THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENSE OF HUMOR,

LEADER-FOLLOWER DISTANCE, AND

TENURE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

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A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Education

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by

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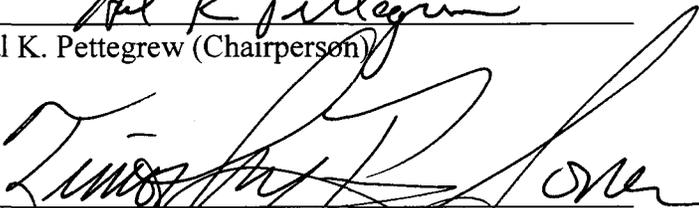
Timothy P. Jones

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP   Annual Church Profile

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

CMS   Conflict Management Strategies

HSQ   Humor Styles Questionnaire

LFD   Leader-Follower Distance

LOC   Locus of Control

SBC   Southern Baptist Convention

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PREFACE

My father was a pastor and a remarkable leader. After his death, many people shared stories of his influence on their lives. Invariably, his sense of humor would be mentioned. I began to reflect on how his humor was more than just an endearing aspect of his personality; it functioned integrally in his pastoral ministry, especially in terms of relating with people and coping with stress.

One anecdote in particular illustrates this. Our family was joking around one evening at the dinner table when the parsonage phone rang. Dad answered it with, "Duffy's Bar and Grill; may I help you?" We could hear only half of the conversation, but had the benefit of his facial expressions, which immediately registered regret at the realization of what he had done. There was a moment of silence followed by, "Yes, this is Pastor Young." Another longer silence, followed by a broad grin on his face, and then, "Well, OK . . . good . . . all right, goodbye." The phone call had lasted about a minute.

We demanded the rest of the story. He shook his head and said, "I shouldn't have done that, but the lady on the other end recognized my voice, and said in a mock scolding voice, 'Pastor Young, is that you?' She then said she had been all upset by something, but my silly joke made her laugh. In fact, laughing made her feel so much better she no longer needed to talk about it. She even thanked me as she hung up!" My father could get away with that only because humor was a natural way he expressed love toward people, which, in turn, enhanced his pastoring. He inspired this study.

This journey has been a miracle of God's grace. I was always needing the help of others, and God brought just the right people, with just the needed wisdom, and with attitudes of servanthood! The librarians at Cedarville University tutored me in on-line researching, saving me hundreds of hours and vastly improving my research efforts in sermon preparation. My church family has been gracious with their encouragement. The SBC Cooperative Program deserves thanks: this has been the most affordable *and* academically rigorous degree I have earned. My gracious dissertation chairman, Dr. Hal Pettegrew, and second reader, Dr. Timothy Jones, have given much appreciated guidance and encouragement throughout this process. I have become a believer in the cohort model of education: our cohort has been a joy to learn with and from.

My wife, Sarah, and our daughters, Hilary and Olivia, deserve an award for putting up with my head being continuously in a book and my desk lamp burning late into the night in the corner of the bedroom as I type papers (even as I type these words). Their love, patience, and support have made this experience enjoyable. Thank you.

All of these are nothing less than gifts from God, to Whom I am most humbly grateful.

Jonathan Walter Young

Cedarville, Ohio

March 2009

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

The Gospels do not record a single account of Jesus laughing. The early

church fathers read much into this silence, resulting in a negative evaluation of humor

(Giannarelli 2006, 361-62). St. Basil the Great imposed strictures on laughter in his

ascetical rules along with strictures on most forms of pleasure. "He, therefore, who is

master of every passion and feels no excitement from pleasure, or at least, does not give it

outward expression, but is steadfastly inclined to restraint as regards every harmful

delight, such a one is perfectly continent – but, clearly, he is also at the same time *free*

from all sin" (Basil 1962, 272; emphasis added). For Basil, and all who have followed

his monastical rules, an emaciated body and a deathly pallor are the badges of deep piety.

Humor is, therefore, antithetical to spirituality (Basil 1962, 273).

Believers are called to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), so if

Jesus apparently did not laugh, and if He condemned laughter ("Woe to you who laugh

now, for you shall mourn and weep," Luke 6:25b), it follows logically that believers also

should avoid humor. This reasoning, which rests largely on an argument from silence,

has influenced Christian thought through the millennia (Capps 2005, 175-76). Indeed,

the polar opposite position – that humor is spiritual – may also be logically deduced from

Scripture. In the same beatitude passage of Luke's gospel cited above, Jesus proclaims

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh" (Luke 6:21b). The context makes

clear that Jesus is condemning those who selfishly live this temporal life as though there

1

were no eternal existence. Laughter is, however, promised to citizens of the divine

kingdom. If laughter is a corollary of life in God's kingdom, laughter must be consistent

with God's will. It follows logically from the Lord's Prayer – which requests the

presence of God's kingdom on earth (Matt 6:9-10) – that the positive use of humor is in

alignment with God's will and should be practiced on earth. A primary thesis of this

study is that healthy humor is foundational to healthy spiritual leadership.

This study has been a mixed methods examination of Southern Baptist pastors

exploring the relationship between the leader's dominant sense of humor style, Leader-

Follower Distance configuration, and ministry tenure characteristics. Phase 1 of the

study involved an online survey given randomly to senior (or lead) pastors only; Phase 2

of the study involved follow-up interviews in a small number of church settings with the

senior pastors who completed Phase 1 and with subordinates who serve under their

leadership. This mixed methods study explored possible relationships between the

primary variables, paying special attention to how the findings might practically help

local churches and individual pastors to increase pastoral leadership effectiveness.

Introduction to the Research Problem

Pastoral ministry is uniquely demanding. Studies indicate that a significant

percentage of vocational pastors leave the ministry prematurely each year. The *Canadian*

Baptist Spring 2007 newsletter cited that 1,600 North American ministers are terminated

each month across denominations (Mix 2007, cb-spring07.pdf). Lifeway research

suggests that 45% of Southern Baptist pastors who were fired did not return to vocational

ministry (Sande 2008, 1245867.asp). Those pastors who enjoy effective leadership and

consequently "finish strong" with grace and honor are becoming more rare. Research has

been conducted to explore possible determinants of such resiliency and longevity in vocational ministry (Lane 2005); but research exploring the relationship of a pastor's sense of humor with these outcomes has been lacking.

Sense of Humor

In general, sense of humor has been shown to affect the personal dynamics of leadership in many ways. Leadership is "an influencing process that results from follower perceptions of leader behavior and follower attributions of leader dispositional characteristics, behaviors, and performance" (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 675). Because the effectiveness of leadership depends so much on the way in which the leader behaves or is perceived, certain characteristics of humor are especially well suited for leadership tasks. Humor has been shown to reduce stress (Martin and Lefcourt 1983, 1323), open channels of communication (Morreall 1983, 114-17), improve social relations at work (Decker and Rotondo 2001, 451), enhance performance under stress (Capps 2006, 403; Henman 2001, 93), and create an atmosphere in which potentially hurtful messages are better received (Young and Bippus 2001, 48). Humor's unique power may lie in the fact that it can simultaneously access seriousness and non-seriousness, reality and unreality (Mikesell 1998, 21). In the exercise of leadership one is often called on to walk the tightrope between reward and punishment, motivation and threat, and between being colleague and supervisor. Humor can be an effective tool in these circumstances, assuming that it is not perceived to be contrived or manipulative.

Perhaps this dichotomy is better described in the lubricant-abrasive metaphor of humor – initiating and facilitating social interaction where smoothing is useful, applying friction when opposition is useful (Martineau 1972, 103). It should be noted

that humor contains the potential to offend, and when used improperly or without sensitivity, can produce negative effects that undermine rather than enhance leadership (Bippus 2003, 413; Capps 2006, 409).

In more classic leadership studies, humor has been linked with improving morale, enhancing group cohesiveness, increasing creativity and motivation, and stimulating higher levels of productivity (Avolio, Howell, and Sosik 1999, 219-20; Shamir 1995, 38). Followers report a stronger perception of good leadership when positive humor is used by the leader (Priest and Swain 2002, 178, 182). Humor was even found to be generally more fruitful for female managers than males (Decker and Rotondo 2001, 458). Duncan and his colleagues observed a growing momentum of research in the field since its modest beginnings in the 1960s (Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap 1990, 256), and that momentum has increased even more in the decades that followed that particular observation. Humor is also gaining momentum in the field of psychological research (Hart 2007, 180).

What is generally true for sense of humor in leadership may be especially true for pastoral leadership and may thus contribute positively to both pastoral effectiveness and longevity. With the exception of humor as a communication tool in preaching (e.g., Heflin 1974; Damron 2003; Rushing 2006), the literature has not explored the possible links between sense of humor and pastoral leadership. The effective use of humor in speech communications is well-researched in general but is not a primary focus of this study.

Leader-Follower Distance

Sense of humor may be a useful tool to manage the Leader-Follower Distance (Bogardus 1927) inherent in the pastor's position. Secular research in this area discovered hints of a relationship between humor and leadership distance (Henman 2001; Bippus 2003; Antonakis and Atwater 2002) as well as direct correlations (Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap 1990; Graham 1995; Romero and Cruthirds 2006). Hughes conducted a study in 2005 attempting to find correlations between sense of humor, a leader's relational transparency (a cousin concept to Leader-Follower Distance), and creative performance among followers. This study failed to find direct correlations between the primary variables under consideration which resulted from inadequacies such as small sample size and methodological design shortcomings (Hughes 2005, 99). No research has been conducted specific to the unique demands of pastoral leadership and these variables.

Theological Aspects

The literature on humor in general warns against the use of inappropriate or offensive humor. From a business perspective, some humor can compromise a leader's respect and status in the organization. A similar observation can be made of a pastor who abuses humor in preaching and teaching. Indeed, the pastor is not a comedian, and humor is but one tool in the communicator's arsenal. Beyond the cautions that are warranted in secular situations, however, the pastoral leader must answer a few additional questions related to the use of humor to effect spiritual change.

Foremost is the question raised as early as Plato about the inherently evil basis for humor – that we laugh at people and situations that enable us to indulge in superior

self-glory (Martin 2007, 22). There appears to be a close association between the Latin roots for the words *humor* and *humiliation* (Capps 2005, 113). If humor and laughter are evil, then Christians should eliminate them from their lives, not seek to develop them. In the biblical record, references to laughter occur almost entirely in the context of scorn or derision rather than humor, a point that has been well-noted in the literature (Capps 2005, 175; Capps 2006, 409-10; Morreall 1983, 86).

A second question has to do with the built-in distance from reality that must be maintained for a person with a humorous approach to life (Morreall 1983, 120-21). This distance presupposes that experiences are relative: they can be either serious or funny depending on one's perspective. If one adopts a *relativistic* perspective on life, does this not run counter to the biblical worldview of *absolute* truth? Can God even have a sense of humor, and if not, should Christians have a sense of humor?

These and other related questions concerning the use of humor in pastoral leadership are explored in chapter 2 along with questions concerning the value and role of Leader-Follower Distance in spiritual leadership settings. The biblical metaphor of shepherd for pastoral leadership is particularly germane to this exploration (John 21; 1 Pet 5). Robert Greenleaf initiated interest in secular "servant-leadership" with the publication of his essay "The Servant as Leader" (1970). Recent leadership author Jim Collins has recast this concept in his identification of "Level 5 Leaders" who exhibit the counter-intuitive characteristics of humility and servanthood with respect to Leader-Follower Distance. Level 5 Leaders are those who are "ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the movement, the mission – *not themselves* – and they have the will to do whatever it takes (*whatever* it takes) to make good on that ambition" (Collins 2005, 11).

Level 5 Leadership resonated deeply among his non-profit sector readers (including

church leaders) who often must lead from this paradigm rather than from other paradigms

available to business sector leaders. Collins' self-published monograph answered the

social sector's demand for more discussion on the forms of servant-leadership (Collins

2005, 1-3).

Summation

Pastoral leadership places unique demands on the pastor. The dynamics

involved in church settings often result in high expectations and relational challenges that

can undermine the pastor's effectiveness as a spiritual leader. Sense of humor is a useful

tool in managing stress, preserving personal well-being, improving communication, and

building relationships. This study has explored those ramifications of humor within the

specific context of pastoral leadership, ministry tenure, and the type of LFD leadership

style the pastor employs.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between the

pastor's predominant sense of humor style, the pastor's predominant configuration of

Leader-Follower Distance, and the pastor's local-church and career tenure in vocational

pastoral ministry. Pastoral leadership is a very serious vocation, perhaps one of the most

demanding and stressful in our present culture (Wilson and Hoffmann 2007, 31; Sande

2008, 1245867.asp). Sense of humor was not studied in this paper from the perspective

of its ability to make other people laugh, *per se,* but from the perspective of its ability to

equip the leader to cope effectively with the stressful realities of pastoral ministry, its

ability to gain a balanced perspective on reality, and its capacity to create and manage

effective leader-follower relationships. The ramifications of these relationships were explored in-depth during Phase 2 of the study.

Research Questions

The following five research questions were utilized in this study:

1. What are the predominant humor styles exhibited by SBC pastors in their leadership?

2. What are the predominant configurations of Leader-Follower Distance exhibited by SBC pastors in their leadership?

3. What, if any, relationship exists between a pastor's dominant humor style and Leader-Follower Distance configuration?

4. What, if any, relationship exists between a pastor's dominant humor style and local-church and career tenure in ministry?

5. What, if any, relationship exists between a pastor's configuration of Leader-Follower Distance and local-church and career ministry tenure?

Research Hypotheses

The following three research hypotheses were explored in this study:

1. Pastors with a dominant humor style of affiliative or self-enhancing humor will be more likely to experience greater local-church and career tenure in ministry due to the coping and relationship-building dynamics of those styles.

2. Pastors with a dominant humor style of affiliative or self-enhancing humor will exhibit "close" configurations of Leader-Follower Distance.

3. Pastors with "close" configurations of Leader-Follower Distance will be more likely to experience greater local-church and career tenure in vocational ministry.

Delimitations of the Study

1. This research studied Southern Baptist pastors only; therefore does not represent all pastoral leadership situations.

2. This research studied only pastors who use the internet, specifically those whose email address could be accurately acquired from the database of SBC churches.

3. Ethnic churches (e.g., Korean congregations in large American metropolitan areas) might operate with different cultural perceptions of humor in the pastor-people dynamic. This study has not been adapted for such cultural considerations.

4. Phase 2 of this study consisted of qualitative interviews in church settings which had pastoral subordinates to the senior pastor. This precluded small churches from this portion of the research (with the exception of one small church in which all of the pastors served bi-vocationally).

5. This research relied on perceptions shared by the research subjects and thus may have been skewed by inaccuracies inherent in such data. Phase 2 of the study attempted to quantify such inaccuracies by verifying these self-perceptions with subordinate staff.

6. Phase 2 of this study was delimited to lead pastors who allowed their subordinates to participate (i.e., the pastor was the gatekeeper). Lead pastors may have felt uneasy about followers evaluating their leadership and thus chose to opt out of the research. This particular behavior may be more prevalent among pastors exhibiting one or more of the research variables. For example, pastors with a "distant" LFD configuration may consider evaluation by subordinates as a threat to the distance they have established. Such self-selection may have impacted the research.

Terminology

Affiliative humor. A style of humor used for the purpose of facilitating relationships and reducing interpersonal tensions (Martin et al. 2003, 53). This healthy style of humor results in enhanced interpersonal and psychosocial well-being among the participants (see Humor styles).

Aggressive humor. A style of humor used to disparage or manipulate others by means of an implied threat of ridicule (Martin et al. 2003, 54). This unhealthy style of humor employs sarcasm, teasing, and ridicule without regard for its potential impact on others (see Humor styles).

Career tenure. For the purposes of this study, career tenure is the cumulative length of time the pastoral leader has served in vocational pastoral ministry, minus any

leave-of-absence or other intervening non-ministry activity. The career tenure includes

all vocational pastoral ministry roles – not just years spent as the senior (or lead) pastor.

Close Leader Follower Distance configurations. For the purposes of this study

three of the eight LFD configurations were deemed to be "close" based on a high level of

personal interaction and (preferably) low physical distance: the proximal style, the

socially distant style, and the virtually close style.

Humor. Any communication or meta-communication that results in laughter

or mirth (Smith, Harrington, and Neck 2000, 607).

Humor styles. The basic categories of humor in which it is made to serve

individuals in those functions considered most relevant to psychosocial well-being

(Martin et al. 2003, 51). These styles can be either inherently adaptive and beneficial or

else maladaptive and detrimental. For the purposes of this study the humor styles

identified in the Humor Styles Questionnaire were used.

Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ). A research instrument developed by

Martin et al. to measure humor which focuses on the interpersonal and interpsychic

aspects of humor (Martin et al. 2003, 51). The four styles which are measured are

identified as: Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor, and Self-

defeating humor. This study was primarily concerned with the first two of these humor

styles – the beneficial, adaptive styles.

Leader-Follower Distance (LFD). The relational dynamic comprised of three

independent factors: physical/geographic distance between the leader and follower,

perceived social distance, and perceived interaction frequency (Antonakis and Atwater

2002, 674). There are eight possible configurations of these factors resulting in the eight

configurations of LFD. A high physical distance factor means that a leader is physically located at a distance from followers (in the church setting, most pastoral leaders serve "on the field" with parishoners). A high social distance factor means that the leader remains aloof from followers outside the work (or church) environment. A high interaction frequency means that a leader maintains personal contact on a regular basis with the individual followers in the work (or church) environment.

Ministerial effectiveness. This term refers to the positive degree to which vocational leaders are able to minister in given settings, with specific resources and certain limitations (McNair 2008, 14). This study was interested specifically in the ministerial effectiveness of senior (or lead) pastors.

Self-defeating humor. A style of humor used to ingratiate oneself or gain approval by saying funny things at one's own expense (Martin et al. 2003, 54). Not to be confused with mildly self-depreciating forms of Affiliative humor, this unhealthy style of humor is a means of hiding underlying negative feelings or as a means of avoiding dealing constructively with problems (see Humor styles).

Self-enhancing humor. A style of humor used for the purpose of maintaining a healthy perspective of life in the face of stress or adversity (Martin et al. 2003, 53-54). This style of humor results in an enhanced image of the initiator relative to others (Romero and Cruthirds 2006, 59) by means of his or her ability to lead others by rising above problems (see Humor styles).

Senior (or lead) pastor. In most church settings, the senior or lead pastor role is clearly and unambiguously defined. In some church settings which function with a

team paradigm, the senior (or lead) pastor is the "first among equals," often the primary teaching pastor.

Sense of humor. The ability to generate humorous communication, and conversely the ability to appreciate such humorous communication (Graham 1995, 159).

Local-church tenure. For the purposes of this study, the local-church tenure is the average length of time the pastoral leader serves in a single local church.

Research Assumptions

The subject matter of this dissertation – the role of sense of humor in leadership – exists on the edge of generally-accepted scholarship in the leadership literature. As was mentioned above, this field of study has been garnering more scholarly research in recent years, creating a momentum that this author believes can prove useful in equipping leaders with effective tools.

Nevertheless, researchers studying sense of humor have many hurdles to negotiate before this field of study becomes a respected subheading under leadership studies. This is doubly true for the field of pastoral leadership, since humor can be crude and harmful – the antithesis of what pastoral leadership seeks to espouse – and thus may be treated with disdain by many religiously-minded people. Given this general bias *against* research on the subject, a researcher must necessarily have a significant bias toward the usefulness of humor in order to press forward with his or her studies. This author acknowledges that a positive bias toward humor exists, and that its basis initially was founded largely in anecdotal personal experience and common intuition (Wlodkowski 1999, 4; Capps 2006, 409). The preliminary reading during the early

stages of this degree program affirmed that a dissertation-worthy study of the role of sense of humor in pastoral leadership was realizable.

In contrast to the study of humor, the study of LFD has been a recognized subcategory in the leadership literature; therefore it garners the respect of scholars. Though it holds tremendous potential for application in pastoral leadership, there appears to be no research of LFD in that particular domain. Graham's research (1995) showed a relationship between humor and uncertainty reduction – a significant component in relational distance; however, the majority of potential correlations between LFD and sense of humor are yet to be studied. Their existence is assumed precisely because humor is one of the most effective tools for managing social distance in relationships (Decker and Rotondo 2001, 451; Bippus 2003, 413; Capps 2006, 409).

Theologically, the author assumed that intentional humor exists in the Bible and that the use of humor is acceptable for pastoral leaders. This is discussed in chapter 2 under the section titled "A Brief Overview of Biblical Humor." Because moral failure is one of the major contributors to failure in pastoral leadership (and therefore a termination of ministry tenure), and because lack of personal accountability (also referred to as the *pedestal effect*) is often a precursor to such moral failures, research should explore the possible relationship between "distant" LFD configurations and the pedestal effect in moral failures. Conversely, anecdotal observances of large successful church ministries indicate that pastoral leaders in those settings must necessarily operate with distant LFD dynamics (otherwise, such leaders would be rendered ineffective with the volume of minute details that would accrue to being a close LFD shepherd of a large congregation).

It is hoped that the current research, especially the follow-up interviews, will suggest clarification on these issues so that benefit can be derived for pastors in general.

Finally, this research methodology assumed that it is valid to treat the verbal and nonverbal components of humorous communications as a single unit. Nonverbal humorous communication may be independently significant.

Procedural Overview

The researcher used a mixed methods research approach consisting of two phases. In Phase 1, an email was sent to pastors randomly chosen to participate in the survey. The email message contained a link to the on-line survey website where the pastor could complete the research instrument. The research instrument contained a demographic section which determined the size of the church and pastoral staff, the pastor's ministry tenure statistics, and an entry indicating whether the church's health was trending up or down (from the pastor's perspective). Three questions addressed the pastor's predominant LFD configuration. The HSQ comprised the bulk of the instrument to determine predominant humor style(s). A final section asked if the pastor was willing to participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher, and when yes, captured the name and contact information of the survey respondent. Otherwise, the survey was anonymous.

Once a statistically significant number of responses had been returned, the researcher sorted the data for those pastors willing to participate in the follow-up interview procedure of Phase 2. Of those willing to participate, a small number (37) were solicited for Phase 2 based on the following criteria: the existence of at least one other pastor on staff (to compare the accuracy of the pastor's self-assessments), the indication

of church health trending up, and outlying scores on the humor scale (either high or low scores in at least one of the four styles). Since there were such a large number of pastors who indicated willingness to be interviewed, the researcher further culled the pool so that representatives of each LFD style, of various church sizes, and of a broad range of ministry experience were interviewed.

Definition of Theoretical Population

The theoretical population of Phase 1 of the study consisted of approximately 44,000 SBC lead pastors in North America (2006 ACP statistics retrieved from lifeway.com on 12 May 2008). Of that total (the 2007 ACP was actually used for this study), only slightly more than 6,800 churches recorded a church website. Though stratification of the population would have been an acceptable method, it was not necessary since random sampling of the entire population was possible and feasible.

Definition of Research Sample

A random sample of 2,500 was drawn from the database of SBC churches which recorded a church website. An email was sent, requesting that the lead pastor take the survey instrument. Though only 381 pastors were required to participate for a statistically representative sample at 95% confidence level (±5%), 530 pastors completed the survey during the three-week period in which the survey was conducted.

Methodological Design

Phase 1 of the research was a quantitative descriptive correlation study consisting of an on-line survey instrument. The survey instrument included:

1. A 32-item humor style instrument (Humor Styles Questionnaire by Martin et al.).

2. A categorical determination of Leader-Follower Distance consisting of three questions with respect to the three configual factors of LFD (physical/geographic distance between the leader and follower, perceived social distance, and perceived interaction frequency). This generated eight possible configurations of LFD.

3. Various demographic data, including size of church worship attendance, size of staff, pastor's length of service at church, length of service in pastoral ministry, average length of service per church, leave of absences, and health trend of the church.

4. Willingness to participate in a follow-up interview process (Phase 2), with contact information recorded for those indicating willingness.

Using an on-line survey instrument facilitated ease-of-use, reduced coding errors, and provided better statistical results. Correlational coefficient analysis and ANOVA tests were used to determine correlations between the variables.

Phase 2 consisted of a qualitative follow-up interview with a select number of churches (13) in order to assess the accuracy of the leader's initial responses to the survey (for humor style and LFD configuration), to gain further insights into the variables studied, and to delve deeper into the practical impact of the variables in everyday church ministry.

Research Competencies

1. Competency in designing on-line surveys (e.g., using SurveyMonkey.com).

2. Competency in statistical measures and methods to analyze survey results and determine correlations.

3. Competency in acquiring church data from the SBC and generating random samples from that database.

4. Competency in developing administration techniques and parameters to insure that the instruments were completed in an appropriate and ethical manner.

5. Competency in crafting the original contact email so that enough pastors were inclined to complete the survey to make the study statistically significant.

6. Competency in coding responses according to protocols, especially when using the instruments developed by other researchers.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

A sense of humor is a sign of a healthy spirit . . . . When I stop laughing, I'm in trouble. And I tend not to trust people who won't laugh, because I think there's no hope there.
(Grounds et al. 2002, 53)

Pastoral ministry, like much leadership in the social sectors, must be based on legislative-power rather than on executive-power (Collins 2005, 10-13). In the business realm, executive-power leadership is often built upon financial successes, educational credentials, and political connections. Legislative power is based primarily on leadership capital built upon personal trust (Kouzes and Posner 1987, 244-50). Furthermore, the levers used by secular leaders to accomplish their goals and enforce their decisions are often not available to the pastoral leader who must rely primarily on personal integrity, interpersonal skills, and the authority of the scriptures. Consequently, the stock and trade of pastoral leaders revolves around *trust* relationships.

As noted in the quotation above, a sense of humor is intuitively present in relationships of trust. A relationship that is devoid of humor is likely to be, at best, a strictly functional relationship with minimal interpersonal dynamics (Morreall 1983, 115). A relationship that enjoys a healthy sense of humor, on the other hand, is likely to be not merely functional, but trusting. On this basis, however, humor may be an *indicator* of the presence of trust without necessarily being a *contributor* to the existence of trust in a relationship. A review of the literature which follows suggests that the intentional use of healthy humor functions in more than just an indicative manner.

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Theories of Humor

Prior to any consideration of the theological underpinnings of this study, a

brief overview of the primary theories of humor must be given to establish a foundation

from which a series of observations can be made. It has been noted that there have been

more than 100 theories of humor proposed (Hart 2007, 181; Mikesell 1998, 21).

Consensus has formed, however, around four major theories of humor: the *Superiority,*

Incongruity, Relief, and *Play* theories.

Superiority Theory

Plato and Aristotle were the first philosophers in recorded history to muse over

the role and value of humor. Plato subscribed almost exclusively to the Superiority

theory, which posits that humans laugh at other humans when they can feel superior to

them (Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap 1990, 259-60). This theory holds that the derision

directed to the "butt of a joke" is therefore proof that humor is basically an expression of

human malice and is inherently evil. Much later Hobbes coined the term "self-glory" and

concluded that humor is thus harmful to a person's character (Martin 2007, 8). Hobbes

noted that even self-deprecating humor requires a butt of the joke – the initiator makes

fun at his or her own foibles or former ignorance (Greig 1929, 232).

In connection with the purpose of the current study with relation to LFD,

Duncan has noted:

> Superiority theory views the basis of laughter as the triumph of one person over
> other people and the resulting varieties of humor that can occur. For this reason,
> joking behaviors that relate to social distance and status in work groups can be
> classified accurately as belonging to the general group of superiority theories of
> humor. (Duncan 1985, 558)

This theory seems to have been granted a *de facto* dominance among many

secular scholars because it synchronizes with evolutionary and developmentalist theories.

The evolutionary view links the physical aspects of laughter – baring of the teeth, for

example – as related to a show of aggressive behavior. Humor is a much more advanced

form of aggression than that of a dog growling and baring its teeth, but it is, nevertheless,

a tactic used to communicate to the enemy that one is ably adapted to the situation.

Consequently, people still feel threatened when being laughed at (Morreall 1983, 6). The

developmentalist view links the superiority theory with cruel laughter in the enjoyment of

the suffering of another, as in the propensity of children to taunt and ridicule other

children. This behavior is consistent with Piaget's *pre-operational* cognitive stage in

which children view others as objects (Morreall 1983, 9-10), affirming that superiority

humor is primitive.

Incongruity Theory

Aristotle hinted at a second theory of humor, the Incongruity theory, which

was supported in minor ways by Cicero and Pascal, but pursued with rigor in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Kant and Schopenhauer (Morreall 1983, 15-17).

This theory demonstrates that humor is a cognitive process that results when an

experience takes an unexpected turn from the normally anticipated patterns of our

ordered world. Such surprises appeal to us cognitively and produce an emotional feeling

of delight (Hefferin 1996, 40). Incongruities occur when a single situation or event can

be perceived in two unrelated and even incompatible ways. The mental process known

as bisociation occurs when an event "is made to vibrate simultaneously on two different

wavelengths, as it were" (Koestler 1964, 35). This form of humor is more sophisticated

and requires the recipient to possess certain requisite knowledge plus a level of intellectual acuity as a context for "getting" the joke.

This requisite knowledge and intelligence demonstrates another direct link with developmentalism, the premise of Piaget's cognitive model of learning – that change is triggered by cognitive dissonance (or incongruity) (Richards 1975, 62, 181). This form of humor is especially fertile for purposes of this research because it has the ability to fine-tune the amount of disequilibrium created in order that effective learning might occur. This humor is helpful in settings where there is a danger of upsetting learners by over-disequilibrating them (such as church settings). Incongruity theory allows that humor need not be inherently evil, but it does require that one be able to dissociate from absolute reality in order to appreciate the incongruity.

Relief Theory

The Relief theory fits well with Freud's psychology of repression and was thus appropriated by him and afforded much credibility (Capps 2005, 6 ff.). This construct purports that humor is a release of pent-up nervous energy. Because humor takes the biomechanical form of laughter, this theory views the purpose of humor as a necessary vent for energy repressed in normal human activity (Morreall 1983, 20-22). It is no wonder that Freud resonated with this theory, which he expounded upon in his book *Jokes and Their Relation to the Subconscious Mind*. In Freud's view, all of human behavior was influenced somehow by repression of urges, or as he defines it in this book in relation to jokes, the repression of psychic energy (Freud 1960, 147-48). There does seem to be a connection to this theory and the preponderance of sexual and taboo humor (Macy 2006, 8); however, Freud suggests that such humor extends beyond these drives to

be an outlet for "difficult thinking," which explains, for example, gallows humor. The

concept is that certain subjects are very difficult for humans to think about – they create

stress. Humans give each other the *gift* of humor about these subjects as a way of

releasing one another from the responsibilities of such difficult thinking. Jokes about

death, debt, addictions, or other difficult subjects help to release the built-up psychic

energy and allow the recipient of the humor to recalibrate processing at a less stressful

level (Capps 2005, 9).

Play Theory

This final theory has been advanced by Lee in recent years and has garnered

little coverage in the literature. This construct says that humor is simply a display of

love, enjoyment, and fun (Hefferin 1996, 41), and in contrast to the Superiority theory,

purports that humor is ethically positive. The Play theory is used to explain the laughter

of young infants.

> When conscious eye contact is made and the setting is appropriate, the smiling
> human face elicits our most primitive and yet elegant humor experience. . . .
> Humor's first function in life is to convey love and security. Humor isn't just so
> much fluff; it is absolutely essential to human survival. It is one of the principal
> ways that love is expressed. (Macy 2006, 9)

Play humor is embodied in the Hebrew term שׂמח, as in Deuteronomy 24:5

"When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with

any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness [שׂמח] to his wife

whom he has taken." This word, which is found approximately 152 times in the Old

Testament, refers to humor embedded in finding joy in the present moment (Koehler and

Baumgartner 2001, 1335-36). Laughter which falls into the Play category has no roots in

pride, cognitive processes, or psychological compensation. The spontaneous, emotional

nature of such humor may explain why researchers have avoided this theory in the literature – love is *not* the basic foundation of most social and business interactions. Play humor does not seem to hold the promise of sophisticated analysis that the other theories do.

Theological Perspectives on Humor

The four theories described above demonstrate that humor may be rooted in a broad spectrum of motives, from good to evil. Theological objections to the use of humor derive from interpreting scriptures in ways which connect humor to the evil end of that continuum. The following sections examine the biblical passages relating to humor in light of the primary theories of humor in order to derive a balanced theological perspective on the use of humor in ministry leadership settings.

Theological Objections to Humor

As mentioned previously, humor has the potential to offend. In business settings, the results can be disastrous. In church settings, offensive use of humor by the pastor can leave spiritual scars. Pastoral leaders need to understand some of the moral and theological objections to the use of humor so that their use of humor in ministry contexts will be healthy, balanced, and non-offensive.

Plato believed that humor was inherently rooted in pride – we laugh at people and situations that enable us to view ourselves as superior. Many biblical references to laughter are in the context of derision rather than humor (e.g., Ps 80:6, "You make us an object of contention to our neighbors; And our enemies laugh among themselves"). Morreall focuses on this point, even suggesting that the gospels deliberately portray a totally serious Jesus, never a laughing Jesus (Morreall 1983, 126). Hefferin takes a

differing view of Scripture, citing instead Proverbs 17:22 "A merry heart does good like

medicine." This verse is seminal because it proves that not all forms of humor are evil,

indeed some merriment is inherently *beneficial* (Hefferin 1996, 42). In direct

contradiction to Morreall's depiction of Jesus as humorless, Robert Stein has devoted an

entire chapter in his book to how Jesus intentionally used various forms of humor as

teaching methods, such as overstatement, hyperbole, pun, simile, metaphor, riddle, and

paradox (Stein 1994, 7-22). Donald Capps has recently compiled his research in religion

and psychology in which his driving thesis is that religion *requires* humor to function:

> What I hope to show in the course of this book, however, is that humor need not be
> viewed as a competitor, much less an enemy, of religion. On the contrary, religion
> itself is impoverished when it fails to manifest its own historical association with
> humor, an association that may be traced back to the biblical tradition itself and to
> the simultaneous emergence of religion and humor in the development of the child.
> (Capps 2005, 5)

Capps cites research by Vassilis Saraglou which demonstrates that religions in

general promote a *suspicion* of humor because religion opposes the very things which

humor engenders: ambiguity, loss of self-control, moral relativity, aggression, and sexual

taboos (Capps 2005, 175-76).

The issue may be a matter of eisegesis – what is interpreted into the text –

rather than exegesis – what may be inferred from the original intent of the text. In other

words, those who presuppose that God affirms a sense of humor can see it implicitly

reflected in biblical texts, whereas those who presuppose God is humorless focus on the

lack of explicit positive humor in the Scriptures. The presupposition that intentional

humor exists in the Bible is assumed in this research and will be discussed in the section

below: "A Brief Overview of Biblical Humor."

This suspicion of humor leads to a second objection which has to do with the ambiguity or built-in distance from reality that must be maintained for a person with a humorous approach to life (Morreall 1983, 120-21). This view presupposes that experiences are relative: they can be either serious or funny depending on one's perspective. In order for one to gain such a humorous perspective, one must achieve mental bisociation (Martin 2007, 7) and even a psychological distance from the circumstance so that the event can be relativized.

For example, some churches post 1 Corinthians 15:51 on the door of the nursery: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." This quotation is humorous only when taken out of the context of the passage, in which the word *sleep* is a euphemism for death. Almost all humorous situations can be humorless to a person whose worldview requires all systems to be strictly absolute. Casual observations suggest that such a condition might be more prevalent in church congregations than in the population at large. In the above example, a person could be offended by the humorous use of a serious Bible verse because God's Word is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction (1 Tim 3:16) and *not* intended for humor. The pastoral leader, therefore, must use such humor with caution. Relatively few people, however, fall into this extreme of humorlessness; most people respond intuitively to humor at some level.

Nevertheless, humor does possess the potential to undermine absolute truth. If a pastor regularly creates cognitive dissonance in the parishioners' belief systems in order to produce teachable moments, those parishioners may begin to lose faith in the value of belief systems at all. Still, it is possible to use incongruity humor in such a way that the relative distance is managed strictly to appreciate the weakness of our humanity, without

compromising the underlying biblical worldview. Sarah declared in Genesis 21:6, "God *has caused* me to laugh" at the incongruity of an elderly woman having a child. God created incongruity for Sarah without participating in the humor Himself: "And the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?" Is anything too difficult for the Lord?' " (Gen 18:13-14a).

There exists a final objection to be addressed: can God even have a sense of humor? If not, should Christians have a sense of humor? If one analyzes the first three dominant theories of humor (Superiority, Incongruity, and Relief), God would seem to be incapable of experiencing humor. He *is* superior, so derisive humor cannot logically pertain to Him. When He describes events derisively (see, e.g., Ps 2), He does so in order to reveal the truth of His perfection rather than from an evil desire to gain dominance. He *is* omniscient; therefore there exist no incongruities for Him – He cannot be surprised cognitively. God *is* limitless and unchanging (Mal 3:6), so there is no energy that must be pent up and therefore released through the mechanism of humor.

Christians often attribute human characteristics to God (anthropomorphisms) as a technique to aid an understanding of His perfections. Attributing a sense of humor to God could be a prime example of such anthropomorphizing. Indeed, God may be incapable of having a sense of humor because He is divine, but that does not imply that sense of humor is inappropriate for His human creation *nor* that God must necessarily refrain from using humor when interacting with humans. Put another way, humor may be a result of the finite state in which God created humanity. Since this finite state preceded the entrance of sin into the world, finitude is apparently not a result of sin. If humor results from finitude, it may be an acceptable disposition for human beings even if God

cannot share that disposition. One can argue from the doctrine of the Incarnation that Jesus, being fully human as well as fully divine, could experience a sense of humor.

One passage of Scripture is particularly instructive on this point – the invocation of blessing which God *commanded* the priests to pray over the people in Numbers 6:23-27: "The Lord bless you, and keep you; /The Lord make *His face shine on you*, /And be gracious to you; /The Lord *lift up His countenance on you*, /And give you peace" (emphasis added).

In this passage, God portrays Himself as desiring to "make His face shine" and to "lift up His countenance" on His people. Though the first idiom may be related to the imagery of glorious sunshine (Korpel 1989, 6), the second idiom harks back to one of the earliest encounters God had with His creation in Genesis 4:5-7. In that passage, God had rejected the offering of Cain, a fact that had resulted in Cain's jealousy and anger. God speaks to the fact that Cain's interior anger was reflected on his exterior countenance, which was "fallen" (Hebrew נָפַל). God then counseled Cain that if he did what was right rather than the evil he was contemplating, his countenance would be "lifted" (Hebrew שְׂאֵת) in reflection of the interior joy that would replace his anger. The Genesis passage is linked with the blessing of Numbers 6 by utilizing the same root word (Hebrew נָשָׂא) and the same idiom (Koehler and Baumgartner 2001, 1301). Psalm 89:15 also relates joy with the "light" of God's face. When God communicates a desire to shine His face on His people, it seems that this expression may imply the sort of merriment and joy that accompanies a Play theory of humor.

A Brief Overview of Biblical Humor

Though it cannot be proven categorically, there appear to be many instances of intentional humor in the Bible. Some of these passages are cited with minimal commentary in order to cover a breadth of specimens.

Humorous passages that come readily to mind include Balaam's donkey rebuking the prophet (Num 22:28); Elijah's outrunning Ahab's chariot (1 Kgs 18:46); God's directing His prophets to act out prophetic object lessons involving a yoke around the neck (Jer 27), a mock battle (Ezek 4:1ff.), and a dramatic evacuation (Ezek 12:3ff.); and Peter paying tax by fishing money out of a fish (Matt 17:27). These seem like humorous situations due to the ignominy or incredulity of the circumstance, yet one cannot say unequivocally from these passages that God has a sense of humor. At the very least, one can say that God creates situations in which incongruity is a key ingredient. The injection of emotional or intellectual dissonance can often charge the learning environment with an energy that is infectious, synergistic, and leads to the formation of new beliefs or schemata (Wlodkowski 1985, 168). Perhaps Jesus' most famous discourses are those in which He developed gripping, incongruous hypothetical stories – parables like that of the eleventh-hour laborers (Matt 20:1-16) – which all seem to hinge on such dissonance. His purpose in using incongruity is not to promote humor, but to create an environment for learning, for which humor is an effective method. Bain suggests that such cognitive and emotional dissonance is a hallmark of excellent college teachers (Bain 2004, 40). Such techniques have been proven effective in helping many students *want* to learn particular material intrinsically rather than extrinsically.

Genesis 17-21 records the events surrounding the birth of Isaac, whose name means "he laughs." Laughter is a key component of this narrative from the moment the heavenly messengers announce his birth until when Sarah exclaims "Everyone will laugh with me" (Gen 21:6). Ted Cohen has suggested that laughter was *the necessary* expression of Abraham and Sarah's understanding – after all, the prophetic message was utterly incongruous. Their laughter was, therefore, consistent with their faith (Cohen 1999, 53-54).

The thread of humor in the account of Isaac continues with the story of his first meeting Rebekah (Gen 24:61-67). In the account, Rebekah approaches on camelback and sees Isaac in the field, who had gone out to "meditate." The word translated "meditate" is of uncertain origin, but is used in variant form in 1 Kings 18:27, another humorous passage in which Elijah is mocking the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. Elijah taunts, "Maybe Baal doesn't hear you because he is *meditating,* or busy, or on vacation, or asleep!" More recent linguistic studies indicate the word in question is better translated "urinating" or "defecating" (Capps 2005, 78-79; Vall 1994, 515). Consequently, Elijah's taunting becomes even more humorously sarcastic: "Baal is a god . . . perhaps he is out watering the bushes!!" (Macy 2006, 92). If these linguistic conclusions are accurate, then the love scene of Isaac's and Rebekah's first meeting in a field is a humorous contrast to the classic scene of lovers meeting one another in a field of wildflowers! It is no wonder Rebekah fell off her camel ("dismounted" might be more accurately be translated "fell off" in Gen 24:64) (Capps 2005, 79).

The book of Judges contains many glimpses of humor. In his commentary on Judges, Dale Davis takes special note of the affiliative humor used in chapter 3 as a

means to cope with Israel's weakness, bolster national resolve, and minimize the strength

of the enemy (Davis 2007, 51-60). Israel's first oppressor is identified in the text as

Cushan-rishathaim hailing from Aram-nahariam. Even foreign speakers can hear the

assonance and rhyme in this description, which scholars believe is a clue to the function

of the text as affiliative humor. *Cushan-rishathaim* means "Cushan double wickedness,"

not a name a king would officially sanction. Aram-naharaim means "Aram double

rivers," which is a typical place name featuring geographically distinctive descriptions.

The evidence seems to indicate that the Israelites gave their enemy king this catchy

sarcastic nickname ("Cushan double-evil from Aram double rivers") to use as a seed of

rebellion against his oppression of them.

That same chapter describes Israel's second oppressor, King Eglon, as a "very

fat man" (Judg 3:17) whose assassination is accomplished because his security guards

overlooked Ehud's left-handedness when they frisked him. The features in this account

are further evidence of affiliative humor: the King is so fat the knife gets stuck inside

him, and Ehud is able to escape easily because the palace guards assume their king is

defecating (a conclusion perhaps drawn from the smell emanating from the chamber in

which he was stabbed, the wound having caused "refuse to spill out," v. 22). Davis

observes:

> [T]his may tell us something about Holy Scripture: when writing up redemptive
> history, the Holy Spirit and the biblical writers conspire to do it with spice! . . .
> Surely you can see that God doesn't take away your humor when you belong to His
> people. (Davis 2007, 51)

During the time when King Saul was pursuing David, his warriors launch a

surprise attack on his house, and bring the bed on which he lay back to Saul. There, in

front of the king, they turn back the sheets to discover the lump under the covers was an

idol topped by a quilt of goat's hair (2 Sam 19:11-16). David subsequently escapes to Achish, king of Gath, but realizes the fragility of his position and feigns insanity even to the point of drooling (1 Sam 21:10-15). Achish sarcastically quips, "Do I lack enough madmen around here already that you bring in more from outside?" (1 Sam 21:15).

David's wise son Solomon codified his wisdom in the Old Testament books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. Scholars have noted that humor is used often in these books (Macy 2006, 98-99): for example, Proverbs 27:14-15, "He who blesses his friend with a loud voice early in the morning, it will be reckoned a curse to him. A constant dripping on a day of steady rain and a nagging woman are alike."

Jonah, the reluctant prophet was sent by God with a message to Ninevah, a political opponent with which Jonah wanted no part. He flees from God rather than obey the commission. God relentlessly pursues Jonah, using crusty sailors and a big fish to bring him back. When he finally arrives in Ninevah, Jonah's worst fear is realized: the entire city repents. The conversion is so complete that the king declares that all must fast and be clothed in sackcloth – man and beast! (Jonah 3:7-8) We smile when people dress their pets in funny clothes; what must it have looked like to see farm animals dressed to match the residents of Ninevah. The book closes with a comically-portrayed Jonah whining over the loss of a plant.

The New Testament likewise contains passages best understood with a wink of humor. In recent years, actor Bruce Marchiano depicted Jesus as full of joy in a video adaptation of Matthew's gospel (Thomas Nelson 1997) – a *smiling* Jesus as compared to a *sober*, deadly serious Jesus. The portrayal created discussion on this subject of whether or not Jesus smiled or if God has a sense of humor. This author concurs with

Marchiano's characterization of Jesus as smiling, even playful. This playfulness can be seen, for example, in the account of Matthew 22:15-22. The Pharisees try to trap Jesus over the issue of taxes, to which He replies by asking for a denarius coin. When they produced the coin, it was already a "gotcha" situation, because no self-respecting Pharisee should carry around a coin with a graven image of a false god (like Caesar) on it (Adams 1997, 8-9). Later, Jesus describes the Pharisees as so fastidious in the fine points of the law that they "strain out a gnat" while at the same time indulging their own rationalized vices which He describes as "swallowing a camel" (Matt 23:24). Earlier, He used a similar technique when He noted that we are quick to judge others – pointing out a speck in someone's eye but failing to notice the log in our own eye (Matt 7:3). There is a wink of humor in Christ's teaching about God's generosity in Luke 11:11-13: as bad as we humans are, we would never think to give our son a snake if he asked for a fish, or a scorpion if he asked for an egg. How much more generous must our Heavenly Father be toward us?

One can imagine that the early church enjoyed a good laugh on the night of a special prayer meeting called because Peter had been thrown in prison (Acts 12:1-17). While the church was praying fervently behind closed doors, God sent an angel to release Peter from jail, who proceeded to go to the prayer meeting himself. Rhoda, the little girl who answered the knock, was so excited she left Peter standing outside and reported to the adults, who refused to believe her. Meanwhile, Peter stands outside, continuing to knock until finally someone lets him in!

Luke recalls an event in which seven brothers began a little business of exorcising demons, trading presumptively on the power of Jesus' name. A demon they

encountered this way replied to them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" and proceeded to overpower them so that they fled the scene naked (Acts 19:11-16). In the very next chapter, Luke immortalizes the name of Eutychus who famously and dangerously fell asleep during a long sermon (Acts 20:7-12).

Humor is not lost in the writings of Paul either. In his teaching about the spiritual gifts, he notes that some believers were using the more flamboyant gifts as a way of attracting attention to themselves. He paints a metaphor of the various gifts as being various members of a body, and then suggests that a giant eyeball or a giant ear would not a body make (1 Cor 12:17). Paul warned the Galatian believers of the dangers of the Judaizers who syncretized the keeping of the Law with the gospel of grace, requiring, for example, that Gentile believers submit to circumcision. In the course of refuting the heresy, Paul suggests that the circumcisers might have an unfortunate slip of the knife on themselves (Gal 5:12). Either the reader is expected to take this statement with a wink of humor, or else one must attribute to Paul a sadistic vindictiveness. This author believes it is intended as humor.

To impose a sense of humor upon the biblical text seems less presumptive than to impose a restriction of it from the biblical text. Taken as a whole, these passages – and others – point to a Creator Who understands human nature, Who appreciates how humor functions, and Who is willing to introduce humor in the context of sacred history.

The Function of Humor

The theories of humor reviewed above address the *foundations* of humor but do not necessarily address the *function* of humor. Laughter has long been thought to be a uniquely human experience (a point now challenged in research; a good overview is

found in Vettin and Todt 2005). Consequently, researchers operating within a biological paradigm seek to discover physiological reasons for laughter: what is it about humor that creates better evolutionary *fitness* for survival? In addition to the view that laughter is an evolved form of animal aggression discussed above, other studies have shown that laughter has beneficial physical ramifications. These include improved respiration and circulation, oxygenation of the bloodstream, and the release of endorphins into the brain (Garner 2006, 177). Levels of salivary immunoglobin, a key component in the human immune system for combating common colds and flus, increase with laughter (Perera et al. 1998, 118). Perhaps the most notorious (if not academically rigorous) study in this vein was conducted by Norman Cousins and related in his book (1991) of how he self-medicated with humor and overcame a diagnosed medical condition that was said to be untreatable and debilitating. His claims are mostly anecdotal, but carry the ring of truth (for example, he claimed that after times of sustained physical laughter, he was able to rest pain-free for two hours – something that medications were not able to deliver). Cousins is often cited in the literature – with provisos (Martin and Lefcourt 1983, 1313; Garner 2006, 177). There is a "health and humor" movement that, though minor, persists in the health profession and literature (Martin 2007, 25-26).

Consequent to the biological paradigm, some research instruments devised to measure humor do little more than rate the frequency of overt humorous acts like smiling or laughing (Reff 2006, 18). For purposes of this study, the focus will be on the psychosocial functions of humor which Martin et al. have conceptualized as multi-dimensional (i.e., adaptive or maladaptive humor) and capable of enhancing social

relationships and ameliorating the stresses of everyday life – both at personal and interpersonal levels (Martin et al. 2003, 72).

At this point, however, the functional connections suggested by Manfried Kets de Vries (1993) between humor and leadership serve as an introduction to the section on psychosocial function of humor. Kets de Vries is a decidedly Freudian psychoanalyst who also has consulted in the Leadership and Management field and has held an endowed chair at the European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD) in Fountainebleau, France. Though his credentials in leadership research are well-accepted, some of his concepts are so deeply Freudian that they have garnered only limited acclaim. His work *Leaders, Fools, and Imposters,* however, is considered by this author to be important to this study and will be used to structure the discussion below.

Mirroring and Self-identity

Kets de Vries begins with the concept of *mirroring*, in which he notes the fascination humans have beholding their own image in mirrors. He suggests that the first "mirror" humans experience is the face of one's mother in which the individual sees a reflection of love and adoration. Because our mother's face communicates that we are perfect and adored, we are henceforth marked with a psychological need to be known and adored as perfect. This image, however, changes over time as the infant matures but continues to exhibit selfish behavior. Eventually, the mother's face will reflect disapproval of the infant's selfishness, and the process of differentiation and self-identity begins. The concept of mirroring suggests that humans continue to look at themselves in mirrors subconsciously striving to achieve an image worthy of adoration. In addition, humans use the impressions that other individuals have of them as a mirror of what we

want to believe of ourselves (Kets 1993, 5-20). Cooley was the first to introduce this theoretical construct of the formation of self-concept which he called the "looking glass self" (Cooley 1902, 152). Mead later refined and expanded on the construct which is still regularly referenced in the literature (Gamble and Yu 2008, 860). James Fowler devised a memorable phrase that captures the essence of this concept: "I see you seeing me: I see the me I think you see" (Fowler 1981, 153). We all engage in many forms of image management.

Leaders function with the same psychological needs as followers and are perhaps drawn toward leadership partly because of the idolizing that accrues to leaders. As a result, leaders can easily become addicted to the respect their image as leaders commands and to the power their position as leaders affords. This *power addiction* can drive ambition and ladder-climbing, which, if successful, brings greater status, power, and adoration. Conversely, followers use their leader as a mirror of themselves, wanting to create an aura around their leader which will, in turn, reflect well on themselves. This phenomenon is sometimes known as the "pedestal" or "leader-as-mirror" effect (Kets 1993, 27-36). In fact, the followers can be viewed as significantly responsible for the ways leaders turn out (Kets 1993, 14).

The mirroring phenomenon can be healthy when the leader, ennobled by the expectations of followers, rises to the occasion and personifies the ideal. Narcissistic leaders, however, begin to create a false self-concept in terms of this idealized image – they begin to believe their own press releases. Stated differently, such a leader's psyche becomes intertwined with the image and power of leadership: the line between personhood and position becomes blurred. The power addiction cycle is reinforced to the

point that the leader begins to fear loss of position because it would mean loss of identity. Should this false self-concept occur, the leader begins to adopt an unhealthy, self-preservation mode of behavior.

Emotional Illiteracy

Once the leader becomes obsessed in this way, an emotional illiteracy begins to develop. Decisions that were once made using emotional and intellectual components are now made using the criteria of grasping for power and preservation of position. The followers become objects, and the leader becomes an automaton. Kets de Vries terms this *alexithymia* which means, literally "no words for emotions." In such cases, the leader pulls away from the followers as much as possible (Kets 1993, 60-87). Some individuals, it seems, are inherently prone to alexithymia, which forms one of the bases for the emerging concept of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman 1995, 50). As will be discussed in the section on Leader-Follower Distance below, these concepts lay some of the groundwork for the dynamics involved in the creation of distal leaders.

Counterbalancing Humor

It is at this point that Kets de Vries brings in a discussion of humor. He suggests that humor is a necessary counter-balance to leadership in that it stems the intoxicating effects of power and hubris inherent in leadership. He finds a historical basis in the image of the court jester – the fool. Traditions of jesters date back to the Egyptian dynasties (Morreall 1983, 118), but our contemporary conceptions are influenced by the medieval fools with colorful costumes, cap-and-bells hats (in parody of the king's crown), and bladder-on-a-stick (in parody of the king's scepter). The fool was the one person in the king's inner circle who was given permission to make light of the king's

narcissistic foibles. The fool could disagree with the king's unwise policies and not be killed because it was couched in the garb of foolishness and humor. The *purpose* of the humor was, however, serious – to point out the dark side of the king's leadership and decisions.

> The fool creates a certain emotional ambiance and through various means reminds the leader of the transience of power. He becomes the guardian of reality and, in a paradoxical way, prevents the pursuit of foolish action. (Kets 1993, 95)

In fact, the fool was really the sage and enjoyed the protection of the king as a member of the court (Kets 1993, 89-111).

Modern leadership might well benefit from the introduction and official sanction of corporate jesters in the executive boardroom. The climate in modern business is, however, anything but conducive to such functions of humor. Lundberg's studies have shown several operational dynamics for humor in the workplace that are telling in this respect: (1) if humor is used and the butt of the joke is present and happens to be of lower status in the organization than the initiator of the humor, he or she will not joke back for fear of reprisals from the higher-status individual; (2) if the initiator of the humor is of lower status than the butt of the joke, peers of the butt of the joke will not consider the humor funny for fear of reprisal and for political loyalty; and (3) consequently, humor at the workplace is a top-down perk – the leader can enjoy it, but the lower status employees are subject to reprisals when it is used (Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap 1990, 267). Even self-deprecating humor on the job is dangerous. Studies have shown that use of such humor in the presence of peers or supervisors results in a loss of credibility for the initiator (Romero and Cruthirds 2006, 63).

This study seems to paint a bleak picture for the role of humor in contemporary leadership, but that is only part of the picture. Because humor is a "top-down perk," leaders who wisely use humor can create a climate much more conducive to effective leadership. If the leader uses positive, healthy humor, the benefits spread throughout the organization in a domino effect. Current research on the value of humor in the work setting and in leadership is gaining momentum (Duncan 1982, 139).

An Overview of Psychosocial Humor Research

Morreall has noted that people either take a serious approach to life or a humorous approach. In a serious approach, all activities are calculated to respond to serious demands, to maximize predictable levels of output, and minimize problematic disruptions caused by incongruities. The serious person lives in an ordered cause-and-effect world. In contrast, the person who approaches life with a sense of humor operates with a built-in distance from the world. Thus, demands aren't necessarily serious but are rather relative to one's perspective. Responding to demands then becomes a matter of negotiation. Productivity is likewise relative and may not be maximized by uncreative adherence to rules and expectations. Incongruities are not problematic but are pregnant with new possibilities and combinations (Morreall 1983, 121-22).

The thread of reasoning inherent in the efficacy of humor in everyday life has prompted many to research the value of humor in various settings. Mikesell summarizes the function of humor in general as comprising primarily: (a) promoting cohesion in relationship(s), (b) providing conflict, and (c) providing social control (Mikesell 1998, 26). O'Quin and Aronoff demonstrated that the use of humor leads to greater compliance in test subjects. In their experiment, a stressful bargaining situation was proven to be

altered drastically – though subconsciously – through the interjection of humor at

strategic points in the negotiation. Innate needs to be the winner were fulfilled in non-

aggressive ways because humor somehow recast the situation as less important than

originally thought (before the humor) (O'Quin and Aronoff 1981, 354-55). If humor is

employed manipulatively, the antennae of human nature pick it up and turn this

potentially positive use of humor into a decidedly negative one. The result is

dysfunctional competition – the opposite of compromise (Romero and Cruthirds 2006,

65). Many studies have shown that humor reduces stress in general (Martin and Lefcourt

1983, 1323), enhances performance under stress (Capps 2006, 403), and aids in

conditions of extreme stress, such as that of Vietnam POWs (Henman 2001, 93).

> Humor makes people feel that they are not afraid; without fear they feel a greater
> sense of control (Dixon 1980), which is incompatible with feeling stress. . . .
> [A]ffiliative humor creates a 'we are in this together' mentality, which is
> constructive when responding to stress. (Romero and Cruthirds 2006, 62)

Fear is a trait that inhibits a willingness to act and engenders worry. Kelly's

research revealed a negative relationship between worry and sense of humor – people

with a high sense of humor are less likely to worry (Kelly 2002, 662). A person's *locus*

of control (LOC), that is a person's belief about whether one is responsible for one's own

fate, has been shown to be significantly correlated to fear of failure (Lefcourt, Sardoni,

and Sardoni 1974, 131). Persons with an internal LOC (life is what one makes it to be)

fear failure far less than persons with an external LOC (fate happens, one is passive in the

process). This finding runs counter to intuition, which would suggest that a person who

believes he is not responsible for his fate would not fear failure because he cannot be

blamed for it (Lefcourt, Sardoni, and Sardoni 1974, 130-31). Likewise, higher external

LOC is associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression. Lefcourt and his

colleagues hypothesized this association was due to internals being less vulnerable to immediate experiences, which would only be possible by achieving a certain amount of cognitive distancing (Lefcourt, Sardoni, and Sardoni 1974, 131). This finding led the researchers to study the effect of humor on LOC, since many forms of humor view reality using precisely such a cognitive distancing technique (Morreall 1983, 106). Though the link is somewhat indirect, LOC was shown to be correlated to sense of humor (internals have a higher sense of humor than do externals), and thus, a high sense of humor is linked with a reduced fear of failure (Lefcourt, Sardoni, and Sardoni 1974, 141). Humor could thus be related to removing barriers of fear that inhibit healthy change.

Decades of research using Holmes and Rahe's *Life Events Survey* of stress (1967) have shown that life events contribute significantly to personal stress levels. Using that research as a hypothetical basis, Martin and Lefcourt conducted studies to determine the effect that humor has on reducing the impact of stress and mood resulting from negative life experiences. Not surprisingly, direct correlations were found and later corroborated which proved humor's beneficial impact on stress (Martin and Lefcourt 1983, 1318-19, 1322; Henman 2001, 85). Similarly, humor has been shown to moderate depression (Capps 2006, 401; Hefferin 1996, 43).

Humor opens communication (Morreall 1983, 117), improves social relations (Decker and Rotondo 2001, 451), reduces social uncertainty (Graham 1995, 165-66), facilitates mental flexibility (Morreall 1983, 114-16), and improves the reception of hurtful messages (Young and Bippus 2001, 48). Embarrassment and "loss of face" issues are concerned with the need of some conflict partners to have their issues handled delicately, re-framing the argument in a way that preserves the self-concept of that

person. Humor has been shown to correlate successfully to this type of transaction

(Bippus 2003, 423). Five Conflict Management Strategies (CMS) have been proposed by

Blake and Moulton (1964) and subsequently followed by many researchers studying in

the field. They include (1) compromising, (2) avoiding, (3) smoothing/accommodating,

(4) confronting, and (5) forcing (Smith, Harrington, and Neck 2000, 609). Smith and her

colleagues have illustrated that various kinds of humor can map directly into each

positive CMS (Smith, Harrington, and Neck 2000, 611).

Many have noted that humor has the potential to offend and produce negative

results (Capps 2006, 409). If humor is perceived by the conflict partner as insincere or

inappropriate, it is categorized as manipulative behavior and has been shown to escalate

conflict rather than resolve it (Bippus 2003, 422). The power of humor lies in its

ambiguity – its ability to access simultaneously both seriousness and non-seriousness,

likened to being able to see both sides of a spinning coin (Mikesell 1998, 22). If that

delicate balance between seriousness and non-seriousness is not maintained, the results

will be damaging rather than helpful.

The psychosocial aspects of humor identified above intersect greatly with

pastoral leadership effectiveness. For example, in the context of preaching and

counseling, humor can be used to provide temporary relief when a difficult life situation

is directly confronted in the material being taught. A humorous interlude can be inserted

in the course of the teaching in order to help the learner gain distance and perspective.

Once the humor has recast the subject matter in a different light, the learner can then

better negotiate the demands of the teaching in a healthy, balanced way. Positive change

is encouraged in a context of grace and truth.

Humor and Pastoral Leadership

It has been noted that when humor is introduced into a situation, "it provides a juncture in the flow that changes, irrevocably, the relationships involved – for good or ill" (Mikesell 1998, 32). At the center of this quote is the word "relationships" which is a key ingredient in leadership. Using the definition of leadership as the "influencing process which results from follower *perceptions* of a leader's behavior, and the *attributions* of the leader's disposition, behaviors, and performance" (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 675), one can see that leadership depends to a great degree on how well the leader performs during leader-follower interactions *from the followers' perspective.* In a general way, the research on sense of humor appears to relate to leadership at the level of perception and attribution – humor can be used to enhance one's image.

A significant corpus of research exists which links humor to leadership *in general.* To this researcher's knowledge, there are no studies conducted to date that link humor with pastoral leadership specifically, with the exception of research on humor used as a method of effective communication for preaching. Only three dissertations of humor used in preaching could be found (Heflin 1974; Damron 2003; and Rushing 2006). These studies corroborate what most people accept as a matter of common sense: that humor used effectively in public speaking is a valuable method for holding attention and making a point. Secular research has arrived at similar conclusions:

> Humor is common in many forms of communication and relevant to the study of organizations. Humor in communication creates an open atmosphere by awakening positive emotions that enhance listening, understanding, and acceptance of messages. . . . For example, politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton were known for their selective application of moderate self-defeating humor to make themselves seem like common citizens. . . . Additionally, sharing humor is inconsistent with being offended and, consequently, it facilitates honest and freer communication. (Romero and Cruthirds 2006, 61)

As such, none of these particular studies address the psychosocial benefits of humor, the issue of ministry tenure, or pastoral LFD. Therefore, a brief overview of the *general* literature of humor and leadership follows below, and it will become evident that many of those findings pertain most definitely to pastoral leadership.

Studies Linking Humor and Leadership

Humor has been linked in the research with improving morale, enhancing group cohesiveness, increasing creativity, increasing motivation, and producing higher levels of productivity (Avolio, Howell, and Sosik 1999, 219-20; Shamir 1995, 38). Humor has been shown to increase the *perception* of good leadership by followers (Priest and Swain 2002, 178-82). Multiple studies have linked sense of humor with improved working relationships (Decker and Rotondo 2001, 457; Priest and Swain 2002, 174-82). One study, however, showed no significant difference in *group* productivity when testing for sense of humor (Romero and Pearson 2004, 53). Humor has been linked with rationality and mental flexibility (Morreall 1991, 364-65) which are positive attributes in the work environment. Humor enables a leader to keep checks and balances in place if used positively (Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap 1990, 267). Used negatively, humor can be a tool to exercise domination, for example, when a person refuses to laugh at another person's humor, which communicates an attitude of superiority (Graham 1995, 162), or is interpreted as a sign of conflict (Morreall 1983, 115; Morreall 1991, 370). Even leaders who use aggressive humor exert power over followers, albeit coercive power (Romero and Cruthirds 2006, 60).

Empirical studies have shown that the use of humor is significantly and positively related to individual and unit performance, specifically for those who employ a

transformational leadership style (Avolio, Howell, and Sosik 1999, 223). Duncan

concludes that humor in the workplace alleviates employee stress, relieves

monotony/boredom, diffuses organizational conflict, and has a pervasively positive effect

on organizational cultures (Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap 1990, 274-75).

> Humor creates positive feelings among group members by reducing external threats
> and thereby bonding group members. . . . When group members deride an external
> threat (e.g., competition), they are placing themselves above the threat and, in doing
> so, perceive a feeling of triumph over it. . . . Senior members who feel responsible
> to maintain group integrity can use mild aggressive humor (e.g., good-natured
> teasing, ridicule, mocking) with new members to shape their behavior so that they
> conform to group norms and prove themselves worthy of group membership. . . .
> Affiliative humor highlights the group as an identifiable entity and conveys trust to
> other members due to its positive emotional effect . . . . In addition, self-effacing
> humor at the group level can be employed to enhance the group members'
> perception of the group and create an emotional connection to it. (Romero and
> Cruthirds 2006, 60-61)

These findings are not surprising: common sense tells us that humor is useful

in leadership "as we know a rock is hard and water is wet. We do not need reams of

research . . ." (Wlodkowski 1999, 4). Capps has noted that humor is intuitively

understood to be beneficial, and that we tend to distrust any research that runs counter to

our intuition or experience (Capps 2006, 409). Intuitively, one would expect humor to

function in pastoral leadership as it does in secular leadership. This intuition, however,

may not be borne out in the research because, though pastoral leadership involves the

same leadership dynamics examined in the above studies, some of these issues are raised

to even higher levels of importance in church settings. This escalation is because in the

realm of spiritual leadership, the decisions and actions of the leader have *eternal*

ramifications. The souls of people lie in the balance, thus the pastoral leader is subjected

to a level of scrutiny (and indeed, self-scrutiny) that places such leadership in a unique

position. Many of these leadership dynamics, then, become critical, and the pastoral

leader must exercise great wisdom before applying a particular leadership concept or

method in church settings.

Leadership Trait Studies

The following parallel has been drawn between the imprecision of humor

research and the imprecision of leadership research:

> Attempts to understand leadership have led to multiple frameworks, each providing
> some insight into complex phenomenon. In this regard, leader traits/skills and leader
> behavior have been two avenues explored in detail as having the potential to
> positively impact group and organizational performance. Humor, like leadership, is
> something that includes aspects of a trait or characteristic . . . and of a socially
> determined exchange. (Decker and Rotondo 2001, 452)

Sense of humor as a trait or characteristic is emerging via research as a

significant leadership trait. In the early twentieth century, leadership traits became the

basis for the so-called "great man" theories, focusing on the common qualities of the

great leaders of the times. Numerous studies during this era identified intelligence, self-

confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability as important leadership traits

(Northouse 2007, 18). Kouzes and Posner emphatically refute the trait-theories of

leadership:

> The 'great person' – woman or man – theory of leadership is just plain wrong . . . .
> In talking to leaders and reading their cases there was a very clear message that
> wove itself throughout every situation and every action: *leadership is a relationship*.
> (Kouzes and Posner 1987, 20)

In the strictest sense, leadership trait theories rest on the premise that leaders

differ from followers in the areas of fundamental traits. Sense of humor, in contrast, is

not a trait that differs between leaders and followers. In fact, humor will not be effective

unless *both* leaders and followers possess an aptitude for and appreciation of it.

Nonetheless, sense of humor as an interpersonal skill can distinguish a leader, as attested

to by Shoshona Zuboff of the Harvard Business School:

> There was a long period of managerial domination of the corporate hierarchy when
> the manipulative, jungle-fighter boss was rewarded. But that rigid hierarchy started
> breaking down in the 1980s . . . . The jungle fighter symbolizes where the
> corporation has been; the virtuoso in interpersonal skills is the corporate future.
> (Goleman 1995, 149).

Humor Research Instruments

Rod A. Martin has been a leading researcher in the field of humor, publishing

consistently for over 25 years. In 2002-03, Martin led a team to develop a new research

instrument to quantify humor as it serves in everyday life (Martin et al. 2003, 72) as

opposed to the content analysis approach used by some previous methods, for example,

the Overall Sense of Humor Index developed by Craik, Lampert, and Nelson. The result

of Martin's work was the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), a 32 question instrument

that has undergone numerous validity studies in the intervening years and has become

somewhat of a standard in studies on humor. A primary goal of the team was to

recognize the distinction between "humor that is relatively benign and benevolent . . . and

. . . humor that is potentially detrimental or injurious, either to the self or to one's

relationships with others" (Martin et al. 2003, 52).

This distinction led the team to test for four categories of humor: two adaptive

and two maladaptive. *Aggressive* humor enhances the self at the expense of others; *self-

enhancing* humor enhances the self in ways that are tolerant and non-detrimental to

others. *Self-defeating* humor seeks to enhance one's relationships with others at the

expense of and to the detriment of self; *affiliative* humor enhances one's relationships

with others in ways that are benign and self-accepting (Martin et al. 2003, 52). Though

there can be some blurring of the lines between categories, the operative distinction rests in whether the humor is ultimately healthy or unhealthy. The HSQ instrument relies on 8 questions per humor style to rate the test subject.

Since its initial introduction in 2003, the HSQ has undergone numerous psychometric studies to prove fitness and validity. There have been several studies which validate the instrument among non-American audiences (Kazarian and Martin 2004) and adolescents (Erickson and Feldstein 2007), but at least one reported (but unpublished) study claims that the HSQ produced unreliable data among athletes (Sullivan and Dithurbide as reported in Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, July 2007 Supplement, 207). One study correlated Emotional Management ability, a measurement of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence (1995) construct, with the self-enhancing humor style (Yip and Martin 2006, 1205). Longitudinal studies of the instrument are still forthcoming (Reff 2006, 28). An attempt was made by Reff to redesign the instrument so that it would account for stress-moderation (which may be the reason why the athletes did not validate the questionnaire), the result of which was an instrument with 33 questions, but combining the two positive styles (self-enhancing and affiliative) into a single category (Reff 2006, 40-41).

For this study, the standard HSQ instrument was used to test for the four categories of humor styles in the test subjects. Hypotheses 1 and 2 of this study focus only on the two positive humor styles since intuitively they hold the greatest potential for effective use in pastoral leadership. The first of those two styles, Affiliative humor, is used for the purpose of facilitating relationships and reducing interpersonal tensions (Martin et al. 2003, 53). This style of humor results in enhanced interpersonal and

psychosocial well-being among the participants. The second, Self-enhancing humor, is used for the purpose of maintaining a healthy perspective of life in the face of stress or adversity (Martin et al. 2003, 53-54). This style of humor results in an enhanced image of the initiator relative to others (Romero and Cruthirds 2006, 59) by means of his or her ability to lead by rising above problems.

Ministry Tenure

With leadership comes problems. Not all leaders can negotiate those challenges successfully over the long term. This reality seems especially prevalent in the realm of pastoral leadership. Though several studies and books have highlighted the drop out, burn out, and moral failure realities for pastors in vocational ministry (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 15-16), only a few have addressed underlying causes. Those that go beyond merely reporting the sad state of affairs, however, address the issue from three primary perspectives: physical causes (Swenson 1992), spiritual causes (Piper 2002; Lane 2005), and psychological considerations (Wilson and Hoffmann 2007). Though each of these works espouses a dominant perspective, each also recognizes the contributions of all three. MacDonald (1986 and 1994) intentionally integrates all perspectives in his reflective writings.

Swenson assesses the stresses of a "marginless" life with great precision and bluntness from his experience as a physician. The consequences of living a driven lifestyle are predictable and debilitating. His prescription is simple, though drastic: create margin in our lives by settling for less, not more (Swenson 1992, 92). This simplification entails working less, earning less, accumulating less, resting more, worshiping more, and saying "no" more. His advice is backed by his personal experiences of drastic

simplification. Taken as a whole, his thesis is theologically sound, but pragmatically difficult to achieve.

Lane's study, one of the few supported by methodical research, found that the top 10 reasons for pastors leaving the ministry were (from most significant to least): discouragement, frustration, exhaustion, situational pressures, poor leadership by others, depression, financial considerations, family situations, uncontrollable circumstances, and mistakes in leadership (Lane 2005, 96-97). Lane also identified six significant factors leading to longevity in ministry: one must determine that one is called of God to the ministry, seek a deep intimacy with God Himself, maintain one's relationships with spouses and families, be tenacious in one's personal commitment to longevity (ministry tenure), truly love people, and maintain one's personal sense of hope and humor (Lane 2005, 98-103).

The therapeutic perspective is represented by Wilson and Hoffmann (2007) in a workbook of seven preventative, activity-supplemented sessions covering: intimacy, calling, stress management, boundaries, re-creation, people skills, and leadership skills. This work flows out of their organizations, ShepherdCare and CareGivers Forum – both counseling venues for vocational ministers. In this perspective, it is possible to extend ministry tenure through a program of self-help practices and an accountable support system of professional counselors and other ministry practitioners.

As will be discussed in the following section on Leader-Follower Distance, ministry tenure involves both the pastoral leader and the church follower sides of the equation. Still, resolution of these interior concerns of the pastor's physical, spiritual, and therapeutic needs is an important aspect of avoiding burnout and personal failure.

Ministry tenure is a measure of the longevity a pastor experiences in vocational ministry. There are two components to ministry tenure: local-church and career tenure. *Career tenure in pastoral ministry* is the cumulative length of time the pastoral leader has served in vocational pastoral ministry, minus any leave-of-absence or other intervening non-ministry activity. Career tenure includes all vocational pastoral ministry roles – not just years spent as the senior (or lead) pastor. *Local-church tenure in pastoral ministry* is the average amount of time the pastoral leader serves in a particular church. Pastors may employ a variety of external methods to achieve ministry tenure. For example, some pastors (and denominations) intentionally limit local-church tenure at a given church in order to maximize career ministry tenure. Stated differently, pastors stay long enough at each church to enjoy the honeymoon period and preach through their stock of already-crafted sermons. They move on to another local church before problems caused by the weaknesses in their leadership can accrue and reach a crisis (Wilson and Hoffmann 2007, 88). By avoiding crises or over-extension in this way, career tenure is made possible. While such a strategy can have some benefits, the pastor does not develop leadership skills that can only be forged in crisis. This strategy may also have a correspondingly detrimental effect on the churches being served. Consequently, the current study sought to capture data that distinguishes between career and local-church ministry tenure.

Leader-Follower Distance

Leader-Follower Distance (LFD) is an external indicator of the power that is functioning in a leader-follower relationship. LFD is defined as:

> . . . the configual effect (i.e., the coexistence of a cluster of independent factors . . .) of leader-follower *physical* distance, perceived *social* distance, and perceived *interaction frequency.* (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 674; emphasis added)

Social distance in the leadership domain is later defined as:

> . . . differences in status, rank, authority, social standing, and power, which affect the degree of intimacy and social contact that develop between followers and their leader. (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 682)

Therefore, in general, the greater the LFD, the greater the power differential that is exercised between the leader and the followers. LFD has a limited, though growing body of research, much of which is connected with charismatic leadership. The term "charismatic" is often related to pastoral ministry, both as a designation of theology and as a descriptor of a powerful leadership style. In the realm of pastoral leadership where relationship lies at the center of the role, exercising a power differential is a matter to be taken with great seriousness. The following section explores the biblical passages that relate to the model of closeness and quality of relationships between spiritual leaders and followers.

Theological Perspectives on Spiritual Leadership

Leader-Follower Distance is a primary variable in this research; therefore, a brief review of the biblical passages that speak to the relational aspects of pastoral leadership is necessary. The most significant question to answer from the text in this regard is this: *does God intend pastoral leaders to relate proximally* rather than *distally to followers?* If a precise answer to this question is not possible, is there at least a preponderance of biblical evidence that points toward one style or another?

Pastor Andy Stanley from North Point Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, is a prominent voice in the current conversation about pastoral leadership. In an interview in *Leadership* journal, he suggested that Jesus used the shepherd metaphor for pastoral leadership simply because shepherding was a convenient cultural image on which He

could draw and with which His listeners could relate. Stanley is convinced that there is no inherent value in the shepherd metaphor of pastoral leadership beyond that pragmatic fact. He goes on to suggest that if Jesus were teaching on leadership in our current culture, He would draw from the realm of contemporary business, which is the reason Stanley holds so strongly to the CEO-metaphor for leadership (Stanley 2006, 27-28). This author disagrees with Stanley's assessment. Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:2, 11-12, 14, 16; and was referred to as such: Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25) and used the shepherd metaphor often – including allusions to Old Testament usages of the same metaphor – because of deep, timeless principles inherent in the shepherd metaphor that *must* characterize pastoral leadership. A CEO pastor would not necessarily be concerned about relationships, but a shepherd pastor must be.

It was the world of business leadership studies that first introduced the terminology of "leadership at a distance" (Bogardus 1927) which has evolved into the concept referred to as Leader-Follower Distance in this study. The landscape for leaders has changed dramatically in the last century because technology has made it possible for a leader to remain virtually close to followers (telephone, email, etc.) while being physically separated from them (commuting when necessary by automobile or airplane). Television and now internet have birthed the "celebrity" pastor, as opposed to the "co-laborer" pastor (Phil 1:5). Virtual church membership is available via television or through "online church" where church is packaged into a totally distal-leadership format – no real face-to-face relationships necessary.

The biblical ability to lead effectively, however, seems to be related to the *intentional management of distance* between leader and follower. Paul said in 1 Cor

11:1, "Be imitators of me, just as I also imitate Christ." Inherent in this statement is the need for pastoral leaders to be ahead of followers (a matter of distance) and the need for identification between pastor and followers as fellow-imitators (a matter of affiliation).

Three Greek terms are used in the New Testament in reference to pastoral leadership: ποιμήν (shepherd), πρεσβύτερος (elder), and ἐπίσκοπος (overseer). It can be demonstrated that these terms are used interchangeably of the same office of pastoral leadership with each term emphasizing a different, though primary, function of that office (Mappes 1997, 164; Sanders 1980, 59-60). These interchangeable terms, therefore, will be briefly reviewed in light of the relational aspects which accrue to pastoral leadership.

Pastor as Shepherd

The most relational term used is shepherd, describing the pastoral role in terms of feeding the flock, or church. Jesus charges Peter with this task in His post-resurrection interview (John 21:15-22) in which He closely relates love and shepherding. The implication is that Jesus exercises His love for all the sheep *through* the pastor. Therefore, pastoral leaders should use John 10 – Jesus' teaching on Himself as the Good Shepherd – as an exemplar for their own calling. Accordingly, pastors must give focus to calling the sheep by name (v. 3), leading them out for appropriate pasture and exercise (v. 3), establishing a relationship of trust (vv. 3-5), and guarding against enemies (vv. 9-13) (Bredfeldt 2006, 53-54).

The Old Testament used the shepherd metaphor extensively, with notable warnings to the "shepherds" of Israel in Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34. These passages make specific connections between the shepherd metaphor and spiritual leadership. All

of the aspects of shepherd-type pastoral leadership *require* an emphasis on *proximal* relationships between the leader and the followers.

Pastor as Elder

This term carries much historical freight in Jewish tradition and when used in the New Testament of pastoral leadership it stresses the leader's godly wisdom and maturity (Sanders 1980, 51). In Jewish synagogues and communities, elders performed corporate roles – leading services and ceremonies, teaching, and ruling (Mappes 1997, 90-92). Though this term is more relationally distant than shepherd, there is still a significant component of communal relationship inherent. Trust, respect, and social standing are all consequences of well-maintained communal relationships and are integral to the pastoral function of the elder.

Pastor as Overseer

This final term refers to the function of pastoral leaders to provide administrative and spiritual oversight of the people entrusted to them (Brefeldt 2006, 60; Mappes 1997, 164). That the very word itself is a compound form of the word "watching" suggests that pastoral oversight must be done in the context of proximal leadership. It is possible to make administrative decisions and spiritual pronouncements from an ivory tower based only on ideals and theories; however, such oversight is anemic without the benefit of closely watching the followers so that the leader's words might be "fitly spoken" (Prov 25:11).

In summation, it appears that there is more theological and biblical basis for pastoral leadership to be exercised in the context of proximal rather than distal relationships. This author's father noted well the delicate balance the pastor must achieve

in the intentional management of leadership distance: "A pastor must be out in front of his people in order to lead them into spiritual battle; otherwise, people will suspect his perspective is, at best, merely as good as their own. If the pastor gets out in front of his people too far, the smoke of the battle may cause them to mistake him for the enemy!"

Humor and Leader Closeness

Because pastoral leadership is primarily exercised in proximal relationships, wise pastors seek to manage and enhance the relational dynamics of ministry. Humor has been shown in the secular literature to decrease social distance, promote cohesion in leader-follower relationships, and reinforce similar values between the leader and followers (Mikesell 1998, 28) – all issues of relevance to LFD in the context of pastoral leadership. Yagil has also demonstrated that humor is directly related to leader distance (or more accurately, to leader-closeness), which is, in turn, correlated to leader effectiveness (Yagil 1998, 172).

Follower Expectation

Implicit in the dynamic of LFD is the role which expectations play in the relationship: both the expectations followers have of their leaders, and vice versa. The metaphor of coaching can illustrate this well (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 693). A junior varsity football coach exercises a completely different form of leadership than does a college coach. A professional football coach is *expected* to lead at a different level still; indeed, if a professional coach treated his players like they were in junior varsity, the situation would not be tolerated for long.

In one of the oldest studies reviewed for this research, Burke showed the importance of matching leaders and followers at the level of expectations. Affinity

between task and leadership is vital (what is viewed as good supervision in one task is viewed as micromanagement in another), as is compatibility at the level of basic needs (Burke 1965, 68-70). Leader effectiveness is contingent on matching the LFD to followers' expectations in a particular leadership context (Roberts and Bradley 1988, 270-71).

For example, David McClelland (1975) published some seminal research in which he identified subconscious motivators for behavior. His research indicated that people are driven by a need for (1) power, defined as influence and impact over people and social systems; (2) achievement, defined as surpassing the standard measures for performance and success; and (3) affiliation, defined as the desire to be friendly and emphasize social relationships (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 695). Leaders who have a need for achievement tend to exercise close supervision of followers, whereas followers who have a need for achievement (and are thus self-motivated) do not respond well to micromanagement (Burke 1965, 63-65). Similarly, leaders with a need for power will maximize LFD whereas leaders with a need for affiliation will attempt to eliminate LFD (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 695). McClelland has noted an exception to this trend for leaders who exhibit a high power motivation, a high level of inhibition, *and* a high Stage IV score (a rating of one's sense of duty toward the welfare of others). Such a leader has a high need for power, but is a selfless leader and thus would tend to minimize LFD (McClelland 1975, 264). A high Stage IV score would be akin to the findings of Collins which he identified as Level 5 Leaders (Collins 2005, 11).

If the tables are turned and the situation is viewed from the followers' expectations, one can see that followers who are motivated by a need for power want to

be led by a leader who espouses the same value. Likewise, a constituency of high-affiliation followers will expect their leader to focus on them as people. High achievers will be under-impressed with leaders who value relationships over tasks. The high expectations of followers may contribute to the "pedestal effect" whereby followers want their leader to represent an ideal, and therefore add distance to the dynamic.

Power relates negatively to affiliation; high achievers tend to be micromanagers in their leadership and be high in frequency of interactions. These dynamics are at work in many local churches and may explain the reason why some pastors will be effective and others will not. If the relationship between pastoral leaders and their churches is so dependent on follower expectations, this study will not obtain an adequate picture of LFD by assessing the LFD configuration of the leader only. Instrumentation to obtain this kind of 360° assessment is not currently available and may not even be possible, given the complexity of follower expectations in typical leadership situations.

Though Hughes's study failed to prove correlations between sense of humor, relational transparency, and follower creative performance, *post-hoc* supplemental analyses did suggest partial support of the hypotheses (Hughes 2005, 99-100). Graham's research did demonstrate a direct correlation between high sense of humor and a reduction of uncertainty and consequently an increase in attributional confidence (Graham 1995, 165). This research demonstrated that humor and LFD are likely correlated, as did the current study.

Types of LFD Leaders

Antonakis and Atwater expanded on work done by Napier and Ferris (1993) using the configual concept of LFD (distilled by them as the relational dynamic comprised of physical distance between leader and follower, perceived social distance, and perceived interaction frequency) to categorize distinct leadership styles (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 681-90). By using high and low designations for each of the three components, eight possible combinations exist, as summarized in the following eight leadership types.

Proximal leaders. Proximal leaders (low, low, high) are characterized by physical proximity (being with followers), low social distance, and a high level of interpersonal interaction with followers. Alexander the Great was an historical example of this type of leader. He chose to live with his soldiers, fight with them, socialize with them and know them by name. The fact that he was the leader was never in question, but his reputation and leadership style were enhanced by his intentional actions as it related to these three components of LFD.

Hands-off leaders. Hands-off leaders (low, low, low) are located physically close to followers and are perceived by followers to be social peers. But hands-off leaders choose to isolate themselves significantly from followers by minimizing personal interaction. Pastors who fit this type would be called "ivory tower" pastors who exit their study, walk directly to the pulpit, preach pontifically, and then escape to their study directly after the sermon and stay there as much as possible throughout the week.

Virtually close leaders. Virtually close leaders (high, low, high) may be physically separated from followers, but intentionally maintain social contact and direct interaction with followers. This leader is called an "e-leader" because of the use of technology to maintain closeness. Ulysses S. Grant was reportedly this type of leader despite living in a pre-technology era. Grant hated the sight of blood and battle, so his physical presence at the front was a rare occurrence. He overcame this barrier, however, by maintaining very close contact with his soldiers via letters, telegrams, and courier dispatches. He maintained social contact with his troops by modifying his own lifestyle at headquarters to utter simplicity (eating similar food as was being provided in the field, etc.) and by modifying his dress to a common uniform with only the minimal decorations required to indicate his rank.

Socially distant leaders. Socially distant leaders (low, high, high) exhibit a curious blend of characteristics. Though physically close to followers and consistently high in interaction frequency, these leaders remain aloof from followers. The Duke of Wellington is reported to have been such a leader. Though he camped with his soldiers and moved continuously through the troops, he remained socially distant by not using names, by remaining stiff and in the saddle, and by his general air of superiority. Pastors with this LFD type may believe it is unhealthy for them to have close friends among the church family for fear that jealousies would arise. Rather than risk even the appearance of giving preferential treatment, these pastors choose to be socially distant.

Virtually distant leaders. Virtually distant leaders (high, high, high) are rare and can operate in very limited scenarios. Such leaders maintain high physical and social distance from followers, but communicate regularly with them (usually in group

settings). The communication may be personalized, displaying a good grasp of the

follower's situation, and may be highly effective in eliciting follower loyalty and effort.

This kind of leader must be adept at managing image and creating perceptions and

attributions. Such leaders are termed *charismatic* in the literature. In the church setting,

such pastors may lead large churches and capitalize on a celebrity status.

Avuncular leaders. Avuncular leaders (high, low, low) work hard at being

known as one of the common folks despite being physically distant from followers and

rarely interacting with them. An example of this leadership category is Franklin D.

Roosevelt who ran his campaign by identifying with the common citizen and then

worked hard to maintain that persona throughout his presidency. In reality, he was far

removed from the common man in most every respect, but he used opportunities in which

he communicated with the nation to perpetuate his image of being socially close to them.

Manor house leaders. Manor house leaders (low, high, low) are physically

proximal to followers, avoid social contact despite proximity, and have very little

personal interaction. Pastors who exercise this category of leadership perhaps interact

minimally with a small circle of colleagues (or staff members) who subsequently interact

with the followers. Such leaders may be introverted but surround themselves with more

extroverted staff.

Distal leaders. Distal leaders (high, high, low) are the most distant, though not

necessarily ineffective. Effective distal leadership is perhaps possible only because of the

conditions described by Kets de Vries above in which the followers want to idolize the

leader. An example of this kind of leader was Adolf Hitler. This leadership style was

cited in a case study where the followers referred to their leader as "the Yeti, living at

great heights and occasionally sighted in cold places" (Kets de Vries 1993, 80).

Table 1. Styles of leadership defined by LFD configuration

Type of Leader	Physical Distance	Perceived Social Distance	Perceived Interaction Frequency	Comments
Proximal	Low	Low	High	highly relational (e.g., Alexander the Great)
Hands-off	Low	Low	Low	isolated (e.g., "ivory tower" pastors)
Virtually Close	High	Low	High	e-leader (e.g., Ulysses Grant)
Socially Distant	Low	High	High	air of superiority (e.g., Duke of Wellington)
Virtually Distant	High	High	High	charismatic (e.g., "teleleader")
Avuncular	High	Low	Low	typical CEO (e.g., Franklin D. Roosevelt)
Manor House	Low	High	Low	interact with staff only (e.g., Prince Charles)
Distal	High	High	Low	"the Yeti" (e.g., Adolf Hitler)

Antonakis and Atwater have grouped these eight configurations into three

broad classes. Class 1 comprises proximal, hands-off, and virtually close leaders.

Because these leaders operate with social closeness, leader outcomes are visible at the

individual level of analysis. Class 2 comprises socially and virtually distant leaders who

make impressions almost exclusively at the group level. Class 3 comprises avuncular,

manor house, and distal leaders whose personal interactions with followers are low.

These leaders function through interaction with subordinate leaders or at a group level, or

both (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 691). Class 1 could be classified as "close" LFD

configurations, whereas Class 3 would be "distant" LFD configurations.

It bears noting that those styles which rely on perception-building are fragile in proximity. As Bogardus noted early on, "To the extent that leadership rests on sheer prestige, it is easily punctured by intimacy" (Bogardus 1927, 177). This condition ought not to be the case with pastoral leaders, who ought to model spiritual character qualities effectively, as suggested by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1 (as cited above). In fact, the effect of true godliness should be enhanced by intimacy between leader and follower. Yagil notes that proximity allows the leader to tailor communications at a personal level which builds confidence among the followers, allows for the reinforcement of model behaviors, and establishes the leader in more human terms, thereby reducing social distance (Yagil 1988, 172). Shamir noted that even among charismatic leaders who are typically located at a distance from followers, social closeness affords reputation-building opportunities (Shamir 1995, 36). Physical distance negatively impacts follower performance, conscientiousness, and civic virtue (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Bommer 1996, 394-95).

The research cited above demonstrates that distal LFD is not as effective as conventional wisdom might indicate. The studies also demonstrate a potentially significant correlation between humor and balanced LFD. As was shown in the examples cited under each of the eight LDF configurations, leaders who exercise any of the configurations can be successful, given the right circumstances. Apart from the potential imbalance inherent in distal LFD configurations (creating a susceptibility to moral failure for pastors who succumb to temptation in their isolated settings), this author has hypothesized that the current research would demonstrate that the intentional use of

self-enhancing and/or affiliative humor by a pastor is an effective means by which LFD is

balanced *and* pastoral leadership is enhanced.

Span of Control

One consideration under the heading of LFD is of special note – span of

control. In relation to pastoral leadership, span of control (which is a concept reflecting

the size of the follower group in proportion to the leader) becomes an issue as a church

grows larger. At some point during the growth, it becomes impossible for the pastor to

know each congregant by name and the level of relational closeness must necessarily be

diminished (Meier and Bohte 2000, 116). Thus, as span of control gets larger, LFD also

increases.

Profile of the Current Study

From a theological perspective, the current study was predicated on two

scriptural interpretations: (1) that humor is an acceptable, if not necessary, companion to

biblical faith and (2) that the characteristics of leadership distance between the pastor and

congregants must be intentionally managed. Just as the biblical text contains many

passages that can be better understood if the element of humor is assumed, so too, the

biblical models of spiritual leadership point primarily toward a proximal rather than distal

exercise of leadership in the context of sustained personal relationships between pastor

and congregants.

Research on humor in general has been broad and has produced findings that

intersect with interpersonal skills, leadership practices, management of stress, and

emotional health. Given the unique relational dynamics of pastoral leadership, the

effective use of humor may be more beneficial for the specific domain of pastoral

leadership than for business-oriented leadership. To date, no humor research has been

conducted to study the relationships between sense of humor and pastoral leadership

specifically; therefore, this research might be the beginning of a fruitful vein of study and

application. The complexity and diversity of topic, coupled with the fact that:

> ...all human societies expend a great deal of time and energy engaging in humor
> and laughter, while the purpose of this activity is not immediately obvious, makes
> this a puzzle worthy of careful and systematic study. (Martin 2007, 27)

The research hypotheses suggested that there would be a significant

relationship between humor styles, LFD, and ministry tenure. Ministry tenure might be

an indication of leadership effectiveness – certainly it is intuitively thought to be so.

Correlations were indeed found to exist: the follow-up interviews revealed some of the

foundational dynamics involved.

A review of the literature has identified two promising areas of study that were

touched upon in the follow-up interviews and analysis of the results: the ability for humor

to *manage stress* in ministry and the ability for humor to negotiate the intricate dance

between *leader and follower expectations*.

Managing stress. Religious people tend to hold deep convictions concerning

the eternal importance of lifestyle behaviors and faith practices. This reality creates

unique leadership dynamics within local church organizations, placing potentially

excessive amounts of stress on the pastor. Prayer is one biblically prescribed remedy for

anxiety (Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7) as is shaking the dust off one's feet (Matt 10:14, in reference

to processing and moving on from failure/rejection). Laughter is another biblical

remedy: "a joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones" (Prov

17:22).

Strategies to *prevent* stress in ministry are also quite welcome. Because of the nature of faith and conviction, believers embroiled in conflict often confuse resolving disputes with compromising the truths of Scripture. The pastor is drawn into many of these situations and often discovers convictions that are erroneously held or out of proportion to the problem. Yet convictions are notoriously intractable, and even though Scripture might be shared that gives new light to the problem, conflict partners are so entrenched in their thinking that it is difficult for them to become teachable to a different perspective. As shown in many of the studies cited above, humor can serve as a catalyst for new thinking and cognitive flexibility. Humor can also be used to enhance social relationships, another key component to the resolution of conflict. The threshold for the amount of humor that is acceptable also varies from person to person and church to church; therefore, the pastor's use of humor must always be sensitive to these realities. Even still, it seems that humor may be indispensible as a means to remain balanced and reasonably unstressed in the everyday exercise of pastoral leadership.

Managing leader-follower expectations. Though many factors contribute to the dynamics of follower expectations of leaders and vice versa, humor may prove to be one of the factors more under the control of the leader than others. If true, the effective use of humor can create an atmosphere and a platform for better communication of expectations in both directions, resulting in longer ministry tenure. Managing expectations can potentially deteriorate into manipulation of people, a reality that has been duly noted above. Though pastoral leadership is not immune from manipulation, certain humor styles may prove to be better suited for church contexts and consequently less susceptible to manipulation.

This researcher sincerely hopes that this study will provide useful insights and applications for pastoral leaders and for the church at large.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

A review of the precedent literature has shown that research on the relationship

between humor and leadership has generated important findings, though no studies have

been undertaken to test the relationship between sense of humor and *pastoral* leadership.

Furthermore, pastoral leadership involves some unique dynamics for which humor may

offer increased benefits. The literature on LFD has also produced insightful results, none

of which have been studied in the realm of pastoral leadership. Similarly, LFD holds the

promise of providing helpful insights for churches and pastors. Finally, the review of the

literature has shown that no studies have explored the relationships between sense of

humor, LFD leadership styles, and ministry tenure. It is hoped that the findings

uncovered in this study provide descriptive and perhaps even predictive results for the

field of pastoral leadership.

The methodological design for this study was established through a review of

the various humor assessment instruments, finally focusing on measuring the

psychosocial functions of humor as reflected in the Humor Styles Questionnaire, an

assessment instrument that has undergone extensive validation and psychometric studies.

This instrument was coupled with demographic data, ministry tenure statistics, and a self-

assessment on the three components of LFD. On the basis of these data, ANOVA and

correlation coefficient testing analyzed relationships between the primary research

variables with respect to the research hypotheses. In addition, this research captured

statistical information relating the dominant humor styles and dominant LFD leadership

styles in use by SBC pastors.

Research Question Synopsis

The following five research questions were utilized in this study:

1. What are the predominant humor styles exhibited by SBC pastors in their leadership?

2. What are the predominant configurations of Leader-Follower Distance exhibited by SBC pastors in their leadership?

3. What, if any, relationship exists between a pastor's dominant humor style and Leader-Follower Distance configuration?

4. What, if any, relationship exists between a pastor's dominant humor style and local-church and career tenure in ministry?

5. What, if any, relationship exists between a pastor's configuration of Leader-Follower Distance and local-church and career ministry tenure?

Research Hypothesis Synopsis

The following three research hypotheses were explored in this study:

1. Pastors with a dominant humor style of affiliative or self-enhancing humor will be more likely to experience greater local-church and career tenure in ministry due to the coping and relationship-building dynamics of those styles.

2. Pastors with a dominant humor style of affiliative or self-enhancing humor will exhibit "close" configurations of Leader-Follower Distance.

3. Pastors with "close" configurations of Leader-Follower Distance will be more likely to experience greater local-church and career tenure in vocational ministry.

Research Design Overview

A mixed methods research approach was used in order to understand how

sense of humor functions in the context of pastoral leadership. In the quantitative Phase

1, the researcher sent an email to SBC lead pastors chosen randomly asking them to

participate in the survey. This brief email message contained an introduction to the

researcher, an overview of the research being conducted, an estimate of the time required

to complete the survey, and a link to the website where the pastor could complete the

research instrument. Once the pastor clicked through to the survey website link, the

browser opened up to the research instrument, and the pastor could complete the survey.

When a statistically significant number of responses had been completed, the

researcher sorted the data for those pastors willing to participate in the follow-up

interview procedure of Phase 2 (qualitative), from which a manageable number (13) were

scheduled to participate in telephone interviews. Phase 2 also consisted of having a

subordinate staff member take the same Phase 1 survey instrument to assess the lead

pastor. These results were compared with the lead pastor's self-assessments. The

researcher then conducted the open-ended interview with the lead pastor sharing pertinent

highlights from Phase 1 of the study. Five discussion questions guided the pastors in

sharing insights on how humor and LFD are related to ministry effectiveness and tenure.

The questions are included in Appendix 4. The researcher solicited particular examples

of how humor is used effectively or ineffectively in ministry settings. The researcher

also solicited the pastors' views on relational closeness and ministry effectiveness.

Population

The population of Phase 1 of the study consisted of the approximately 44,000

SBC lead pastors in North America (2006 ACP statistics retrieved from lifeway.com on

12 May 2008). Because the research was conducted online, the researcher eliminated all

churches which did not list a church website address from which an email address could

be obtained. The population of Phase 2 of the study consisted of those pastors who

completed Phase 1, indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview, and provided valid contact information.

Sample

A random sample of 2,500 was drawn from the database of the 2007 ACP after eliminating those churches which did not list a website. The researcher visited each website address listed and attempted to extract a valid email address. In many instances, the website addresses provided were invalid, in which case the researcher attempted a Google search of the church or a search using the SBC.NET church locator feature. Of the 2,500 churches, 154 were eliminated because the website address provided was invalid and internet searching did not generate an alternative website address. An email was sent to the remaining 2,346 churches, inviting the senior pastor to take the survey. Approximately 410 of those emails were returned as undeliverable. At least 381 completed surveys were needed for a statistically representative sample at a 95% confidence level (±5%). Though a total of 530 surveys were completed, the confidence level is still 95% ±5%.

The Phase 2 sample was drawn from the pool of 283 pastors who completed the Phase 1 instrument and indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. To pare the number of Phase 2 interviews down to a manageable level, only churches with at least one other pastor on staff (to verify some of the pastor's responses) and whose health was assessed to be trending up were included. Of the 190 pastors remaining, the responses were sorted by humor scores, LFD configurations, church size, and years in pastoral ministry. Thirty-seven pastors who roughly represented the entire sample were thus solicited and contacted by email with further instructions. These

contacts produced thirteen pastors who were successfully scheduled to participate in Phase 2.

Delimitations of the Sample

The pastors surveyed in this research were delimited in several ways. First, only Southern Baptist pastors were contacted for inclusion in the study. There are several reasons for this delimitation, including that the researcher and the institution through which the research was conducted are Southern Baptist and therefore have a vested interest in collecting data on that specific population. By making statistical information on its churches accessible to researchers, the Southern Baptist Convention has created an environment in which research such as this study is encouraged and enabled.

A second delimitation of this study was a technological constraint imposed by the logistics of conducting on-line research. Consequently, only pastors who had access to email and the internet could participate in the research. While this condition limited the generalization of the results, conducting an online survey had offsetting advantages. The Phase 1 instrument used in this research eliminated all invalid data from being entered. This applied to errors that normally are introduced when the test subjects incorrectly complete paper surveys and to errors that are introduced when researchers transfer data from paper surveys into a spreadsheet or database for statistical analysis.

The qualitative phase of this study was subject to delimitations as well. Since the researcher was not able to conduct follow-up interviews with all survey respondents, the final question on the instrument asked for volunteers for a follow-up interview. This methodology effectively limited the qualitative data only to those pastors who were confident enough in their ministry style to permit such probing. Phase 2 was further

delimited to those pastors who have subordinate staff (so that the Phase 1 results could be compared with subordinates' assessments). This criterion precluded most small churches from the qualitative analysis.

Limitations of Generalization

The delimitations described above necessarily affect the generalization of this research's findings. The immediate results only reflect the pastoral leadership of the SBC; however, since there is a breadth of methodology (and even theology) within SBC churches, it is likely that the results of this study will be helpful to pastoral leaders in other denominations.

Instrumentation

The Phase 1 research instrument consisted of four sections of multiple choice questions (see Appendix 1). The possibility of invalid data was eliminated, except for the final question which required that the pastor type in the contact information for a follow-up interview. The survey's *demographic* section determined the size of the church in terms of worship attendance and pastoral staff, and the trend of the church's health. The survey's *ministry tenure* section asked 5 questions concerning the specifics of career and local-church ministry tenure of the pastor. The *LFD* section used 3 very specific questions in which the pastor rated himself in the areas of physical distance, perceived social distance, and perceived interaction frequency with the church body. The *Humor Styles Questionnaire* section presented the 32-item standardized instrument designed by Martin et al. (2003). The final question asked if the pastor was willing to participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher, and if so, captured the contact information. Otherwise, the survey was anonymous. Data from each completed survey was made

available by the survey software (surveymonkey.com) in spreadsheet form for statistical analysis.

Pastors selected to participate in the qualitative follow-up interview procedure of Phase 2 were contacted first by email and then by phone for the interview. The interview sought to validate the lead pastor's self-assessment data and further probe how the leader's LFD configuration and humor style(s) have related to tenure and practical pastoral ministry. All interviews were recorded with permission.

Procedural Overview

The researcher executed the following steps in the course of conducting this study:

1. Obtained final approval through the seminary to conduct the actual research.

2. Acquired permission and access to the SBC church database through Lifeway research (under the direction of dissertation advisors).

3. Acquired permission to use the Humor Styles Questionnaire instrument (see Appendix 2).

4. Crafted the introductory email that was used to recruit randomly selected pastors to participate in the survey.

5. Crafted the Phase 1 survey instrument in paper form.

6. Converted the Phase 1 survey instrument to an online, internet-based format using surveymonkey.com.

7. Crafted the Phase 2 interview protocol. Obtained recording equipment.

8. Randomly selected 2,500 churches from the SBC database and acquired email addresses for them.

9. Emailed the introductory letter to selected churches or pastors, requesting that the lead pastor participate in the survey.

10. Performed correlational coefficient and ANOVA analysis to test for relationships between the primary research variables. Performed other descriptive statistical analyses.

11. Sorted the completed forms so that all pastors who indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview were identified.

12. Eliminated from this list any pastors who had no subordinate staff and whose church health was *not* trending upward.

13. Chose from the remaining pastors on the basis of logistical parameters so as to form a representative subset of the sample. By email and telephone, scheduled the Phase 2 interviews.

14. Conducted the Phase 2 interviews, recording the sessions.

15. Compiled the results of Phase 2 and dovetailed the information into the Analysis of Findings and Conclusions.

16. Composed and sent a thank-you email to each of the Phase 2 participants along with a summary of the results.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The current study delineated the predominant humor styles and LFD leadership

configurations in use among Southern Baptist lead pastors, and correlated those data with

ministry tenure statistics. All data were gathered using an online survey instrument

designed to eliminate data errors. A personal, follow-up interview was conducted on a

limited number of survey responses, allowing the researcher to triangulate survey

responses with subordinate staff. Additional research implications and applications were

discovered during the follow-up interview process.

Compilation Protocol

The survey was offered to only lead pastors in the SBC. The 2007 Annual

Church Profile data was obtained through Lifeway research from which a random sample

of 2,500 American SBC churches was drawn. The researcher obtained email addresses

for these and sent an email recruiting the lead pastors to participate in the on-line survey.

A statistically significant number of surveys was completed within four weeks and the

data was compiled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using the statistical

modules of that program. The demographic data, including tenure statistics, was

analyzed for all the common descriptive measures: mean, median, variance, standard

deviation, etc. The LFD responses were sorted into the eight LFD leadership styles

described in chapter 2. The HSQ responses were analyzed using the standardized HSQ

protocol developed by Martin et al. into scores for each of the humor styles: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating.

The Phase 2 interview was conducted with thirteen lead pastors chosen on the basis of their willingness to participate in the follow-up interview and with a view to representing many church sizes, LFD types, and humor styles. Phase 2 included a subordinate pastoral staff member completing the same Phase 1 survey evaluating the lead pastor. An open-ended interview was conducted with the lead pastor during which the researcher probed for implications and applications of humor style and LFD leadership style with respect to effectiveness in pastoral ministry and tenure considerations.

Demographic and Sample Data

The first section of the survey instrument captured demographic data concerning church and staff size, church health trends, and tenure statistics. The research findings of this section are summarized in the tables below.

Table 2. Responses categorized by size of church

What is your church's average current weekend worship attendance?		
100 or less	23.2%	140
101 – 200	25.7%	155
201 – 500	32.1%	194
501 or more	19.0%	115
number of responses		604

Though only 530 pastors completed the entire survey, over 600 began the survey and completed the demographic section. As can be seen in Table 2, pastors of

churches with 100 or less in AM attendance comprise only 23.2% of the participants.

This statistic indicates that the survey may be somewhat skewed toward pastors of larger

churches.

Table 3. Responses categorized by trend of church health

Would you assess the current health of your church to be trending up or down?		
trending up	66.6%	402
trending down	5.6%	34
holding steady	27.8%	168
number of responses		604

The results in Table 3 reflect an optimism among senior pastors regarding the

health of their churches. SBC leaders have recently suggested that most SBC churches

are plateaued or in decline, so this finding should be evaluated. Because only churches

with an web presence (and correspondingly, only pastors who are web-connected) were

solicited to participate, it is possible that churches which are more technologically savvy

are better equipped to be healthy in today's culture. It may also be that the pastors

themselves were not objective concerning the rating of their church health. In Phase 2,

30% (4 of 13) of the subordinates downgraded the senior pastor's assessment of church

health from "trending up" to "holding steady." If the subordinate pastors are, indeed,

more objective in this regard, and if 30% of the entire sample should be downgraded,

then another 121 pastors should have responded "holding steady." This adjustment

would bring the majority (53%) within the plateaued or declining status – more in

alignment with what SBC leaders have purported.

Table 4. Responses categorized by size of staff

How many vocational (or bi-vocational) pastoral staff serve under you?		
I am the sole pastor	22.2%	134
Only 1	14.2%	86
Two or more	62.1%	375
I am not the lead pastor	1.5%	9
number of responses		604

Note that the nine pastors in Table 4 who were not lead pastors were prevented from proceeding with the survey.

The following two figures depict the tenure characteristics of the pastors participating in the study. Though technology skills tend to be more prevalent in younger people, this did not apparently affect the response rate of older pastors in the survey population. It would appear that the average chronological age of the pastors participating was approximately 45 years.

| low	1
high	54
average	20.7
median	20
total responses	562
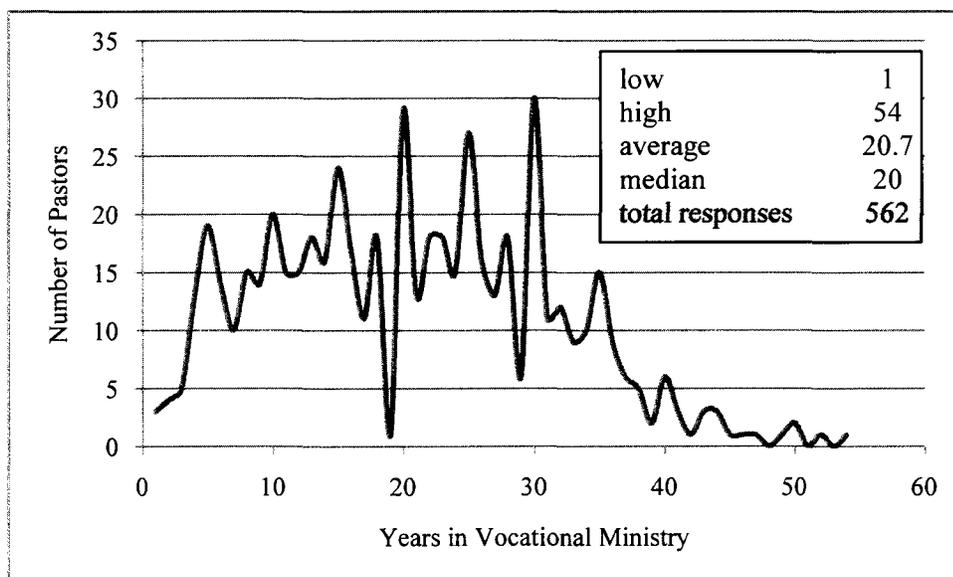
Figure 1. Distribution of career ministry tenure values
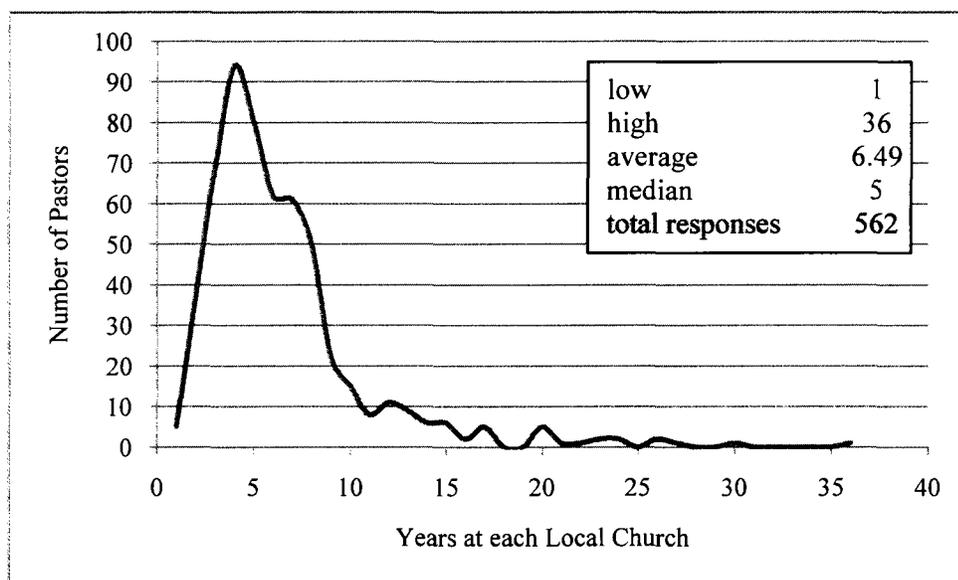
Figure 2. Distribution of local-church ministry tenure values

The average local church tenure of 6.49 years was also higher than anticipated.

This, combined with the average current church tenure of 8.2 years (see Table 5 below) is

an encouraging finding. The sample is skewed in distribution, however, and long tenures

(greater than 15 years) are quite rare.

Table 5. Demographic data descriptive statistics summary

	AM worship	Vocation tenure	Total churches	Local tenure	Current tenure
Mean	2.492832	20.6828	3.853047	6.485663	8.202509
Standard Error	0.044282	0.453116	0.089864	0.183604	0.279833
Median	3	20	4	5	6
Mode	3	30	3	4	1
Standard Deviation	1.046042	10.70352	2.12278	4.337094	6.61022
Sample Variance	1.094203	114.5653	4.506194	18.81039	43.695
Kurtosis	-1.18434	-0.52733	1.845449	8.947973	1.030413
Skewness	-0.06122	0.282435	1.019464	2.480814	1.161298
Range	3	53	13	35	35
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	4	54	14	36	36
Sum	1391	11541	2150	3619	4577
Count	558	558	558	558	558

Table 5 includes AM worship statistics, but this is confusing as this data in ordinal and falls in the ranges reported in Table 2 on page 76. A mean of 2.49 reflects that the average response to this question fell halfway between option 2 (101-200 people in worship) and option 3 (201-500 people in worship), roughly an average worship attendance of 300 people.

Humor Styles Data

The final section of the research instrument captured data concerning the Humor Styles of the lead pastors using the HSQ instrument developed by Martin et al. There were an additional 28 pastors who dropped out of the survey at this point, reducing the total number of completed surveys to 530. The HSQ instrument is designed such that the lowest possible score in any category is 8 and the highest possible score is 56. As can be seen in the summary in Table 6 on page 88, the pastors participating in the survey scored highest in the positive HSQ styles (affiliative and self-enhancing). Maximum scores (of 56) for these styles were represented in the survey results. Likewise, minimum scores (8) were represented in the survey results of the two negative HSQ styles (aggressive and self-defeating). The research findings for this section are summarized in the figures and table below.
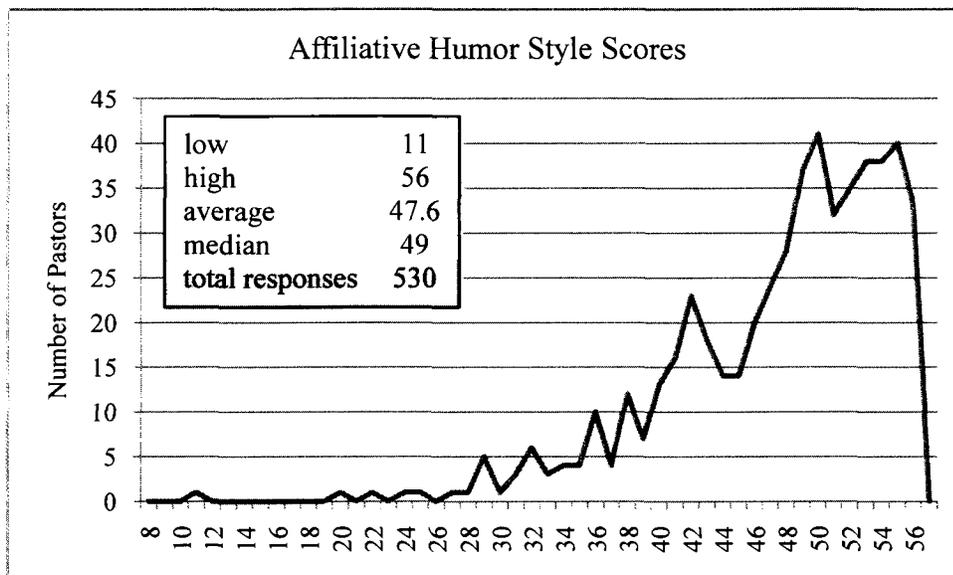
Figure 3. Distribution of affiliative HSQ scores
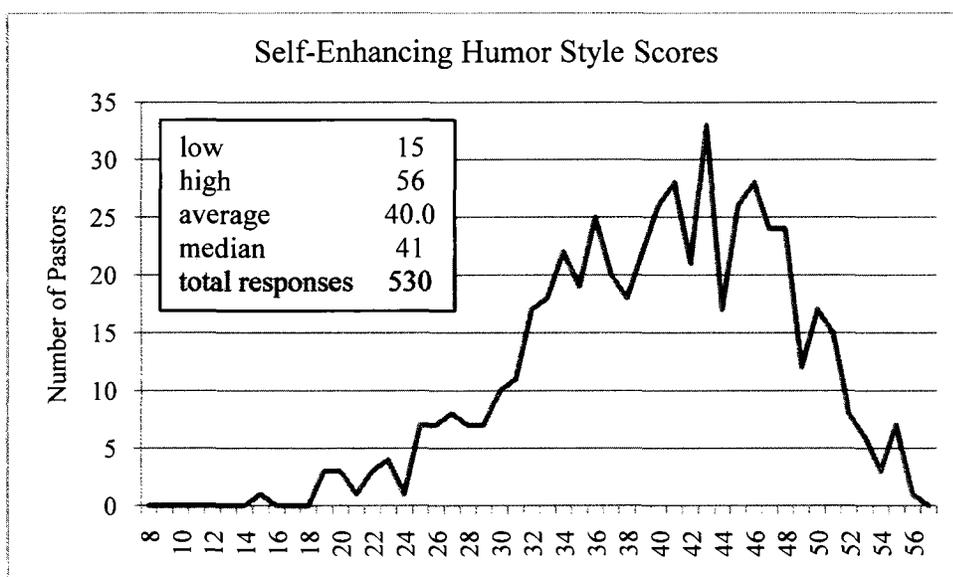
Figure 4. Distribution of self-enhancing HSQ scores

Aggressive Humor Style Scores

low	8
high	46
average	21.7
median	21
total responses	**530**
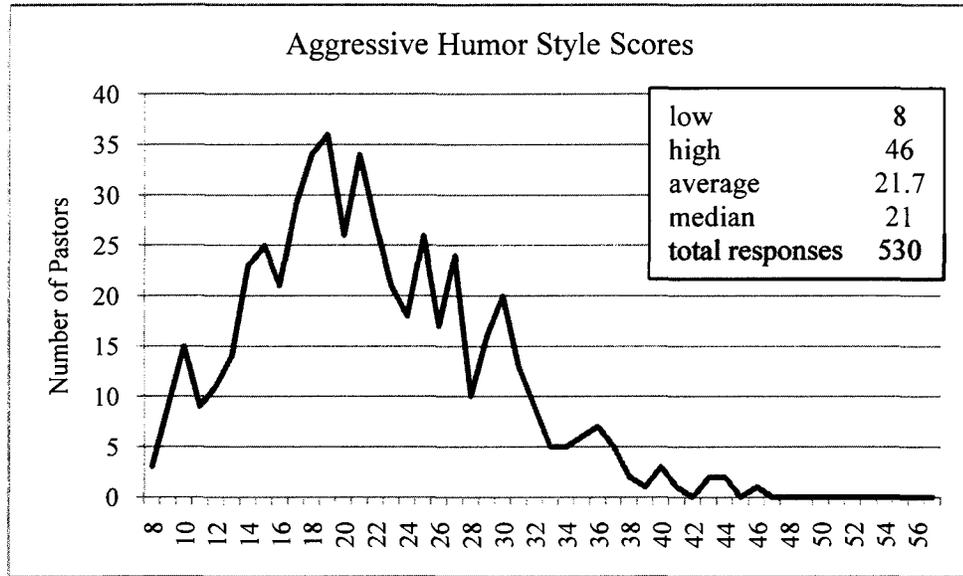
Figure 5. Distribution of aggressive HSQ scores

Self-Defeating Humor Style Scores

low	8
high	54
average	28.1
median	28
total responses	**530**
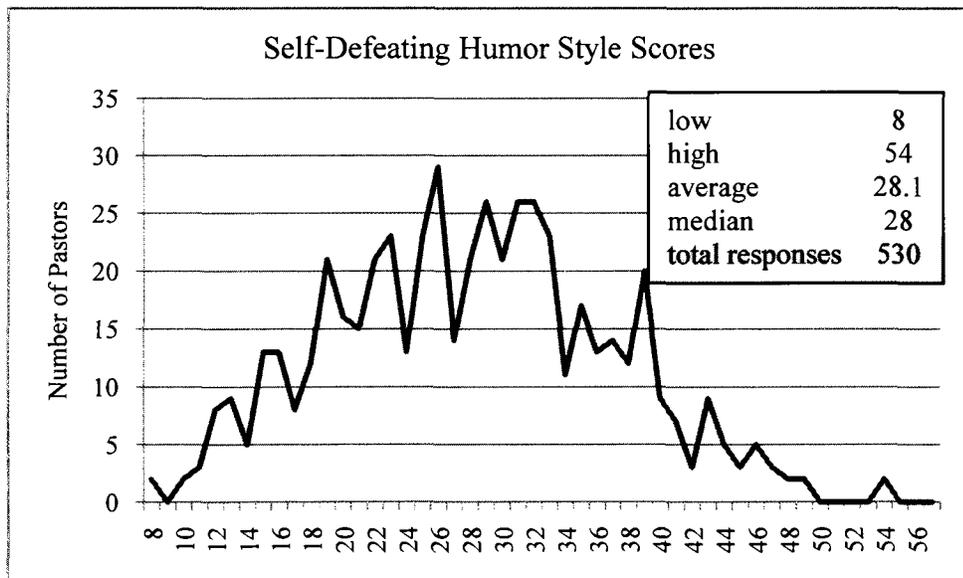
Figure 6. Distribution of self-defeating HSQ scores

Table 6. HSQ scores descriptive statistics summary

	Affiliative	Self-enhancing	Aggressive	Self-defeating
Mean	47.56981	39.99245	21.6717	28.11132
Standard Error	0.303479	0.337691	0.31427	0.378
Median	49	41	21	28
Mode	50	43	19	26
Standard Deviation	6.986608	7.774221	7.235033	8.702218
Sample Variance	48.8127	60.43851	52.3457	75.72861
Kurtosis	1.962687	-0.25048	0.052133	-0.41562
Skewness	-1.24011	-0.39688	0.527394	0.141715
Range	45	41	38	46
Minimum	11	15	8	8
Maximum	56	56	46	54
Sum	25212	21196	11486	14899
Count	530	530	530	530

Findings Related to Research Question 1

Research question 1 pertains to the predominant humor styles exhibited by

SBC pastors. As reflected in Table 6 above, the positive styles (affilliative and self-

enhancing) had much higher scores than the negative styles (aggressive and self-

defeating). This finding makes logical sense since the psychosocial aspects of these

positive styles enhance personal relationships and communication effectiveness.

Findings Related to Research Question 2

Research question 2 pertains to the predominant configurations of LFD. As

reflected in Table 7, the configurations with low physical distance accounted for 96.6%

of the 558 lead pastors who completed the survey through the LFD section. This physical

proximity is to be expected in pastoral leadership situations because the local churches

call the pastor to serve "on the field." There are some rare situations where the pastor is

not physically close due to bivocational issues or perhaps a vigorous travelling schedule.

Also as expected, because the respondents scored themselves in terms of LFD, 73.3%

perceived themselves to interact personally at a high level with their followers

(combining *virtually close*, *social distant*, and *proximal* results). Not surprisingly, the

proximal LFD type which corresponds most closely with the pastor-as-shepherd

metaphor was the dominant LFD type, accounting for 63.6% of the pastors.

Table 7. Responses categorized by LFD configuration

Type of Leader	Physical/ Social/ Frequency	Comments (example)	Frequency	%
Virtually Distant	High/High/High	charismatic ("teleleader")	0	0%
Distal	High/High/Low	"the Yeti" (Adolf Hitler)	3	0.5%
Avuncular	High/Low/Low	typical CEO (Franklin D. Roosevelt)	5	0.9%
Virtually Close	High/Low/High	e-leader (Ulysses Grant)	11	2.0%
Manor House	Low/High/Low	interact with staff only (Prince Charles)	28	5.0%
Socially Distant	Low/High/High	air of superiority (Duke of Wellington)	43	7.8%
Hands-off	Low/Low/Low	isolated ("ivory tower" pastors)	113	20.3%
Proximal	Low/Low/High	highly relational (Alexander the Great)	355	63.6%

Findings Related to Research Question 3

Research question 3 pertains to the relationship between a pastor's

predominant humor style and his predominant LFD style. The null hypothesis is that no

relationship exists. ANOVA tests were run on the data for each of the four HSQ styles.

Only the *self-enhancing* HSQ style revealed significance with LFD type. The results of

that analysis are presented in Table 8 (the results of the non-significant ANOVA results

are presented in Appendix 5). Because the *virtually distant* LFD configuration was not

represented in the survey results, it was eliminated from the analysis. These findings also

pertain to research hypothesis 2.

Table 8. Analysis of variance: LFD and HSQ self-enhancing style

Anova: Single Factor: LFD type vs. Self-enhancing HSQ (at p=.05)						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
Avuncular	4	169	42.25	80.25		
Distal	3	117	39	52		
Hands off	109	4213	38.65138	55.96993		
Manor house	24	880	36.66667	42.05797		
Proximal	338	13826	40.90533	58.73285		
Socially distant	41	1577	38.46341	79.05488		
Virtually close	11	414	37.63636	73.65455		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	923.4232	6	153.9039	2.592447	0.017456	2.115902
Within Groups	31048.55	523	59.36625			
Total	31971.97	529				

Findings Related to Research Question 4

Research question 4 pertains to the relationship between a pastor's

predominant humor style and career and local-church ministry tenure. The null

hypothesis is that no relationship exists. A correlational coefficients statistic was used to

test for significance of relationship. The coefficients and the critical values are presented

in Table 9, with the statistically significant relationships shaded. Specifically, the

affiliative HSQ style correlated with worship average and pastoral staff *but not* with any

of the tenure statistics. The *self-enhancing* HSQ style did correlate with career tenure but

not local church tenure.

Table 9. Correlational analysis: HSQ self-enhancing style

	worship average	pastoral staff	health trend	career tenure	local tenure	current tenure
Affiliative	**0.09719**	**0.15333**	-0.05545	-0.00311	-0.03155	-0.02816
Self-Enhancing	0.08073	**0.10986**	-0.07149	**0.09232**	-0.00248	0.01635
Aggressive	0.00564	0.04915	0.05933	-0.07702	-0.05254	-0.01819
Self-Defeating	0.03546	0.05727	0.00400	-0.03406	-0.07067	-0.02089

Minimum r significant at p=0.05 is 0.0852
Minimum r significant at p=0.001 is 0.1426

These findings also pertain to research hypothesis 1 as will be explored in chapter 5.

Findings Related to Research Question 5

Research question 5 pertains to the relationship between a pastor's predominant LFD style and local-church and career ministry tenure. The null hypothesis is that no relationship exists. ANOVA tests were run on the data for career tenure, local church tenure, and even tenure at the current church. The analysis showed that a significant relationship between LFD type and ministry tenure occurred only at the career level, and that relationship was significant at the .001 level. The results of that analysis are presented in Table 10. These findings also relate to research hypothesis 3 which will be discussed in chapter 5.

Table 10. Analysis of variance: LFD and career tenure

Anova: Single Factor: LFD type vs. Career Tenure (at p=.05)

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Avuncular	5	44	8.8	58.7
Distal	3	51	17	172
Hands off	113	1897	16.78761062	137.6866308
Manor house	28	556	19.85714286	88.79365079
Proximal	355	7948	22.38873239	103.3399857
Socially distant	43	863	20.06976744	101.923588
Virtually close	11	182	16.54545455	83.47272727

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	3717.85	6	619.6418	5.681381	9.62E-06	2.115019
Within Groups	60095.0	551	109.0653			
Total	63812.9	557				

ANOVA (at p=.001)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	3717.85	6	619.6418	5.681381	9.62E-06	3.8062479
Within Groups	60095.0	551	109.0653			
Total	63812.9	557				

Evaluation of the Research Design

The current study developed in some surprising ways. First, the response to the survey was greater than anticipated. The 2,500 emails were sent out in 5 waves over a period of 3 weeks. The researcher was logged into the *surveymonkey* website when the solicitations were sent out and was able to watch the rate of immediate responses for each wave. It became evident that Tuesday mornings were the most effective in terms of a fast response, which is likely related to a higher overall response rate. This observation is

consistent with the researcher's own work routines: Tuesday mornings are a relatively low stress period of a pastor's work week.

One of the goals during the research design phase was to streamline the survey so that it could be completed quickly and easily. The actual survey instrument was a 44 question online survey that took about 10 minutes to complete in most cases. This fact was related prominently in the solicitation email. One pastor still found this hard to believe and responded by email saying that he would not be participating because all the other surveys he had taken consumed several hours of his time! The fact that approximately 27.4% of the pastors contacted completed the survey after only one solicitation may be partially attributable to the ease and brevity of the survey.

While many aspects of the research design contributed to a successful outcome to the survey, there was one aspect of the original design that proved to create unforeseen problems. The researcher had assumed that valid email addresses would be accessible through the SBC database of churches. When Lifeway provided the database of churches, however, the research division did not provide the email addresses because the churches had not given explicit permission to make that particular information public. Lifeway opted instead to provide website addresses only, deducing that website addresses by definition are public. The researcher was then left to harvest email addresses from the websites, a process which proved to be extremely time-consuming, delaying the overall research. Curiously, the researcher gained some insights in the process of visiting thousands of church websites, some of which will be shared in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Of the pastors who completed the survey, 53.5% indicated a willingness to

participate in the follow up interviews despite the fact that Phase 2 would require an

additional hour of their personal time, the involvement of a subordinate pastoral staff

person, and the voluntary relinquishing the confidentiality and anonymity of their survey

results. The pastors who participated in the research apparently resonated strongly with

the subject matter – sense of humor and LFD. The pastors who participated in the Phase

2 interviews conformed this strong resonance, as related below.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between the

pastor's predominant sense of humor style, the pastor's predominant configuration of

Leader-Follower Distance, and the pastor's local-church and career tenure in vocational

pastoral ministry. Sense of humor was not studied in this paper from the perspective of

its ability to make other people laugh, *per se,* but from the perspective of its ability to

equip the leader to cope effectively with the stressful realities of pastoral ministry, its

ability to gain a balanced perspective on reality, and its capacity to create and manage

effective leader-follower relationships. Leader-follower relationships and tenure

demographics were analyzed so that possible correlations with sense of humor style could

be explored. The ramifications of these relationships were explored in greater depth during Phase 2 of the study.

Research Implications

The initial research hypotheses proved to be largely correct. SBC pastors exhibited predominantly positive humor styles and predominantly close leadership styles. Statistically significant relationships between these variables and ministry tenure do exist. The research suggested many implications for pastoral leaders seeking to develop effective strategies using sense of humor and leader-follower dynamics. These implications will be presented below according to the relationships between the variables.

LFD and Church Size

The survey results indicated that seven of the eight LFD types were present among the pastors surveyed; the *virtually distant* LFD was the only configuration not represented. An ANOVA tested the church's AM Worship size with respect to the LFD type of the pastoral leader. The null hypothesis would be that no relationship exists. The worship size data were ordinal rather than strictly continuous: answers varied from 1 to 4 as the size increased (1 = 100 or less in AM Worship, 2 = 101-200, 3 = 201-500, and 4=501 or more). Based on the results of the ANOVA, the null hypothesis is rejected at both $p=.05$ and $p=.001$. The results are presented in Table 11 below.

The ANOVA revealed that a significant relationship exists between the pastor's LFD type and the size of the church. Specifically, the *proximal, socially distant*, and *distal* pastors lead the larger churches. These 3 LFD types do not share a single LFD component in common (physical distance, social distance, or interaction frequency). In

addition, the distal LFD type represented only 0.05% of the total responses, whereas the

proximal type represented 63.6% of the responses.

Table 11. Analysis of variance: LFD and AM worship

Anova: Single Factor: LFD type vs. AM Worship (at p=.05)				
SUMMARY				
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
avuncular	5	7	1.4	0.8
distal	3	8	2.666666667	2.333333333
hands off	113	243	2.150442478	1.128950695
manor house	28	58	2.071428571	0.80952381
proximal	355	944	2.65915493	1.021914538
socially distant	43	109	2.534883721	1.064230343
virtually close	11	22	2	1
ANOVA				
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	36.849618	6	6.1416030	5.9097013	5.4144E-06	2.1150194
Within Groups	572.62171	551	1.0392409			
Total	609.47133	557				

ANOVA (at p=.001)						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	36.849618	6	6.1416030	5.9097013	5.4144E-06	3.8062479
Within Groups	572.62171	551	1.0392409			
Total	609.47133	557				

The *distal* LFD pastor is one who operates on a normal day at a significant

physical distance from the congregation, one who has a high degree of social distance

from the congregation, and one who interacts with individuals in the congregation only

rarely. Pastors who regularly travel to outside speaking engagements, who have large

pastoral staffs, and who therefore have somewhat of a celebrity status might be able to

successfully lead using this style. The literature cites Adolph Hitler as an example of this type – not a particularly complimentary example when applied to pastoral ministry. To some extent, the church size might shape the LFD type of the pastor, at least in larger churches.

The typical shepherd-pastor would be characterized by the *proximal* LFD type. Indeed, the large percentage of pastors who lead using this LFD type indicates that the shepherd paradigm is the predominant one in use in SBC churches of all sizes. The literature cites Alexander the Great as the personification of this type, suggesting that shepherds can be strong leaders and possess a celebrity status. The *proximal* type accounted for the second highest church size scores, only slightly behind the *distal* type. The *socially distant* LFD type, also known as the "air of superiority" type in the literature, shares two of the LFD components with the *proximal* type: low physical distance and high interaction frequency. Unlike the shepherd-pastor, the *socially distant* pastor chooses to keep social relationships private. Such a leader may subscribe to the philosophy that friendships within the church family are dangerous for the pastor. Many pastors do, indeed, operate with this philosophy, and do so with effectiveness and success. This effectiveness was reflected in the fact that socially distant pastors led larger churches, on average, than the remaining four LFD types.

On the other end of the spectrum, the *avuncular* (the typical CEO type) and *virtually close* ("e-leader" type) pastors are similar LFD styles, having high physical distance but low (or seemingly low) social distance. Again, only a small percentage of pastors make up these groups (n=5 and n=11, respectively). Not surprisingly, these two types comprised the lowest averages for church size.

The final two LFD types, *manor house* and *hands-off*, share both low physical distance and low personal interaction frequency. This combination of being physically close but having little interaction may also be shaped by small church size. This possibility will be discussed in the Phase 2 findings below.

LFD and Career Tenure

As in the previous analysis, the null hypothesis (that no relationship exists between a pastor's LFD type and the pastor's career tenure) is *rejected* at both the .05 and .001 levels of significance. Once again, the *avuncular* and *virtually close* pastors account for the lowest career tenure statistics and *proximal* pastors account for the highest statistics. The results presented in Table 10 on page 87 reveal the large gap between the career tenure averages from one end of the LFD spectrum to the other (*avuncular* leaders had a career tenure of 8.8 years whereas *proximal* leaders had a career tenure average of 22.4).

Research hypothesis 3 proposed that pastors with "close" LFD types would have greater ministry tenure values (in both career and local church tenures). Antonakis and Atwater classified the *proximal*, *hands-off*, and *virtually close* types as "close" configurations because the effectiveness of these leaders is judged by individual followers based on social operations (Antonakis and Atwater 2002, 691). This classification might be true in secular leadership settings, but the follower expectations are different in pastoral leadership settings. Congregations are much more understanding of a pastor who remains socially distant (choosing to socialize outside of the congregation) than they are of pastors who avoid personal interaction with the congregation. With this distinction in mind, the "close" LFD types for pastors would

include *proximal, socially distant,* and *virtually close* – each of the configurations with high personal interaction frequencies. With the exception of the *virtually close* group, that hypothesis seems to hold true with respect to career tenure.

Another way to interpret these findings is that the pastors with greater career tenure have gravitated toward a *proximal* LFD type. Stated differently, on-the-job experiences shape pastoral leaders into shepherds and weed out the CEO-type leaders. From a purely logical standpoint, the pastors with the greatest career tenure are also the oldest pastors, leading to the possible interpretation that generational differences account for the various LFD types. Older generations have been raised in a shepherd-pastor paradigm, whereas younger pastoral leaders may find it more natural to adopt other LFD types. Unfortunately, the survey did not capture the pastors' chronological ages in the demographic section, so testing this hypothesis is not possible using these data. Perhaps future research might explore this question.

LFD and Local Church Tenure

Once again, the null hypothesis was that no relationship exists between a pastor's LFD type and the pastor's local church tenure. In this case, however, the ANOVA generated a critical F value that was not exceeded, so the null hypothesis is accepted. The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Analysis of variance: LFD and local church tenure

Anova: Single Factor: LFD type vs. Local Church Tenure (at p=.05)						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
avuncular	5	27	5.4	7.3		
distal	3	17	5.666666667	16.33333333		
hands off	113	669	5.920353982	19.91324273		
manor house	28	154	5.5	7.296296296		
proximal	355	2404	6.771830986	19.92801782		
socially distant	43	275	6.395348837	17.3875969		
virtually close	11	73	6.636363636	10.25454545		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	100.89262	6	16.815436	0.892913	0.4996557	2.1150194
Within Groups	10376.4927	551	18.832110			
Total	10477.385	557				

Even though the null hypothesis is accepted, looking at the average values for the *proximal*, *socially distant*, and *virtually close* configurations, one notes that those types show higher local church tenure averages. If a greater number of pastors had responded so that each LFD type was also represented by more responses, perhaps a significant relationship might have been found. Future research with a larger sample size might be useful in this regard. As discussed in chapter 2, McClelland's research suggests that different expectations between leaders and followers tend to prematurely break down leader-follower relationships. In church settings, the gap between follower motivations and leader motivations might account for the aberrations in local church tenure. In the aggregate data of career tenure, such local mismatches are smoothed over (see Table 13 below). In the micro view, local church tenure may have no bearing on the pastor's

fitness for pastoral leadership but rather on the local church's fitness for followership: some churches may routinely mistreat their pastors.

Table 13. Tenure averages by LFD type

LFD type	AM worship	Career tenure	Local tenure	Current tenure	N
avuncular	1.4	**8.8**	5.4	6.8	5
distal	2.67	**17**	5.67	7	3
hands-off	2.15	**16.79**	5.92	7.02	113
manor house	2.07	**19.86**	5.5	6.12	28
virtually close	2	**16.55**	6.64	8.84	11
socially distant	2.53	**20.07**	6.4	7.37	43
proximal	2.66	**22.4**	6.77	9.27	355
population	2.49	**20.68**	6.49	8.20	558

In a similar vein of reasoning, it might be impossible for any church to exhibit a consistent set of expectations of the pastor, given the wide spectrum of individuals in the congregation. Therefore, no matter what LFD type the pastor employs, all are equally limited with respect to ability to extend tenure in any one place. This observation may be a reflection on the shortening of our culture's attention span. If longitudinal studies were available, perhaps it might be proved that local church tenure is diminishing over time in general. If such a hypothesis were proven true, it would argue for pastors and churches to change leadership more often in order to improve effectiveness. One final observation before moving on: the average local church tenure in the sample is 6.49 years, and the average current church tenure in the sample is 8.20 years. This finding seems to suggest that pastors learn lessons from previous church experiences which result in greater tenure in subsequent churches. The increase in tenure may be true simply because those past

experiences enable pastors to make wiser choices concerning which churches they agree

to lead – they know better which churches match their own expectations, leader styles,

and ministry philosophies, leading to increased tenure (and perhaps effectiveness).

LFD and HSQ Styles

Once again, the null hypothesis was that no relationship exists between a

pastor's LFD type and the pastor's HSQ scores. Each of the four HSQ styles was tested

using ANOVA, and only the self-enhancing HSQ style proved to have a significant

relationship to LFD type. Of the four ANOVA tests run, the self-defeating style

generated the lowest F score, suggesting that the self-defeating style may be the least

likely to be related with LFD type. A comparison of all four HSQ style scores sorted by

LFD type is presented in Table 14.

Table 14. HSQ style scores by LFD type

LFD type	HSQ affiliative	HSQ self-enhancing	HSQ aggressive	HSQ self-defeating	N
avuncular	49	42.25	20.75	30	5
distal	43.33	39	24	31	3
hands-off	46.12	38.65	23.1	28.75	109
manor house	46.21	36.67	21	26.63	24
virtually close	47.45	37.64	25.36	29.18	11
socially distant	47.32	38.46	19.85	27.39	41
proximal	48.19	40.91	21.35	28.01	338
population	47.57	40	21.67	28.11	530

Noting these results (with the statistically significant data in the shaded

column), it is not surprising that the *avuncular* LFD type (the typical CEO type) is

highest in *self-enhancing* humor. This LFD type must use humor to create an image

because social and personal interactions – which are the normal context for creating image – are so rare in the *avuncular* type. *Self-enhancing* humor, especially exhibited in the public, up-front opportunities, helps manage and maintain the leadership capital necessary for continued effective *avuncular* leadership. But the *proximal* type also exhibited higher *self-enhancing* humor scores, which may seem counter-intuitive, being an opposite LFD type in most respects. This dynamic may be explained in part by the fact that the *proximal* leader thrives on personal interaction with followers. As relational closeness increases, the leader's image would be punctured if it was not based in reality. But *proximal* leaders would not be *proximal* if they were not able to be transparent. Transparency can be one of the key components to successful self-enhancing humor, which seems to be the case for these pastors.

The *manor house* LFD type exhibits the lowest scores in the self-enhancing style. This type of leader interacts with staff only, and since staff members are on the payroll and have defined job descriptions, the leader does not have to utilize relational techniques or image enhancement techniques in order to lead them effectively. Staff members follow the *manor house* leader more out of duty than out of desire.

Though not all of the averages presented in Table 14 are significant, it is interesting to note that the *proximal* LFD type tends to have the higher scores in the healthy HSQ styles and the lower scores in the unhealthy HSQ styles. This data would suggest that shepherd-pastors have very balanced leadership behaviors.

HSQ and Demographic Data

Because the demographic data and the HSQ data were continuous rather than categorical, the test statistic used was the correlation coefficient. Table 9 on page 86

presents the sample *r* values for each HSQ style and each demographic category. The critical values for the correlation coefficient statistic for p = .05 and .001 are also included.

Not surprisingly, *self-enhancing* humor is significantly related to career tenure, and *affiliative* humor is significantly related to church size and pastoral staff size (as was *self-enhancing* humor). This finding confirmed other secular leadership research (Decker and Rotondo 2001, 457; Priest and Swain 2002, 174-82). What was surprising was that no other relationships existed. The negative HSQ styles exhibited negative correlation coefficients, which, though not significant, is what would be expected. *Afilliative* HSQ, which is a positive humor style, should logically have exhibited positive correlation coefficients with respect to tenure. The negative coefficients, though not at significant levels, seem out of place with the *affiliative* style. Pastoral leadership, however, is a leadership environment where affiliation can be both positive and negative. The pastor needs to lead by example, especially in spiritual matters. If *affiliative* humor is overused as a means for the pastor to relate to the congregation, it might be interpreted as the pastor attempting to "lower the bar" for his own personal standards and result in a loss of credibility (Romero and Cruthirds 2006, 63). As mentioned in chapter 2, biblical pastoral leaders must meet standards and must be able to say with Paul, "Be followers of me."

The *affiliative* HSQ style correlated with church size and staff size, indicating that this style of humor is well-suited for leadership of larger churches with multiple pastors. Likewise, the *self-enhancing* HSQ style correlated positively with size of staff. Though a few of the pastors who participated in Phase 2 referred to the value of humor in the context of staff meetings and staff relations, most pastors did not refer to this specific

benefit of humor. Further research could specifically explore pastoral staff relations with respect to humor style.

Phase 2 Quantitative Observations

In Phase 1 of the research over 600 pastors clicked through to the online survey. Only 530 completed all 43 mandatory questions, but of that total, 283 pastors (53.4%) volunteered to participate in a follow-up phone interview, even though doing so required that they input personal contact information which negated the anonymity of the survey results. Since the target number of follow-up interviews was in the sub-20 range, the researcher had to conduct more significant filtering. The next criteria used to sift the data was to eliminate churches with single pastors (in order to triangulate the pastor's survey results by having a subordinate staff person fill out survey). The remainder was then sorted by church health, selecting only those pastors who reported that their church health is trending up. This criterion was proposed in the prospectus and was thus adopted, though upon reflection may not have been a wise decision. Some churches may be in decline because of economic issues rather than a result of leadership. In reality, the assessment of church health trend was subjective: 30% of the subordinate staff members who participated in Phase 2 of the research disagreed with the lead pastor's assessment of an upward trend in church health (see Table 15 on page 104). Regardless, the list was thus reduced to 131 names.

These 131 names were then copied into a separate database for further analysis. The HSQ scores were then marked for the highest and lowest range of scores in each of the 4 styles. Then the LFD results were analyzed and sorted (note: of the 8 LFD

types, only the *Virtually Distant* configuration was not represented). Finally, the data was analyzed according to church size and ministry tenure.

The final listing consisted of 37 pastors chosen such that each LFD type was represented (in approximately the same ratio of preponderance as in the overall survey), so that each church size for the various LFD types was represented, so that pastors with various level of ministry tenure would be represented, and finally so that the pastors selected reported humor style scores in the outlying ranges (either high or low). The thinking behind this final criterion was that humor style scores that fell outside the center of the distribution would tend to produce better insights from the interviewees regarding the benefits or detriments of sense of humor.

It was assumed that of the 37 pastors thus identified, some would decline the follow-up interview process for various reasons, including feeling threatened by their subordinate staff completing the survey. Of this group, 18 pastors did not respond to email or phone contacts. Three more pastors declined participation (one after scheduling the interview but before releasing a subordinate to complete the survey). Thirteen of the remaining pastors were successfully scheduled to participate in the phone interview process. Some of these pastors were pursued more aggressively because they fell in the least represented LFD styles. Not surprisingly, the researcher found, in general, the pastors with close LFD configurations were easier to contact and more eager to setup interviews than the pastors with the distant LFD configurations (who tended to schedule at the end of the interview cycle). The most CEO-like type (avuncular) is unrepresented in the Phase 2 interviews because that representative pastor did not respond to either

phone or email, though multiple attempts were made: predictably in the mold of the *avuncular* LFD type.

It has been noted above that the *virtually distant* LFD type was not represented at all in the survey results. The literature uses the description "e-leader" for this leadership configuration because such leaders use technology to reduce social distance and increase personal interaction frequency while at the same time maintaining a physical distance from followers. Such leaders keep in close contact by email, telephone, and even written notes (Ulysses S. Grant was an e-leader using courier-delivered dispatches to keep in constant communication with his troops on the front lines). There are few, if any, e-leader pastors because most pastors score "low" in the physical distance category (539 of 558 – 97% – of the pastors surveyed). Curiously, one subordinate staff member rated his lead pastor as *virtually distant* (whereas the pastor's self-rating was *hands-off*). This was the case of a bivocational pastor whose secular job created an artificially high physical distance dynamic. In fact, all of the pastors who participated in the survey were adept at technology: responding to the solicitation email and use of the internet were required to access the survey. Nearly every pastor interviewed during Phase 2 mentioned the use of email and other technology as a means of pastoral communication.

Data from subordinate staff. One goal of Phase 2 was to capture an outside assessment of the pastors' leadership characteristics which could be compared with the self-assessments to determine if a discernable shift was present. Subordinate staff members were chosen to complete the same survey. The results of this sub-survey are found in Table 15 below. The data is presented in Table 15 such that the subordinate

staff data (in italics) can be compared with that of the lead pastor. Shading is used to highlight the cells in which disagreement exists between lead and subordinate.

Though the sample size is only 13, there are some notable trends. In the central section of the table – the section dealing with the LFD findings – one notices that the shaded cells (the points of disagreement) increase in the assessment of *interaction frequency* and even more so in *social distance*. In the Phase 1 survey, 409 of 558 pastors rated themselves as high in *interaction frequency* (73%), whereas only 8 of 13 subordinate staff members (62%) rated their lead pastors as high in this regard. It appears that the lead pastors think they interact personally with people at a higher frequency than others observe. In Phase 1, 484 of 558 (87%) pastors self-rated with low *social distance*. In other words, the large majority of lead pastors saw themselves as very socially connected with their church families. The Phase 2 results in this rating varied from the Phase 1 results in several important ways. First, only 8 of 13 lead pastors rated themselves as low in *social distance* (62%), meaning that the Phase 2 sample was not representative of the original survey in this regard. Secondly, 10 of 13 (77%) subordinates rated their lead pastors with low social distance, meaning that the subordinates rated their lead pastors more generously (i.e., more socially involved in church families' lives) than their lead pastors rated themselves.

Table 15. Comparison of Phase 2 survey results

church health	phys	freq	social	LFD	affil	self-enh	aggr	self-def
trending up	low	high	low	proximal	50	33	19	10
holding steady	*low*	*high*	*high*	*soc distant*	*49*	*34*	*33*	*14*
trending up	low	low	low	hands off	45	44	15	34
trending up	*high*	*high*	*high*	*virt distant*	*35*	*33*	*19*	*20*
trending up	low	low	low	hands off	55	50	21	27
trending up	*low*	*high*	*low*	*proximal*	*49*	*42*	*15*	*17*
trending up	low	low	low	hands off	43	46	19	15
trending up	*high*	*low*	*high*	*distal*	*27*	*31*	*11*	*15*
trending up	low	low	high	manor house	48	25	30	26
holding steady	*low*	*low*	*low*	*hands off*	*52*	*32*	*35*	*33*
trending up	low	high	low	proximal	27	26	26	16
trending up	*low*	*high*	*low*	*proximal*	*32*	*29*	*24*	*14*
trending up	low	high	low	proximal	54	55	18	22
trending up	*low*	*low*	*low*	*hands off*	*52*	*50*	*41*	*37*
trending up	low	high	high	soc distant	56	38	15	17
holding steady	*low*	*high*	*low*	*proximal*	*55*	*46*	*23*	*22*
trending up	high	high	low	virt close	50	53	38	39
trending up	*low*	*high*	*low*	*proximal*	*55*	*46*	*20*	*34*
trending up	low	high	high	soc distant	56	54	14	46
trending up	*low*	*high*	*low*	*proximal*	*48*	*46*	*12*	*18*
trending up	low	high	low	proximal	55	50	19	43
trending up	*low*	*low*	*low*	*hands off*	*54*	*47*	*13*	*34*
trending up	low	low	high	manor house	48	32	28	30
holding steady	*low*	*low*	*low*	*hands off*	*51*	*35*	*20*	*23*
trending up	high	low	high	distal	44	37	24	23
trending up	*low*	*high*	*low*	*proximal*	*56*	*43*	*30*	*16*
				lead pastor	48.54	41.77	22.00	26.77
				staff pastor	*47.31*	*39.54*	*22.77*	*22.85*

These findings are important because they argue against the theory that subordinates may rate their lead pastors lower out of competition or petty jealousy. If that were the case one could expect the subordinate ratings to be less flattering to the pastors in both areas. They were not. In fact, the lead pastors were given the opportunity

to choose which subordinate staff person they wanted to take the survey. This meant that the lead pastor could, in theory, preclude disgruntled or immature staff members from sabotaging the results.

The differences in the LFD ratings highlighted above naturally resulted in an almost complete disagreement in the eventual LFD type. The one exception was a pastor whose subordinate affirmed the lead pastor's entire self-assessment – even the HSQ scores were amazingly similar. The 12 of 13 pairs that disagreed on LFD type is not a cause for alarm: the LFD ratings are based on much subjective reasoning, as will be discussed in the qualitative observations below. If we assess the LFD shifts, several patterns emerge. The self-rated *proximal* pastors (the shepherd paradigm) differed from their subordinates in only one component. Five other subordinates changed their lead pastors to the *proximal* type, including one pair where the lead self-rated as *distal* (the complete opposite of *proximal*). All but one of the remaining subordinates also rated their lead pastors with closer configurations of LFD, the one exception going from a self-assessment of *hands-off* to a staff assessment of *distal*. This particular subordinate also had the highest differential in the positive HSQ scores, rating down the affiliative score by 16 and the self-enhancing score by 15 (which will be discussed further below). These findings suggest that, for whatever reason, most pastors are perceived by their followers as operating with close LFD dynamics.

One final quantitative observation based on Table 15: with the exception of the *aggressive* HSQ style, the subordinates rated their lead pastors with lower humor scores on average. This is true even when the scores for the pair with the highest differential (mentioned in the previous paragraph) are removed from the analysis, though the

difference is less pronounced. Most people believe they possess a great sense of humor when, in fact, not everyone agrees. Likewise, we expect even pastors view themselves as more humorous than, in fact, they are. Other dynamics possibly play into this finding, such as the fear that many pastors have of the overuse of humor in the ministry which could have harmful results. If this is true, pastors may squelch some of their innate humor before it finds outward expression, resulting in lower humor scores by outside observers than by the pastors themselves. This differential is discussed further in the next section.

Follow-up Interview (Phase 2)
Qualitative Observations

Only 13 representative pastors were interviewed in Phase 2 but the patterns that were observed during those conversations were universal and unmistakable. The most important of those patterns are discussed under the four subheadings below.

Humor is essential for pastoral ministry. The first question asked during the phone interview was, "Do you think that sense of humor is beneficial or detrimental to pastoral ministry, and why?" Every pastor responded emphatically that humor was beneficial, strengthening the force of their answers by adding "absolutely" or often "not just beneficial, it is essential." Even the pastors with low HSQ scores held strong convictions about the important role of humor in pastoral ministry. The second interview question also probed for negative responses, seeking harmful examples of humor in ministry, but the pastors remained steadfast: humor is essential for ministry. As one pastor put it, "Whenever you try to make people laugh or smile, you run the risk of offending people; but the benefits far outweigh the risks." The responses given by the

pastors confirm prior research on the value of humor in maintaining mental flexibility

(Morreall 1991, 364-365) and balance (Duncan, Smeltzer, and Leap 1990, 267).

Every pastor interviewed provided several reasons why they felt humor was

essential. These answers aligned with many of the benefits of humor discussed in the

literature and affirmed the researcher's theological conclusion that "humor is an

acceptable, if not necessary, companion to biblical faith" as proposed at the end of

chapter 2 above. Humor is vital for *coping with stress* because "intensity is unavoidable

in ministry, but you can't let yourself [as pastor] get caught up in it or the atmosphere

becomes unhealthy." Humor is important for the pastoral leader personally, but it is also

important for the people they lead. Many pastors referenced the value of using gentle

humor at funerals. One pastor shared a story about the death of a 12 year old girl – the

people were grieving so hard that when he shared a little humor in the funeral message,

there was a sense of corporate relief, as if people were saying "thank you for letting me

change my emotions." This insight confirms some of what was noted under the Relief

theory of humor discussed in chapter 2 above (Capps 2005, 9).

Pastors also cited the many ways humor *enhances relational nearness.*

Because humor is intuitively related to joy, people (even little children) are drawn to

others who exude laughter and joy. Also related to relational nearness are the

characteristics of humility, vulnerability, and transparency. Humor can be an effective

means of communicating those characteristics between leaders and followers.

Conversely, relationships may suffer when humor is used insensitively, inappropriately,

or even innocently. One pastor shared how, during a visit with a church family gathered

around their loved one in a hospice room, he shared a gentle joke to help lighten the

mood. It just so happened that the loved one breathed his last breath at that very moment, and although the family was (and continues to be) very gracious about it, the pastor has regretted that moment ever since. Such moments, whether they take place in private settings or publically from the pulpit may produce what one pastor called "courtesy chuckles: people laugh outside, but inside they think 'you shouldn't have said that' and they find it difficult to hear you from that point on." One pastor noted that humor should never be used "when preaching on hell or at the Lord's Table – certain subjects and certain times demand a holiness moment of the pastor." More will be discussed about relational nearness in the sections below.

Humor is also essential in pastoral ministry because it enables people to *receive messages* they might otherwise not receive. People resist change and build psychological barriers into their lives to protect themselves from having to face areas of needed change (Lefcourt, Sardoni, and Sardoni 1974, 141). Pastors are faced with needing to get those messages across to people; humor can be one of the most effective tools in getting beyond the barriers. One pastor quoted Chuck Swindoll who was president of Dallas Theological Seminary during his years as student there:

> Get them laughing, and when you get them laughing really good, shove the Word of God right down their throat and make a deposit – they won't even notice it; humor is the way you set them up for truth.

In a related comment, another pastor noted that humor was one way he could "set off what topics are really important versus what we should laugh at" (using humor to maintain a healthy perspective). Pastors themselves need humor to put things in proper perspective at times.

> Sense of humor is needed in the tough times. Take Moses, for example. The people would often complain, "Moses, why did you lead us out here?" When people pick

up stones, you need the perspective of humor, which keeps you from taking yourself too seriously. Consequently you don't take criticism too personally, which is debilitating.

Pastors offered several guidelines for the effective use of humor in ministry: humor must be natural, not forced; spontaneous humor is more effective than programmed humor; pastors must be balanced and use humor to "provoke thought, not just to make me look cool;" and most importantly, don't use humorous stories about your spouse or children without prior permission, and then only sparingly!

Pastoral ministry, by definition, is relational nearness. Many pastors cited Ephesians 4:11-16 as the biblical purpose statement of pastoral leaders: the building up of the body (of believers) to do the work of the ministry. Pastoral ministry is about producing disciples, not producing activity. If people are at the center of pastoral ministry, then relationships are at the center of pastoral ministry. Several pastors referenced the oft-quoted proverb, "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." One pastor followed this up by observing:

> People can get great Bible teaching off the radio if relationships were not important [to them]. My knowledge of my people is the draw – I can't compete with John MacArthur in Bible knowledge. My applications of the text are more valid for my context because of the relationships.

Another pastor suggested that it is easier to minister to someone that you don't love than it is to minister to someone you don't know.

One interviewee noted that spiritual sensitivity for pastors must operate in relationships: "if you have nearness, you can begin to notice when something is amiss." Nearness also helps with the more administrative functions of pastoral leadership, like conducting meetings.

> You've got to know which people talk louder when they are upset with something and which ones clam up when they are upset. We may all be spending eternity together in heaven with one another, but a wise pastor knows his people enough to know that this person and that person should never serve on a committee together!

One pastor noted that humor is predicated on relational nearness: "I use humor to the extent that I have a relationship with someone; I back off from using humor with strangers."

Relational nearness was analyzed in this study as LFD, a function of physical proximity, social distance, and frequency of personal interaction. The pastors interviewed in Phase 2 ranged from *proximal* to *distal*, yet all subscribed to the indispensible need for relational nearness. To a great extent, the LFD type in use by the pastors interviewed was shaped by the demographics of their churches and by their ministry philosophies. This shaping will be discussed further below; however, personality factors also play a role. One pastor described himself as "emotionally void" which meant that he developed relationships professionally rather than personally – he was just not one to hang out with people. This observation did not appear to be the same as the emotional illiteracy created by the unhealthy exercise of leadership (termed alexithymia in chapter 2) but rather a personality trait (Kets 1993, 60-87). Another pastor noted, "I need the people I oversee to have relationships with others in order for me to be effective." One pastor reflected that his mentor in ministry was relationally distant to people, a tendency he also recognized in himself and for which he was learning to compensate. One pastor confided that, though he was gracious to all people, his personality tended toward being "friendly with my friends." Part of healthy pastoral leadership is recognizing the flaws in our personality and, by God's grace, living out the model of Jesus as much as possible (Rom 12:8).

Relational nearness must necessarily be related to ministry tenure. One pastor articulated this connection very clearly: "Relational nearness takes five years to develop and is based on three factors: transparency, integrity and consistency, which, consequently, all take *time*." Another interviewee who has served at his current church for over 17 years observed that the younger pastors he knows look to pastors like John Piper, John MacArthur, or Mark Dever for their models. These men have ministries that are almost exclusively preaching. Likewise, these young pastors want to invest their time in the preaching *without* investing in active pastoral ministry.

> What they don't see is that Piper earned the right to just focus on the preparation of preaching *over time* by originally investing a lot of time in relationships with the people. Because I invested heavily in relationships early, I now have more time than ever to study for sermons. Relationships between the pastor and the people are critical. Relational nearness is the only way church can create a culture of community, which is very rare in the church today.

That culture must be cultivated from the top – it must be caught as well as taught. Pastoral leadership is built on relationships, and relationships are built on trust (Kouzes and Posner 1987, 244-50).

Pastors must intentionally manage humor and relational nearness.

Pastoral ministry is a calling that comes with great expectations and pastors feel the weight of those expectations daily. This "burden" is markedly true of the pastors of larger churches, confirming previous research (Meier and Bohte 2000, 116). One pastor said:

> I can't be all things to all people, so I have to say no. I can't be the sole pastor and meet everyone's needs, there is not enough of me to spread around. If I try to help everybody that comes to me, I'll help nobody!

The sheer demands of personal ministry exceed the physical and psychological capabilities of most pastors in most church situations; therefore, intentional management

of resources becomes necessary. In addition, pastors must remember that "as a leader, you must be apart from the flock at times; be ahead of them, but not too far or they won't see you." Hence, pastors must not only intentionally manage these issues for the purpose of building affiliation, they must also intentionally maintain an appropriate leadership distance and consistency.

In terms of affiliation management, many pastors highlight the importance of Sunday worship services when the majority of church family is together. The pulpit is the greatest point of contact with people; therefore pastors can effectively use humor and illustrations in sermons to serve double duty – communicate truth and build personal relationships. Both *affiliative* and *self-enhancing* humor styles are well-suited for this task. Most pastors make a point of greeting people before and after the service. Gentle humor and teasing before and after services has been a great way for one 31 year old pastor to form close relationships with his "super seniors." Many interviewees noted the importance of active listening during these times – maintaining eye contact with people as they talk, not looking over their shoulder at the next person in line. One pastor offered, "I hug people a lot; to touch a person and look them in the eye with a genuine smile means so much to people." Another summed up the way he manages relational nearness in three simple words: "I walk slow." Several referenced the value of handwritten notes during the week, usually expressing thanks for something the pastor observed a person doing on Sunday.

Several pastors shared strategies for prioritizing these affiliation behaviors. One pastor focuses his personal interaction on three groups of people: ministry leaders (because they need pastoral direction), senior adults (because they tend to call their

friends on the phone when you minister to them), and "the 10% minority of people in the church who cause 90% of the problems." By proactively talking with the problem people on his timetable and on his terms, this pastor avoids some of the carnal reactions he might have if he waits for them to come to him (on their timetable and on their terms). Another pastor shared a concept that was given to him by a retired military officer in his church that he called "spherepunct:" being in the right place (the right sphere) at the right time (punctual). "I consciously think to myself as I move through the day, *where should I be at this moment?*"

Most of the pastors interviewed referenced the strategic importance of managing their relational nearness with church leaders. "Leaders will convince others below them *only if* I am close to them and know them well enough to personally motivate them. That is when I am truly effective." Another used a sports analogy: "my effectiveness as head coach is dependent on the effectiveness of the other coaches and coordinators." The strategic importance of ministry leaders plays a key role in the ways that ministry philosophies shape the behaviors of pastors, an important consideration that will be discussed in the next section below.

Another strategy employed by pastors to maximize the relational effectiveness of their actions could be termed *crisis management*. Most pastors spoke of the importance of hospital visitation and pastoral ministry surrounding weddings and funerals. "Crisis is one time people lean heavily on their faith – they *need* their faith – so I try to be the first point of contact during these times." In some larger churches, crisis management can control the pastor's schedule so that the lion's share of his available

time is spent reacting and responding to crisis situations. This reality takes some wise

management as well.

> I still meet with anybody that wants to meet with me (except that I won't meet with females one on one). But just because a person comes up to me on Sunday saying 'Pastor I need to meet with you this week' doesn't automatically mean that they really *must* meet with me. I've learned to respond by saying, 'I'd love to meet with you but my ministry assistant handles my schedule; call or email her to set it up.' Most people will not follow through because they just need to know that they *can* meet with me – they need to feel like they can have access if they really need it.

From the perspective of managing relational nearness in order to maintain

appropriate leadership distance, consistency is an adjective that was used often. Pastors

vary on whether or not it is wise to have close friendships with people in the church, but

even those who do maintain that close friendships cannot color the decision making

process of the pastor.

> I have made it a point to be fair and consistent with my relationships with all people. I actually have patterns I use for ministry. For example, hospital visitation: I visit a person before having surgery, I don't stay with family during surgery, and I make a single follow-up visit. If more visits are needed, I delegate to deacons. I consider some people in the church my best friends – but when it comes to ministry, I always follow the pattern.

Maintaining leadership distance may also be important for the pastor's own family

health. One pastor shared that with relational nearness comes increased expectations for

the pastor to respond immediately to all crises – real or imagined.

> I manage this differently now so that I don't drop everything and take off on an emergency pastoral call. There are very few things necessary for me to stop my life; my family is most important because I only have one shot with them.

Ministry philosophy and church demographics shape pastors. Almost

every pastor interviewed verbalized the belief that the biblical metaphor of shepherd is

prescriptive for pastoral leadership. The large majority of the pastors responding to the

Phase 1 survey self-identified as shepherd pastors utilizing the *proximal* LFD type: living

in close physical proximity, enjoying close social (non-pastoral) relationships, and interacting frequently (in pastoral ways) with followers. Many Phase 2 pastors spoke of this belief with great passion and conviction. Jan Karon's *At Home in Mitford* series of novels personifies this pastoral paradigm in Father Tim Cavanaugh, who ministers in a friendly small town, interacts continually with his congregation in the course of everyday small town life, and seamlessly moves between the roles of intimate friend and spiritual advisor in the triumphs and tragedies of his people's lives. In reality, pastoral leadership is not that idyllic. Thankfully, effective pastoral leadership is possible using a variety of LFD types. Indeed, the pastors interviewed all demonstrated healthy, godly, and growing leadership behaviors (in the researcher's judgment).

As noted above in the quantitative observations section, most of the pastors selected for Phase 2 were not *proximal* leaders according to their own assessment. Those who self-identified as *proximal* were often perceived to lead with more distant LFD types by their subordinates, and those who self-identified as more distant in LFD type tended to be rated more proximally by their subordinates. An outside observer might falsely conclude that such phenomena would tend to undermine either the foundational LFD concepts or else the validity of the self-assessments. The Phase 2 interviews, however, revealed some pertinent insights which point to the ways pastors (and their leadership behaviors) are shaped by many external factors, most notably church demographics and personal ministry philosophy.

For example, a bivocational pastor interviewed was physically close to his church family, but the demands of his second occupation made it impossible for him to be physically present in most situations. Hence, though that pastor was a shepherd at

heart, his church demographics imposed a more distant leadership style on him. Another young pastor leads a relatively small church comprised of mostly senior adults. As a result, the pastor feels socially isolated from his people and rates himself as the *socially distant* LFD type. His subordinate staff member rated him as a *proximal* (shepherd) type. Conversely, pastors of larger churches know that they must operate with less relational nearness than they would prefer. One pastor has seen the church grow from very small to very large over the course of his tenure, and his LFD type has had to change over that time. Though he once had opportunity to know everyone, he rated himself as the *distal* LFD type – very high physical distance, very high social distance, and relatively low frequency of personal interaction. His subordinate, however, saw his leadership differently – moderately low physical distance, moderately low social distance, and moderately high frequency of personal interaction – a *proximal* LFD rating.

Church demographics which shape a pastor's leadership behavior include: church size, church location, church building characteristics, age range and distribution of church members, church income, church history and reputation (including moral failures of previous pastors), church health trends, staff characteristics, and even regional cultural characteristics. But far more important in the shaping of a pastor's leadership behavior is the pastor's ministry philosophy.

The last question of the interview (see Appendix 4) was designed to discover what the pastors were passionate about in their leadership and to find how humor and LFD intersected with that passion. Answers to this question often came in the form of personal mission statements or an articulation of the pastor's underlying ministry philosophy. At one point on the spectrum of philosophies was the pastor who focused on

the sovereignty of God – only He can change the lives of people; all that a pastor can do is create an environment that is conducive for God to work. Physical presence with the people he led was, therefore, a low priority for this pastor, hence he operated with a *virtually close* LFD type. At another point on the spectrum was the pastor whose philosophy emanated from the need to model Christ-likeness in his own life. This not only included modeling holiness, but also humility, accountability, and compassion, hence he operated with a strongly *proximal* LFD type. Other ministry philosophies revolved around the question of what making disciples looked like – the product of pastoral leadership. Some pastors focused on the aspect of active participation in ministry: moving people from the periphery to the center of ministry (*hands-off* LFD pastors). One pastor focused on the interior aspects of the disciple: helping people see the seriousness of growing closer to God in sanctification, hence he operated with a *socially distant* LFD type. One large church pastor's philosophy was influenced by his responsibility to his pastoral staff: he pastored and led his church *through* his staff, hence he self-rated with a *manor-house* LFD type (though his subordinate rated him as operating much closer to his followers).

Most of the pastors interviewed mentioned the importance of investing in ministry leaders as a means of multiplying span of care and oversight. A few pastors, however, saw leadership development as the driving focus of pastoral ministry. Two pastors in particular articulated this philosophy most clearly. One pastor shared about his first pastoral assignment which was marked with significant numerical growth. Less than one year after being called to his second ministry, the group in his first church had dwindled back down to the size he had started with. The lesson he learned was

eventually transferred to his second (and subsequent) assignments and then crafted into a

personal mission statement: "I will strive with skillful hands to build and equip *leaders* to

accomplish the great commission." If he disappears, the ministry will continue through

the leaders, hence he operates with a *manor house* LFD type.

The second pastor who leads by focusing on leaders self-rated with a *distal*

LFD type. He noted that pastors "sometimes enable people to be dependent upon us

rather than on the Lord." Even in pastoral care situations, he consciously pushes people

toward being better leaders, helping people see crises and trials as opportunities to grow

into stronger disciples (Rom 5:3-4). Sometimes, people need to learn how to sit on the

ash heap and wait for the Lord's provision (like Job). Pastors who want to develop

leaders help people see the importance of leaning on our Creator rather than leaning on

the pastor.

The final word on this point comes from a seasoned pastor who notes that all

pastoral leadership is a stewardship of the gifts and calling that come from God. "If

pastors are not Spirit-led and infused with *compassion* and *humility*, then pastors become

just plain *mean*. Humility and compassion trump leadership style every time." This

observation is perhaps at the bottom of how even the pastors with the most distant LFD

types can experience the blessing of God and great fruit in their ministries.

Other Observations

Before the research could even be conducted, the researcher had to sift through

church websites to find the lead pastors' email addresses. The underlying philosophy

behind having a church website is to facilitate new relationships with potential church

members and enhance communication with current members. A surprising number of the

web addresses provided were invalid and returned browser errors. In these cases, the researcher used the church finder feature of www.sbc.net and/or did a google search for the church and used whatever contact information could be found. Even after these measures were taken, 154 churches (6.16% of the total churches listed) were, therefore, without an attemptable address. Of the remaining churches that were attempted, approximately 410 (17%) were undeliverable due to a variety of errors. Therefore, of the 2,500 churches in the original database (which had entered some kind of web-presence information), approximately 22% did not have a web presence after all. This is in addition to the 37,000 SBC churches that did not indicate any web-presence at all in the 2007 ACP.

Several thousand church websites were accessed successfully, however, which proved to provide additional interesting observations. Though specific statistics were not kept, far too many church websites were unattractive and disorganized. Most internet users are younger people, so if a website presents the church in a way that looks culturally-backward or primarily populated by senior adults, it will result in negative marketing of the church. Finding a valid contact email address on many church websites was daunting, which sends the message that the pastor is distant and non-communicative (concepts which are connected to the LFD portions of this study). Churches which choose to market their ministries by internet and email must keep their website and email addresses current and simple to use. Churches must also keep their www.sbc.net account current. Literally hundreds of emails were returned because the church email accounts had full mailboxes (an error that typically is caused by not reading and deleting emails)

or the account had expired (an error that typically is caused by not renewing the URL registration with the internet service provider).

During the website searching phase, a number of ethnic churches were accessed. Because their websites are completely in Korean or Chinese or Vietnamese (or even Russian) and were infused with cultural elements, the researcher speculated that this survey on sense of humor and LFD might not translate culturally to those ministries. Humor may also play a different role in those cultures with respect to the pastor-people dynamic. The cultural churches were included in the sample, but there were no mechanisms built into the survey to isolate their responses and analyze them separately.

Research Applications

The enthusiastic response of the pastors participating in this research is indicative of the appeal of the subject matter. This became even more apparent during the Phase 2 interviews: sense of humor and LFD type intersected with the very things that many pastors are passionate about. Sense of humor is perhaps an intuitively valuable asset to pastors, but very little research or writings are available to pastors on the subject. Furthermore, all of the pastors interviewed in Phase 2 referred to the necessity of using appropriate humor – all pastors realize there is a line which can be crossed. Perhaps some of this research will help pastors understand better how to effectively use healthy humor and how to avoid the unhealthy humor in ministry situations.

Of greater application, however, is the LFD information, especially some of the insights gleaned from the Phase 2 interviews on the practical implications of how pastors manage the issues of relational nearness. This area is a bit swampy for many pastors: the risks and rewards of relational nearness in ministry are real but unpredictable.

The fact that the *proximal* LFD type (pastor-as-shepherd paradigm) is still predominant among pastors ought to encourage pastors that the shepherd model is still valid and effective in our changing culture.

Additionally, the implications of *affiliative* and *self-enhancing* humor for pastoral ministry are significant. Though the pastors studied scored high in these styles of humor, the *affiliative* style can reach a point of diminishing returns and even turn into a negative issue in the context of pastoral leadership. Pastors who over-affiliate lose their leadership voice – people can only follow a leader who is out in front to some extent. The *self-enhancing* style, however, seems to hold great potential for aiding pastoral effectiveness. It behooves pastors to study this style and develop skills necessary for its effective use when possible.

Finally, church search committees would benefit from an understanding of the basic concepts presented in this study. Humor can be used effectively to make first impressions that, over the course of time, prove to be shallow. This is because humor is an image-management tool as well as a healthy relational tool. The ramifications of LFD type could theoretically be used by a search committee to assess the level of compatibility between the congregation and the candidate. Because there are significant relationships in terms of church and staff size as well as career tenure with various HSQ styles and LFD types, a church search committee might want to give consideration to these factors in the search process.

Research Limitations

Though the survey studied SBC pastors only, the results of this research may realistically be extended to cover most evangelical denominations. There is a great

diversity of leadership styles, humor styles, ministry philosophies, and methodologies represented in SBC churches and pastors. Though other denominations differ doctrinally, the practical aspects of this study should be generally applicable.

The researcher expected that the distal LFD types would be represented at higher frequencies in the sample than was the case. Logically, one would assume that the larger church pastors would exhibit a more distal leadership style, and in fact the Phase 2 interviews did bear this assumption out. The relatively low frequency of these particular types in the sample, however, may be a limitation in the research methodology. Since it was imperative that the recruitment email reach the lead pastor, it is conceivable that those pastors who filter incoming email using administrative assistants never even saw the recruitment email. Many large ministries with extensive websites do not publish email addresses. The researcher used several strategies to acquire addresses in such cases, often to no avail. Though such churches may be among the most technologically advanced, these realities resulted in these churches being eliminated from the study for lack of an email address. Finally, the more sophisticated churches employ spam and phishing filters to incoming email, and though the researcher attempted to compose an email that did not get trapped by spam filters (3 draft emails were tested prior to the final email shown in Appendix 3, each draft progressively improving in this regard), it is entirely possible that some of the larger church pastors never saw the recruitment email as a result of spam filter interference. A better methodological design would need to be used in order to insure that the larger churches were better represented in the final data.

Further Research

The research connecting humor and secular leadership holds great promise for replication with other populations of pastoral leaders. The current study affirmed that pastoral leadership, like its secular counterpart, can benefit greatly from the application of the proven tools and techniques that humor and LFD exhibit. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to determine if church culture is changing with respect to the effectiveness of long local church tenures. The current study did not collect data on the age of the pastors which could have been used to test a potential relationship between chronological age and LFD type. Such data might yield insights concerning whether or not the shepherd paradigm for pastoral leadership is concentrated along generational lines. Perhaps the limited number of pastors representing the more distal LFD types in this study suggests that further mixed methods research should be conducted focusing on those leadership types, especially pursuing the possibility of a relationship between isolation from followers and susceptibility to moral failures. This research hinted at some significant relationships between humor styles and pastoral staff size. Further research exploring the value of humor in pastoral staff relations might prove fruitful. The self-enhancing HSQ style yielded particularly useful findings with respect to pastoral leadership. Further research focusing on the uses of this HSQ style in pastoral settings would be helpful. Pastors participating in the survey represented their churches as predominantly trending up in terms of health. This perhaps suggests that pastors assess church health in terms other than baptisms and worship attendance figures, a possibility that could be studied further. Finally, of particular interest to this researcher (though not part of the current study) is an exploration of follower expectations, especially with

respect to McClelland's need for power, achievement, or affiliation. How a church's motivations might affect the kind of pastoral leader that would be effective in that setting should be of particular interest to church search committees. If an instrument could be developed to gauge congregational expectations in conjunction with a pastoral candidate's expectations, it might have significant impact on the quality of ministry "marriages."

Summation

After three years of living through the evolution of this dissertation, the researcher's wife made this observation:

> Healthy, positive humor is a sign of integrity in a leader because it is vulnerable. A leader who has something to hide uses tools of manipulation (including unhealthy humor) to keep people at a distance in order to protect what is hidden. Vulnerable, healthy humor is attractive and even compelling because it is an invitation into the interior life of the leader, and that engenders trust and love.

Followers are savvy and even cynical. Pastoral leaders must, therefore, rise to the challenge. May the findings presented here encourage and enable pastors to be the kind of worthy-to-follow leaders spoken of by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 17: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Let us do this with *joy*.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to study how humor and leadership style relate to tenure in pastoral ministry. This research is being conducted by Jonathan W. Young for purposes of dissertation research through the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, KY. In this research, you will be asked simple demographic information about your church, about the length of time you have served in pastoral ministry, about your leadership style in terms of closeness to you followers, and about the ways you use humor. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this online survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

❑ I agree to participate

❑ I do not agree to participate

Thank You

The survey you are about to take contains 44 questions and will require about 20 minutes to complete. If you should need to stop during the middle of the survey and take the survey at a later time, your completed answers will be discarded and you will need to start from the beginning.

Demographic section

(1) What is your church's average current weekend worship attendance?
❑ 100 or less ❑ 101 – 200 ❑ 201 – 500 ❑ 501 or more

(2) How many vocational (or bi-vocational) pastoral staff serve under you?
❑ only 1 ❑ 2 or more ❑ I am not the lead pastor

(3) Would you assess the current health of your church to be trending up or down?
❑ trending up ❑ trending down ❑ holding steady

Ministry Tenure section

(4)   How many years have you been in active vocational ministry?
_____ (computer will validate numeral between 1 and 75)

(5)   Has there been a period of time during these years in which you have temporarily stepped out of vocational ministry?
❑ yes   ❑ no

(6)   How many different ministry locations have you served vocationally in?
_____ (computer will validate numeral between 1 and 20)

(7)   What is the average number of years you have served at a ministry location?
_____ (computer will validate numeral between 1 and 75)

(8)   How many years have you served at your current ministry location?
_____ (computer will validate numeral between 1 and 75)

Leader-Follower Distance section

In this section, please assess whether you lead from a high distance or a low distance with respect to:

(9)   On a typical *weekday*, if you receive a call concerning an emergency with a church member and you drop everything to go to be with the family, how long does it take you to get there?
❑ fewer than 30 minutes   ❑ between 30 and 60 minutes   ❑ a few hours
❑ one day or more

(10)   During a typical *week*, how many times do you engage in personal *pastoral* interaction with *non-staff* church members?
❑ seven or more times   ❑ five or six times   ❑ three or four times
❑ twice a week or less

(11)   During a typical *month*, how many times do you engage in *social* interaction with *non-staff* church members in *non-pastoral* settings?
❑ four or more times   ❑ two or three times   ❑ about once a month
❑ less than once a month

Humor Style Questionnaire section - (12-43)

People experience and express humor in many different ways. Below is a list of statements describing different ways in which humor might be experienced. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can. Use the following scale:

Totally Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑   12. I usually don't laugh or joke around much with
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   other people.

Totally Disagree		Moderately Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Totally Agree
1		2		3		4		5		6		7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **13.** If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   up with humor.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **14.** If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   about it.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **15.** I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   more than I should.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **16.** I don't have to work very hard at making other
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   people laugh – I seem to be a naturally humorous person.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **17.** Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   absurdities of life.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **18.** People are never offended or hurt by my sense of
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   humor

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **19.** I will often get carried away in putting myself down
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   if it makes my family or friends laugh.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **20.** I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   stories about myself.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **21.** If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **22.** When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **23.** I often try to make people like or accept me more
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **24.** I laugh and joke a lot with my closest friends.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **25.** My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   overly upset or depressed about things.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **26.** I do not like it when people use humor as a way of
1 2 3 4 5 6 7   criticizing or putting someone down.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **27.** I don't often say funny things to put myself down.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **28.** I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 29. If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 an effort to think of something funny to cheer
myself up.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 30. Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not
appropriate for the situation.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 31. I often go overboard in putting myself down when I
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 am making jokes or trying to be funny.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 32. I enjoy making people laugh.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 33. If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 of humor.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 34. I never participate in laughing at others even if all
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 my friends are doing it.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 35. When I am with friends or family, I often seem to
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 be the one that other people make fun of or joke
about.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 36. I don't often joke around with my friends.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 37. It is my experience that thinking about some
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 amusing aspect of a situation is often a very
effective way of coping with problems.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 38. If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 to put them down.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 39. If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 cover it up by joking around, so that even my
closest friends don't know how I really feel.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 40. I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 with other people.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 41. I don't need to be with other people to feel amused
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 – I can usually find things to laugh about even when
I'm by myself.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 42. Even if something is really funny to me, I will not
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ 43. Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 friends and family in good spirits.

Follow-up interview permission

Thank you for participating in this survey.

(44) Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher (in person or by phone)?
❑ yes   ❑ no (If yes, the computer will prompt for contact information)

APPENDIX 2

PERMISSION TO USE HSQ INSTRUMENT

From: Rod Martin <ramartin@uwo.ca>
To: Jonathan W Young <jon-sarah.young@juno.com>
Date: Mon, 25 Aug 2008 15:29:47 -0400
Subject: Re: Humor Styles Questionnaire research
Message-ID: <48B3082B.80009@uwo.ca>

Dear Johathan,
I'm very pleased to give you permission to use the Humor Styles Questionnaire in your research. This sounds like a very interesting study. I'd appreciate receiving a summary of your findings after your research is complete. I'm attaching a copy of the HSQ that you may feel free to copy for your research.

In case you're not aware of it, I've written a book on the psychology of humor, which would likely be a useful resource for you in writing your dissertation. There's a link to the publisher's website below, and it's also available through Amazon.com.

Good luck with your research!
Best regards,
Rod Martin

Rod A Martin, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Psychology
University of Western Ontario
Westminster College
361 Windermere Road
London, Ontario, Canada N6A 3K7

** NOW AVAILABLE: "The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach"
http://www.elsevierdirect.com/product.jsp?lid=0&iid=5&sid=0&isbn=012372564X

Email: ramartin@uwo.ca
Website: http://psychology.uwo.ca/faculty/martin_res.htm
Telephone: (519) 661-3665
Fax: (519) 850-2554
Administrative Assistant: (519) 661-4068

Jonathan W Young wrote:

Dear Dr. Martin,

My name is Jonathan Young and I am a doctoral candidate at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY pursuing an Ed.D. in Leadership. My area of study has been the relationship between sense of humor and pastoral leadership. I have just defended my prospectus which is titled: The Relationship Between Sense of Humor, Leader-Follower Distance, and Tenure in Pastoral Ministry. I am writing because your research has been seminal in this field and I would like to obtain permission to use your HSQ instrument as a foundational part of my research instrument. My advisors are Dr. Hal Pettegrew and Dr. Timothy Jones.

The psychosocial functions of humor may have special significance in pastoral leadership where relationship-building and perspective-taking are major aspects of being successful and effective in that vocation. I am a pastor myself, and the longer I serve in this kind of leadership, the more I value sense of humor. There has not, to my knowledge, been any specific research studying the relationships between pastoral leadership and sense of humor. Your research and your collaboration with Dr. Lefcourt has been a fascinating pursuit as I have worked on the Literature Review these last two years. I'd like to extend your studies, specifically as it relates to how humor styles affect the amount of Leader-Follower Distance and career tenure in pastoral ministry.

I would be very happy to provide you with more information if you would be interested in it. For now, you are probably interested in how I propose to incorporate the HSQ into my instrument. Here is a brief overview of the research methodology: I will randomly and anonymously survey Southern Baptist lead/senior pastors, asking them to complete some demographic information, some data concerning how long they have served in career pastoral ministry and what is the average length of service in each church they have served. I will ask three questions to locate the pastor's Leader-Follower Distance style (per research conducted by Antonakis and Atwater (2002). The next section is your HSQ, and a final question asks if the respondent would be willing to participate in a personal follow-up interview (and then collect contact information if they answer in the affirmative). The survey will be 44 or 45 questions in length. I plan to conduct about 20 follow-up qualitative interviews during which I will also interview the lead pastor's subordinate staff.

As you can see, your HSQ would be the foundation of this research. Please advise me if using the HSQ in this way is possible, and if so, what formal actions I should take to secure permission. Thank you so much for your help in this and for the groundbreaking research you have done.

Sincerely,

Jonathan W. Young

APPENDIX 3

RECRUITMENT EMAILS

Dear Pastor,

My name is Jon Young and I pastor Dayton Avenue Baptist Church, a SBC church in Xenia, Ohio. I am also a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Would you be willing to participate in a random on-line survey of SBC pastors? This survey is part of a study to explore specific aspects of pastoral leadership.

I know your time is valuable: this survey will *take only 10 minutes* of your time or so. It is easy to complete, the responses are anonymous, and the results may generate insights that can help pastors and churches.

To participate, click the link below and your web browser will open up to the survey. The survey is self-explanatory and the computer will guide you through. Here is the link...

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ktcKtEBIUaC3MTtOd8oMOQ_3d_3d

Thank you so much.

Your brother in Christ,
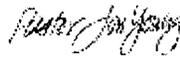
If you have received this email but are not the senior/lead pastor, please forward this email to your pastor. This email was generated using the 2007 ACP data and cross-referencing using the SBC.NET church locator and your church website as listed in the ACP. Some of the following information may not be complete or accurate, but you are still eligible to take the survey if you received this email and are a SBC senior pastor.

    Church: Faith Romanian Baptist, Hayward, CA
    Pastor: Gheorghe Motoc
    Website: www.frbchayward.org

Dear Phillip,

Thank you so much for taking my survey earlier this month. Over 530 SBC pastors completed the survey and of those, over 280 pastors, like you, indicated a willingness to participate in a follow up interview. That response was encouraging and overwhelming.

Because I could not follow up with that many, I sifted the responses down to 36 representative pastors. You are one of those 36. If you are still willing, I'd like to schedule a time to conduct a phone interview with you.

Before you decide to participate, here are a few factors to consider. The interview will take approximately *one hour* and will cover the 5 questions listed below. These questions are open-ended to allow you to dictate the course of the interview as you see fit. Your perspectives and experiences will bring life to this study. I will *record* the interview so that the transcripts are accurate.

I also need to research how your sense of humor and relational styles are perceived by others under your leadership. To this end, *you will designate one of your staff pastors to complete the same online survey you did,* rating you on these same variables.

If these factors alter your ability to participate in the follow up interview process, that is certainly understandable. If you are still willing to participate, however, please reply to this email and let me know that you are still in. I will call you at the phone number you provided earlier and we'll schedule a convenient time for the phone interview.

Thank you so much. I look forward to speaking with you and getting to know you better.

Merry Christmas! Your brother in Christ,

Follow-up interview questions:

1) *Do you think that sense of humor is beneficial or detrimental to pastoral ministry? And Why?*

2) *Do you have any specific examples of how humor has benefitted or harmed your own personal ministry or that of someone you know?*

3) *Would you say that relational nearness is important to effective pastoral ministry? And Why?*

4) *How do you manage the issue of relational nearness to your church family?*

5) *How do you define effectiveness in pastoral leadership, and what do you think are the most important factors that lead to that effectiveness?*

APPENDIX 4

PHASE 2 TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE

Follow-up interview with: __R**** K*****   864 6xx-xxxx__ _____ **date:** __1/20/2009__

- ❑ permission to tape record the audio of this interview?
- ❑ subordinate staff personnel identified to complete the online survey
- ❑ subordinate staff completed the survey yet?
- ❑ subordinate staff may participate in the interview if you would like?

> mp3file: _____
>
> transcript: _____

Purpose #1: to explore the specific ways in which sense of humor and relational nearness operate in real-life ministry settings.
Purpose #2: to allow you to dictate the course of the interview so that your perspectives and experiences can bring life to this study.

Follow-up interview questions:

1) **Do you think that sense of humor is beneficial or detrimental to pastoral ministry?**

   And Why?

2) **Do you have any specific examples of how humor has benefitted or harmed your own personal ministry or that of someone you know?**

3) **Would you say that relational nearness is important to effective pastoral ministry?**

   And Why?

4) **How do you manage the issue of relational nearness to your church family?**

5) **How do you define effectiveness in pastoral leadership, and what do you think are the most important factors that lead to that effectiveness?**

1) very beneficial as long as it's in good taste; folks make everything into a joke with the point being only to make people laugh, that's an extreme; there are many things in life you can only face with humor; benefitted from others humor and is helpful to him;

2) humor takes the edge off emotionally charged circumstances in small or large groups; must be clearly presented so it won't be misconstrued; eg. In deacon's meetings when things get very serious, an intentional injection of humor helps reduce the emotional charge; sometimes humor is not thought through and it fails;

3) you have to relate to folks on an individual basis as much as possible; by thinking one on one even when speaking to a large group (use single person pronouns) it comes across better; also if you know people well enough you can address the right needs – scratching people where they itch.

4) intentional according to personality – I try to develop friendships with people on the fringes of church; work personally and specifically with leaders in order to multiply my leadership... mentor and role-model so that they can do it also; it comes down to time, can I be involved in civic groups, etc? investing in the community at large is a good way to meet people and figure out what the needs are.

5) key factor in effective leadership = learning the difference between managing and leading; the focal point of the work can become administrative (managing) and 10-15 years from now won't matter; leading, however, is not mundane stuff, but it is captured in Acts 6 – give ourselves to prayer and ministry of the Word, let the deacons serve the tables; disciples were leading in every sense of the word, not just in the study; NOT managers, first and foremost, good leaders are good followers of Christ. INTERSECT – you are looking to follow the Lord's will for you and the local church; sense of humor comes in the tough times (Exodus, Moses' leadership always comes back to, "Moses, why did you lead us out here... let's stone him), when people pick up stones, you need the perspective of humor; humor keeps yourself from taking yourself too seriously and consequently you don't take criticism too personally, which is debilitating.

His church is celebrating 125 anniversary this year, he is trying to transition from a lot of that history (where success is defined by the numbers) into a new church that is less about ministry management into a church where people skills and leadership skills will be important. Life transformation and spiritual formation.

John 4 – reaping where others have sown – this means that sometimes God calls people to sow without reaping!

[would like a copy of the results]

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APPENDIX 5

ANOVA RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Anova: Single Factor: LFD type vs. Affiliative HSQ (at p=.05)

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Avuncular	4	196	49	115.3333
Distal	3	130	43.33333	100.3333
Hands off	109	5027	46.11927	55.75416
Manor house	24	1109	46.20833	36.95471
Proximal	338	16288	48.18935	47.0679
Socially distant	41	1940	47.31707	45.02195
Virtually close	11	522	47.45455	27.27273

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	468.36	6	78.05924	1.610227	0.142079	2.115902
Within Groups	25353.6	523	48.47717			
Total	25821.9	529				

Anova: Single Factor: LFD type vs. Aggressive HSQ (at p=.05)

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Avuncular	4	83	20.75	46.91667
Distal	3	72	24	64
Hands off	109	2518	23.10092	64.11009
Manor house	24	504	21	39.47826
Proximal	338	7216	21.34911	50.57212
Socially distant	41	814	19.85366	40.37805
Virtually close	11	279	25.36364	35.85455

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	573.76	6	95.62724	1.844335	0.088614	2.115902
Within Groups	27117.1	523	51.84916			
Total	27690.9	529				

Anova: Single Factor: LFD type vs. Self-defeating HSQ (at p=.05)						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
Avuncular	4	120	30	68		
Distal	3	93	31	57		
Hands off	109	3134	28.75229	77.03993		
Manor house	24	639	26.625	56.50543		
Proximal	338	9469	28.01479	76.91669		
Socially distant	41	1123	27.39024	84.3439		
Virtually close	11	321	29.18182	65.36364		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	174.177	6	29.02944	0.380642	0.891442	2.115902
Within Groups	39886.3	523	76.26435			
Total	40060.4	529				

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENSE OF HUMOR,
LEADER-FOLLOWER DISTANCE, AND
TENURE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009
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Background: Sense of humor has been shown to affect the personal dynamics

of leadership in many ways: it opens channels of communication, improves social

relations, enhances performance, and provides a coping mechanism for stress. In

leadership research, humor has been linked with improving morale, enhancing group

cohesiveness, increasing creativity and motivation, and stimulating higher levels of

productivity. Though humor contains the potential to greatly enhance personal and

leadership dynamics in the realm of pastoral leadership, very little research has been

conducted with this goal in mind.

Method: This study examined the relationship between the pastor's

predominant sense of humor style using the Humor Styles Questionnaire, predominant

configuration of Leader-Follower Distance, and the pastor's tenure characteristics. The

instrument was offered to 2,500 Southern Baptist pastors and was completed on-line by

530 pastoral leaders. Over half of the survey participants also responded affirmatively as

being willing to participate in an extensive follow-up telephone interview. These

qualitative interviews were conducted with a representative subsample of 13 of these

pastors. Sense of humor was studied from the perspective of its ability to equip the leader to cope effectively with the stressful realities of pastoral ministry, its ability to gain a balanced perspective on reality, and its capacity to create and manage effective leader-follower relationships.

Results: The adaptive humor styles (affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor) were predominant among pastors as was the proximal Leader-Follower Distance configuration. The self-enhancing humor style was shown to be significantly related to career ministry tenure (at p=.05) and also to Leader Follower Distance configuration (also at p=.05). Likewise, Leader Follower Distance configuration was shown to be significantly correlated to career ministry tenure (at p=.001). Additional significant relationships were also found between HSQ styles and certain church demographics. These data were further explored in the qualitative telephone interviews.

Conclusion: The study is intended to aid pastors in dealing with the unique stressors of pastoral leadership, to help churches assess their own expectations of pastoral leadership, and to understand better how certain humor styles and LFD configurations will match with those expectations.

Keywords: Humor, sense of humor, leadership, pastoral leadership, leadership style, ministry, ministry tenure, longevity, leader-follower distance, relational transparency, relational nearness.

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