_s$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$r_s$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$r_s$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Support:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prin/Supv.</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>.02834*</td>
<td>-.154</td>
<td>.02270*</td>
<td>.105</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.172</td>
<td>.01013*</td>
<td>-.154</td>
<td>.02204*</td>
<td>.133</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>.37788</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>.17689</td>
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<td>Personal Support:</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>.54199</td>
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<td>Recreational Support:</td>
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<td>.12867</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>.63164</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P < .05

It was thought that supervisor support would be most prominent in the work support network; therefore, data for supervisor support were not recorded for the personal and recreational networks. Supervisor support has a weak negative correlation for both emotional exhaustion ($r_s = -.147$) and for depersonalization ($r_s = -.154$). The null hypothesis was rejected for both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The null hypothesis was retained for personal accomplishment since no significant relationship was found. These results indicate that increased support from principals and supervisors can help to reduce the level of burnout reported by teachers.

$H_{06}$: There is no relationship between the amount of male and female support in the work support network and professional burnout.
The relationships between male support and burnout were significant only for two areas. Male support was significant in the work support network for emotional exhaustion ($r_s = -0.172$) and depersonalization ($r_s = -0.154$), but not for personal achievement. These findings indicated that support from males and females was important in different support networks.

Differences have been reported concerning levels of burnout in relationship to gender, age, and marital status. Were differences evident for the secondary teachers in Northeast Tennessee?

**Research Question Seven**

Are there differences in levels of professional burnout between the personal factors of gender, age, or marital status?

The Mann-Whitney U Test of differences was used to test the hypotheses formulated for Research Question Seven because the scores for the Maslach Burnout Inventory were ordinal in nature. Data are presented in Table 13.

$H_{07a}$: There is no significant difference in burnout levels of males and females.

Mean scores were compared between males ($M = 19.1$) and females ($M = 23.0$) according to their level of emotional exhaustion. A statistically significant z-score ($z = -2.8$) was attained; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The levels of emotional exhaustion expressed by males and females were different. In the sample females were more emotionally exhausted than males. This pattern was not found in the other dimensions of professional burnout.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Exhaustion:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>97.62</td>
<td>-2.82</td>
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<td>Females</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>122.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Younger &lt; 45</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>23.2</td>
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<td>Older &gt; 45</td>
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<td>19.7</td>
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<td>.6631</td>
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<td>Married</td>
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<td>21.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>110.88</td>
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<td><strong>Depersonalization:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>111.57</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.8329</td>
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<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>109.73</td>
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<td>Younger &lt; 45</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<td>.0006*</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<td>.3208</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>113.04</td>
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<td><strong>Personal Accomplishment:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>112.06</td>
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<td>.8326</td>
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<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>110.23</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Younger &lt; 45</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<td>38.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>108.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

The mean scores for males(M = 7.2) and females(M = 7.3) for depersonalization yielded a z-score of -.28 that was not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis for no difference was retained for depersonalization. There also was no significant difference in mean scores of males(M = 37.4) and females(M = 37.5) for personal accomplishment, so the null hypothesis was retained.
$\text{Ho}_7$: There is no significant difference in burnout levels of younger and older public secondary teachers.

Mean scores were compared between teachers who were younger than 45 and teachers who were older than 45 to see if there were differences in the levels of professional burnout between the two groups. The mean of younger teachers ($M = 23.2$) and the mean of older teachers ($M = 19.7$) yielded a $z$-score of -2.32 that was statistically significant for differences in emotional exhaustion. The null hypothesis was rejected. Depersonalization means for younger teachers ($M = 8.6$) and older teachers ($M = 6.0$) also yielded a significant $z$-score of -3.46. Again the null hypothesis was rejected. The younger group of teachers in Northeast Tennessee appears to have significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than the older teachers. However, the means comparing personal accomplishment for younger teachers ($M = 37.1$) and older teachers ($M = 37.9$) were not significantly different ($z = 1.65$). The null hypothesis for differences in younger and older teachers for personal accomplishment was retained.

$\text{Ho}_8$: There is no significant difference in the burnout levels of married and unmarried public secondary school teachers.

The means of unmarried and married teachers were compared to see if there were significant differences in the levels of professional burnout between the groups. The means for emotional exhaustion of unmarried ($M = 21.7$) and married ($M = 21.2$) teachers yielded a $z$-score ($z = -.44$) that was not significant; therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. There was no significant difference in the means of unmarried
(M = 6.9) and married (M = 7.4) teachers. The null hypothesis for no differences was retained. The levels of personal accomplishment of unmarried (M = 38.5) and married (M = 37.1) teachers yielded a z-score (-1.08) that was also not significant. The null hypothesis was retained. No differences were found between the groups of married and unmarried teachers in Northeast Tennessee concerning their levels of professional burnout.

Differences in levels of professional burnout were shown between some groups based upon personal factors of teachers in Northeast Tennessee. Other demographic information gathered included the years of teaching experience, the highest degree earned, and the number of years taught in the present school. These factors are referred to as professional factors. Would these factors that had been related to burnout in other studies be significant for teachers in Northeast Tennessee?

**Research Question Eight**

Is there a relationship between professional burnout and years of teaching experience, highest educational degree, and years taught in present school?

Multiple regression analysis was used to test for significant relationships between the dimensions of professional burnout and teachers' demographic factors in the hypothesis related to research question eight. Professional burnout dimensions were the dependent variables.

**H08:** There is no relationship between professional burnout and years of teaching experience, highest educational degree, and the number of years taught in the present school.
The first regression procedure was to identify the relationship between emotional exhaustion and the factors of teaching experience, highest educational degree and years taught in the present school, with emotional exhaustion being the dependent variable. As shown in Table 14, no significant relationship was found between these variables (Mult. R=.15, R²=.02, F=1.64).

**TABLE 14**

REGRESSION OF EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION, DEPERSONALIZATION, PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT ON SCHOOL EXPERIENCE, HIGHEST DEGREE, AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

<table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Experience</td>
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<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Degree</td>
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<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
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<td>-.19</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mult. R=.15 (NS)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²=.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F=1.64, p=.18)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mult. R=.15 (NS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R²=.02</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(F=1.72, p=.16)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mult. R=.09 (NS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>R²=.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>(F=.60, p=.61)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05

Depersonalization was the dependent factor for a second analysis. No significant relationship was found to exist between depersonalization and factors of school experience, highest degree earned, and teaching experience (Mult. R=.15, R²=.02, F=1.72). Regression analysis with personal accomplishment as the dependent variable also indicated insignificant relationships with the teachers'
professional factors of school experience, highest degree earned, and teaching experience (Mult. R=.09, R² = .01, F=.60). Since no significant relationships were found relating professional burnout with any factors of school experience, highest degree earned, and teaching experience; the null hypothesis was retained.

A brief summary, conclusions of the research project, and recommendations follow in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Professional Burnout is a problem that causes teachers to lose their enthusiasm for teaching and to relate to students negatively. Continued emotional exhaustion and cynical feelings about teaching lead many teachers to leave the teaching profession disillusioned or to suffer from illness, sleep disorders, chronic physical exhaustion, depression, and/or drug or alcohol abuse. Professional burnout has been related to many things, and social support is but one of them.

Social support is thought to alleviate stress or to have a buffering effect upon it. The purpose of this research was to identify relationships between social support and professional burnout among the high school teachers of Northeast Tennessee.

The average high school teacher in Northeast Tennessee was about 45 years old and married with the highest educational degree at the master’s level. The average teacher had also taught school nearly 19 years and had been teaching in the same school for 12 years. More than half of the teachers were women.

High school teachers in Northeast Tennessee were experiencing the same levels of emotional exhaustion as teachers in the rest of the nation. Emotional Exhaustion is the most common dimension of professional burnout indicated by feelings of being emotional overwhelmed by the work. Teachers in Northeast Tennessee felt more personable toward their students and less cynical than teachers in the national norm.
thus indicating less depersonalization, the second dimension of professional burnout. Teachers from Northeast Tennessee also viewed their work accomplishments more positively indicating higher personal achievement. However, lower levels of personal achievement are indicative of more professional burnout.

There were some differences in the amount of professional burnout experienced based upon age, gender, and marital status. Younger teachers tended to have more feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than those over 45 years of age. Women teachers felt more emotional exhaustion than men teachers. No differences were found between levels of burnout experienced and marital status in this study.

Literature indicated that most teachers suffer burnout to a degree at some time during their teaching careers. Some manage to work through it with little serious effect, while others are devastated by it. If social support could help to lessen those lonely, hopeless feelings of doubt, guilt, lowered self-esteem, and disillusionment, then it would be important to note relationships between social support and professional burnout.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to measure the amount of professional burnout experienced by high school teachers in the study. The Teacher’s Support Network Inventory was developed to show from whom support was received, how often support was perceived, how many persons were counted on for support, and the degree of satisfaction teachers felt with the support they received. The Teacher’s Support Network Inventory also indicated size of support networks and demographic features of the teachers.

Teachers in Northeast Tennessee experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion than depersonalization and personal accomplishment, although they were not
significantly different from the national norm group of K-12 teachers. A teacher’s satisfaction with the support he/she received was most closely related to his/her level of burnout.

Weak relationships existed between the work support and two dimensions of professional burnout, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. More work support is related to less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization felt by teachers. More personal support was related to higher scores of personal achievement. The number of supporters was not a significant factor for predicting levels of burnout, although, a relationship existed between personal support members and increased levels of personal accomplishment. Principal support and support from males was inversely related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while female support was positively related to personal achievement.

The average size of a teacher’s total support network was 14 members. The average number for work supporters was 5. Average personal support networks of teachers had 4 members, and the recreation support networks also averaged 4 members.

Teachers’ work support networks had 10% more women than men which was not unusual since there were more women teachers. Three-fourths of the work support network members did education-related work while only one-fourth did work outside the education field. Twenty-five percent of the alters listed were family/relatives and 21% were friends. This indicates that a significant number of teachers’ friends, family, and relatives in the work support networks are also in the education field.

The personal support networks of teachers had more women than men, were nearly half family, and only 16% coworkers. Friends and others made up 40% of the
personal support network. Over half of the personal support members were not in education, while 42% had education related occupations. This indicates that many whom teachers listed as friends or family in their networks must also have education related occupations because so few co-workers were named.

Those persons teachers spend time with when they are in recreation or relaxing have 8% more women than men, 42% family, 11% coworkers, and 47% friends and others. The network members who were not in education made up 63% of the network, and those that did made up 37%.

There were differences between the members of the three support networks investigated, but all show that teachers have other teachers and education related members in all their networks. The conclusions that follow are based upon the findings of the research project.

Conclusions

1. High school teachers in Northeast Tennessee are less distant from their students and evaluate their job achievements more positively than teachers in the rest of the nation. This indicates that teacher-student relations in Northeastern Tennessee may be more relaxed in this region.

2. Teachers in Northeast Tennessee experience emotional exhaustion on the job as often as teachers in the other parts of the country. Teachers need to feel that their work is valued and that their efforts are not overlooked.

3. Teachers’ feelings of personal accomplishment are enhanced when they have others to turn to about personal matters. This is best accomplished by having someone
who listens as a means of support and offers feedback about one's opinions and ideas. Less support from those expected to provide it can lead to lower self-esteem.

4. It is important that teachers have a network of individuals they can talk to concerning work related matters. The persons who are chosen for support by teachers may not necessarily be the ones given that responsibility by those in authority. Knowing that others share your reality and have an understanding of the situation can lessen feelings of emotional despair and a sense of being overwhelmed.

5. More interaction with colleagues will keep teachers from feeling so isolated. Isolation leads to feeling a lack of self-worth and a lack of acceptance. Increase teachers feelings of personal accomplishment by increased teacher interaction.

6. The satisfaction with the quality of support received is more important to teachers than the number of persons in their networks. It is often said that all we need are a few good friends. Maybe quality and not quantity is of importance.

7. When teachers have people to affirm personal feelings of “who I am” and “where I belong”, they tend to see personal achievements in a positive light. When teachers feel good about themselves they tend to communicate better with others.

8. Women are more often listed in support networks of teachers than men. Women are generally considered to be more nurturing, but that is not demonstrated in this study.

9. Spouses, relatives, and principals are important in determining the degree to which teachers take pride in their personal achievements. This was related to lower levels of professional burnout.
10. The presence of men in a person's work support network was a factor in predicting the level of burnout felt. More men in the work support network was correlated with lower levels of professional burnout in all dimensions. While women may be thought of as more nurturing, men in support networks were actually related to lower levels of stress.

11. Teachers who spend time with other teachers when they want to relax and unwind have lower levels of professional burnout expressed in all dimensions. It gives them a sense of shared reality, an opportunity to relieve stress through activity, and probably improves interpersonal relations among members of the staff.

12. Principals and supervisors are considered important buffers against emotional exhaustion and depersonalization for teachers. The presence of them in teachers' networks is correlated with lower levels of burnout. The principal/supervisor support was one of the most significant components of support networks for predicting lower levels of burnout. Feeling that one is "known" or understood by the principal may lessen stress by relieving uncertainty about expectations between the principal and the teacher.

13. Women teachers were more emotionally exhausted than male teachers. This confirms findings of former research. The dual roles that women often hold could be the reason for this. Feeling that the situation is understood may not lessen the burdens of responsibility, but it could lessen feelings of guilt over split responsibilities between home care, child/family care, and work responsibilities.

14. Teachers who were younger than 45 experienced more emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than teachers over 45. Stress of raising children, starting family life, and earning higher degrees could be an important factor here.
15. There is no difference in the level of professional burnout between married or unmarried teachers. This study did not confirm former research findings that single teachers have higher levels of professional burnout. Today, many single teachers are also single mothers. The stresses of family and children would be similar.

16. Teaching experience, educational degree, and the number of years that a teacher had taught in their resident school did not have any effect upon burnout levels of the teachers. This could be because stress and burnout are more related to a multiplicity of roles that we fill rather than the place that we work or the degrees that we hold.

Recommendations

After completion of the study investigating the relationships between social support and professional burnout, these recommendations were made:

1. Shared decision-making in a school could bring teachers and principals together to focus on school goals and to solve existing problems in a more cooperative manner. Teachers and principals would be expected to share ideas and work toward common goals. Teachers would have opportunity for input and growth. When teachers ideas are heard, feelings of self-esteem and self-worth are enhanced.

2. Principals should relate to their teachers and staff on many levels from personal understanding to professional growth opportunities. Principals should actively seek out the talents of teachers and find ways to make everyone feel that they are appreciated for their efforts. Foster the team-building approach and let everyone share in the vision for student and school success.
3. Principals should provide opportunities for teachers to have interaction with each other during the school day to cut down on feelings of isolation. This could be as simple as arranging lunch schedules so that teachers may eat lunch together. Another idea might be to provide in-service programs that improve communication skills among the staff or give insight into personal styles of communicating.

4. Provide opportunities for teachers and their families to have informal interaction. Encourage teachers to taking advantage of opportunities for personal and professional growth. Principals should be a positive influence.

5. Celebrate successes of teachers and students large and small in some way. This could be done through personal notes, comments, bulletin boards, announcements, newsletters, and informal get-togethers. Foster positive attitudes and respect for all persons in the school.

Support of principals was considered an area for further study. Which behaviors do principals exhibit are most related to support that alleviates stress? How closely related are teachers' expectations of principal support to the level of professional burnout? Are expectations of teachers with higher levels of burnout the same as expectations of teachers with lower levels of burnout?

A clearer picture of support to teachers could be found by studying the dynamic interactions of teachers, their faculty, support staff, and principals at the individual school level. Mapping interactions at individual schools would show differences in support strategies throughout a school system. At this level, it would be easier to monitor changes that occurred or to make adjustments in strategies as needed. This could be
particularly helpful to young or beginning teachers who have a higher incidence of burnout.

According to Hamann, most teachers experience burnout to some degree at some time during their careers, but many manage to work through it. Teaching, burnout, and social support all deal with personal interactions; therefore, looking more closely at the social support networks and coping strategies that work for teachers with low levels of burnout may be the key.
References


APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE
January 9, 1995

XXXXXXXX, Superintendent
Anycounty Board of Education
00 Street
Anytown, TN 00000

Dear XXXXXXXX:

Teaching is a stressful occupation and social support is thought to mediate stress. My doctoral dissertation is a study based upon this premise concerning job-related stress and social support of secondary school teachers in the area. A list of names of high school teachers in ________ County High School is needed as soon as possible to get the study underway.

I have been an educator in Hawkins county for 18 years, and I am hoping to complete my graduate studies at East Tennessee State University this spring. 410 randomly-selected teachers from Northeast Tennessee high schools will be asked to participate in this project. With your help data can be collected to provide vital information about job stress and support among secondary school teachers in the area. My hope is that results of this study will lead to a growing understanding of the sources of support we seek to help alleviate the stresses of our work as teachers and that growing awareness of social support and job-stress relationships may help administrators be better able to increase teacher efficacy and to reduce high levels of stress and burnout where they exist.

Please, have someone from your office send a list of names of high school teachers in ________ County High School to me in the stamped, addressed envelope enclosed for your convenience.

I have enclosed a description of my dissertation project for your information. Please call me at (615) 235-2572 if you have questions about my request of this doctoral study.

Sincerely,

Jackie C. Walker

Enclosures
DESCRIPTION OF DISSERTATION PROJECT

1. PROJECT TITLE: The Relationship Between Social Support and Professional Burnout Among Public Secondary School Teachers in Northeast Tennessee

2. PLACE: This study will be conducted at East Tennessee State University in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis.

3. SUMMARY: Teaching is reported to be a stressful occupation and social support is thought to mediate stress. Researchers who have studied job stress and burnout have not fully explored whether there are significant relationships between the size and composition of teacher support networks and burnout. Therefore, this doctoral research project is an attempt to add to the existing body of information concerning the social support networks of public secondary school teachers of Northeast Tennessee and relationships between those networks and professional burnout. Levels of burnout will be measured by the Educators' Survey form of the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Data for comparison will be gathered through a mail survey of 410 voluntary secondary school teachers that have been randomly selected from the population. Ex post facto research techniques will be employed in this descriptive study to show the effects among the variables. Relationships, if any, that exist between various demographic variables (age, marital status, gender, level of education, total years teaching experience, and years of teaching in the same school) and levels of work stress or professional burnout will be explored. The project also seeks to examine the size, composition, perceived amount of support, and level of satisfaction with the personal networks for work support, personal/family support, and recreation support. The Teacher Support Network Inventory was compiled to get this information.

It is hoped that through this study of problems associated with stress and burnout, insight may be gained into how social support networks impact teacher moral and other behaviors which relate to overall teacher efficacy and stability. Teaching may be influenced by using the natural patterns of communication that exist among teachers with shared realities. Knowledge of the teachers' social support networks and job-stress relationships may help administrators become aware of weaknesses and strengths of the informal communication systems among teachers and of social support needs that could reduce levels of burnout where they exist.

4. SPECIFIC ROLE RESPONDENTS—The voluntary respondents of the mailed questionnaire will be expected to answer questions on the Educators Survey and the Teacher Support Networks Inventory by filling in blanks or by circling an answer choice. Respondents will choose a number between 0 and 6 to show how often they experience feelings similar to the 22 statements of the Educators Survey using a Likert-type scale of 0—never experiencing the feeling to 6—experiencing the feeling every day.

On the Teacher Support Networks Inventory, respondents will be asked to provide demographic information to show age, marital status, gender, years of teaching experience, highest educational degree earned, and years taught in their present school.
They will be asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the support currently received concerning work support, personal/family support, and recreational support on a scale of 1-least satisfied to 10-most satisfied.

Respondents will be asked to list initials or 1st names only of persons who give support in the areas of work support, personal/family support, and recreational support. Four questions are asked about each giver of support including: the relationship, gender, whether the person is an educator, and how often support is felt from this individual on a scale of 1-once a month to 5-daily.

5. BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS—Respondents may benefit from feeling a sense of satisfaction in helping to provide data to contribute to the understanding of professional stress experienced by teachers and the possible effects that social support can play in reducing the effects of stress.

6. INDUCEMENTS—All randomly-selected prospective respondents will be sent a pull-out pamphlet entitled Facts About Stress that will be included in the initial mailing. This is provided in appreciation for their time and participation regardless of their response.

7. SUBJECT CONFIDENTIALITY—Each respondent’s right to privacy will be maintained. Only the ETSU IRB and particular ETSU instructors involved in the direction of my doctoral research project would need information made available for inspection. All information about the respondents will be treated confidentially and will not be revealed, except as noted above, unless required by law.

8. INFORMED CONSENT—Respondents are informed in the introductory letter that return of the survey indicates their consent to participate in the study. My name, address, and phone number are provided with a request to call if there are questions concerning the study. A number on the return envelope will enable me to know which persons have responded.

9. PERTINENT LITERATURE—The Educators Survey form of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was chosen as the instrument for measuring the level of job-stress or burnout among teachers since it has been widely used and is easily administered. It was designed by Maslach and Jackson (1986) specifically for teachers and administrators in education. The term “burnout” is not used in the titled or introduction of the MBI to persons responding to the instrument so that they will not be influenced by the researcher. Burnout is not experienced as something you either have or don’t have but to what degree job stress is felt.
February 24, 1995

Dear Teacher:

Would you please complete and return the enclosed questionnaire concerning job-related stress and social support of secondary school teachers in Northeast Tennessee? Completion of the survey requires approximately 15 minutes.

I have been a teachers in Hawkins County for 18 years, and I am conducting a survey of secondary school teachers in connection with my graduate studies at East Tennessee State University. Randomly-selected teachers from Northeast Tennessee high schools are being asked to participate in this project. With your help and participation, data will be collected to provide vital information about job stress and support among secondary school teachers. My hope is that results of this study will lead to a growing understanding of the sources of support we seek to help alleviate the stresses of our work as teachers.

Your participation is voluntary, and returning the questionnaire implies consent to participate in this research project. Please fill out and return the questionnaire in the stamped, addressed envelope. There are no right or wrong answers, and all individual responses of this survey are strictly confidential. Results of this study will be reported in summary form only.

In appreciation for your time and participation, the pamphlet Facts About Stress has been enclosed for you. Please call me at (615) 235-2572 if you have questions about this doctoral study.

Sincerely,

Jackie C. Walker

Enclosures

P.S. The number on the return envelope will allow me to know who has not yet returned the survey so that I may cut expenses of follow-up mailings. When envelopes are opened, no link will be made between your responses and your identity. You may tear off the number or mark it out if you wish, but please send it in.
APPENDIX B

MASLACH BURNOUT INFORMATION
MASLACH BURNOUT INFORMATION

The Educators' Survey is the version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory used for teachers, administrators, and school personnel. An Educator's Survey instrument was one of the document used for this study. It is valid, reliable, and protected by copyright.

Copies of the Educators' Survey, answer key, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual, can be obtained from:

Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.

3803 E. Bayshore Road

Palo Alto, CA 94303
APPENDIX C

TEACHERS' SUPPORT NETWORK INVENTORY
TEACHERS' SUPPORT NETWORK INVENTORY

(TSNI)

The TSNI was developed by Jackie C. Walker for use in this study. It contains sections for demographic information, satisfaction with network support received, and the composition of three support networks (work/professional, personal/family, and recreational/relaxation). The composition included information about the gender of network members, the relationship of network members to respondents, the extent to which network members worked in the educational setting, and how often network members offered support.

The TSNI was written and revised according to suggestions of Dr. Russell West, teachers, professors, and graduate students who reviewed the instrument. Likert-type scales for satisfaction of support, and how often support was received were included because they are easy to administer and are usually found to be reliable. Sources that were helpful in the development of the questions and the format of the TSNI were included in references of this study (Daugherty, Salloway, & Nuzzarello, 1988; Friedman, 1991; McCallister, & Fischer, 1983; Wellman, 1981; West, 1992).
TEACHER SUPPORT NETWORKS INVENTORY (TSNI)

Please answer the following questions by filling in the blanks or circling an answer.

Your age: ___________________________ years of teaching experience
Marital status: ___________________________ highest educational degree earned
Male or Female: ___________________________ years taught in my present school

I. SUPPORT SATISFACTION

1. I would rate my satisfaction with the support I currently receive concerning my work as ______ (a number ranging from 1 - least satisfied to 10 - most satisfied) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

2. I would rate my satisfaction with the support I currently receive concerning personal and family matters as ______ (from 1 - least satisfied to 10 - most satisfied) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

3. I would rate my satisfaction with the support I currently receive for recreation, relaxing, or unwinding as ______ (from 1 - least satisfied to 10 - most satisfied) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

II. WORK SUPPORT - Think about the people you seek for encouragement and assistance concerning your work.

(Questions 2 through 5 refer to those persons listed for question 1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who are the persons that give you support, assistance, and encouragement concerning your work? Use initials or 1st names</th>
<th>What is your relationship? for example: co-worker, neighbor, friend, or wife</th>
<th>Is this person a: male?</th>
<th>Or female?</th>
<th>Circle &quot;M&quot; or &quot;F&quot; to answer. Circle the letter if the person is: Teacher [T]</th>
<th>Circle how often you feel support from this person.</th>
<th>Circle how often you feel support from this person.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>M .. F</td>
<td>[T] [P] [O] [N]</td>
<td>1. 2. 3. 4. 5</td>
<td>5 - daily, 4 - a few times a week, 3 - once a week, 2 - a few times a month, 1 - once a month or less</td>
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Please go on to the next page!
### PERSONAL/FAMILY SUPPORT

(Questions 2 through 5 refer to those persons listed for question 1)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are the persons that give help, guidance, and support for dealing with personal and family matters?</td>
<td>What is your relationship?</td>
<td>Is this person the person is a:</td>
<td>How often do you feel personal/family support?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use initials or 1st names</td>
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<td>friend, or sister: to answer.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- [ ] Teacher
- [ ] Principal
- [ ] Other school staff
- [ ] Not in education

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### RECREATIONAL SUPPORT

(Questions 2 through 5 refer to those persons listed for question 1)

<table>
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<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are the persons that you spend time with having fun, socializing, relaxing, or unwinding?</td>
<td>What is your relationship?</td>
<td>Is this person the person is a:</td>
<td>How often do you feel support from this person?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use initials or 1st names</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- [ ] Teacher
- [ ] Principal
- [ ] Other school staff
- [ ] Not in education

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Thanks for participating.
VITA

JACKIE CHESNUTT WALKER

Personal Data: Date of Birth: January 29, 1954
Place of Birth: Greeneville, Tennessee
Marital Status: Single

Education: Public Schools, Hawkins County, Tennessee
Walters' State Community College, Morristown, Tennessee
Secretarial Science, A.S., 1974
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
Business Education, B.S., 1976
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
Media Services, M.Ed., 1987
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
Educational Leadership, Ed.D., 1997

Professional Experience: Teacher, Hawkins County Schools; Tennessee
1976 - present.

Professional Memberships: Phi Delta Kappa
Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development
Tennessee Education Association