

PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR OF PUBLIC  
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS AND COMMUNICATION  
SATISFACTION OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

By

FRANCES KAY POWELL

||

Bachelor of Arts  
Central State University  
Edmond, Oklahoma  
1968

Master of Education  
Central State University  
Edmond, Oklahoma  
1973

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College  
of the Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
July, 1981

Thesis  
1981D  
P883p  
cop. 2



PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR OF PUBLIC  
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS AND COMMUNICATION  
SATISFACTION OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

Thesis Approved:

*Carl R. Anderson*

Thesis Adviser

*Kenneth D. Clai*

*John Johnson*

*Mark Nelson*

*Ralph L. Hornum*

*Norman D. Durham*

Dean of the Graduate College

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her deep appreciation to Dr. Carl Anderson, who served as chairman of her advisory committee. His guidance and insights served always to encourage progress and stimulate thought. A special thanks is extended to Dr. Kenneth St. Clair, whose careful consideration and scholarly direction proved an invaluable resource. To Dr. Marlan Nelson a large debt is owed for both his counsel and his assistance in editing. Appreciation is also expressed to Dr. Ralph Hamilton for the encouragement and reinforcement he so readily provided, and to Dr. Deke Johnson for his support, his recommendations and his warmth.

Also due special thanks is Dr. James Sweeten who, though not a member of the committee, volunteered time to counsel the writer in statistical approach and computer technicalities.

Additional thanks are extended to those superintendents, district public relations officers, reporters and editors who gave so freely of their time to provide information for this study. To the writer's assistant, Anna Brown, and secretary, Mary Cook, much gratitude for their assistance, encouragement, and willingness to carry on the functions of the office when the demands of this study necessitated the writer's absence.

No greater love is shown by any family than that that stimulates voluntary sacrifice to help one of its members fulfill a goal. To my husband Bob, a very heartfelt thanks for his encouragement, his help,

and his confidence. To my children, Michael, Jon, and Stefani, a deep feeling of appreciation for their patience, their understanding, and their assistance. May I have the opportunity to see you all through to the achievement of your goals with as much love as you've given me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE PROBLEM . . . . .	1
Introduction . . . . .	1
Need for the Study . . . . .	2
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	6
Assumptions . . . . .	7
The Objectives . . . . .	7
Definition of Terms . . . . .	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE, RATIONALE, AND HYPOTHESES . . . . .	9
Introduction . . . . .	9
Review of Literature . . . . .	9
Rationale . . . . .	21
Hypotheses . . . . .	23
III. RESEARCH DESIGN . . . . .	24
Introduction . . . . .	24
Sampling . . . . .	24
Instrumentation . . . . .	25
The Pilot Study . . . . .	26
Administration of the Instrument . . . . .	28
Scoring and Processing of Data . . . . .	29
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA . . . . .	30
Introduction . . . . .	30
Analysis of the Data . . . . .	30
Additional Analysis of Data . . . . .	33
Summary . . . . .	37
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	38
Summary . . . . .	38
Discussion . . . . .	41
Recommendations for Further Research . . . . .	46
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	49

Chapter	Page
APPENDIXES . . . . .	53
APPENDIX A - CORRESPONDENCE . . . . .	54
APPENDIX B - INSTRUMENT . . . . .	56
APPENDIX C - REJECTED QUESTIONNAIRE STATEMENTS. . . . .	59

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Reliability Coefficients of Structure, Consideration, and Communication Satisfaction . . . . .	28
II. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients for Structure, Consideration, and Satisfaction . . . . .	31
III. Reliability Coefficients of Structure, Consideration, and Communication Satisfaction . . . . .	32
IV. Analysis of Variance for Satisfaction . . . . .	34
V. Analysis of Variance for Structure . . . . .	35
VI. Analysis of Variance for Consideration . . . . .	36



## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

#### Introduction

Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes and decisions possible or impossible to execute (Abraham Lincoln, quoted in Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970, p. 100).

It is human nature to want some degree of control over the forces that shape our children's minds and attitudes. The whole concept of local control in our schools is based on this desire. Today's "new politics" in public education may be a community reaction to the policy-making pattern dominated by professional administrators operating under professionally "neutral" norms--all taking place within a closed system. Community groups, including parents, want to have more input into a process that affects their two most precious possessions: their children and their pocketbooks.

The public is rebelling in the only way it can, through the political process. Tax referenda and bond issues have been increasingly voted down over the past decade. Educators are awakening to the fact that the public owns the schools, and that the schools are dependent upon the good will of the people to survive.

No concept is more critical, nor more neglected, in school administration than communication. School administrators' survival, as well as their effectiveness in fulfilling the goals of the organization,

are directly aligned with the ability to initiate, organize and carry out effective two-way communication. Barnard (1968) maintains that the first essential function of the executive and the first task of the organizer is to provide the system of communication for the organization. That leadership will guide the board and the staff in the identification of those matters on which communication needs to be focused. The executive's concept of proper interaction with the various publics of the school will set the tone for the essential roles played by principals, teachers, and laymen in the endless task of maintaining public understanding (McCloskey, 1967).

#### Need for the Study

Few organizational management executives are knowledgeable about the formulation of public opinion. Instead, they seem to operate on the theory that, where communications is concerned, "they need to oil only the wheels that squeak the loudest." Failure to get through to a target public brings a clamor for "more communication as if that, in itself, is tantamount to effective communication" (Snyder, 1978, p. 32).

According to Moehlman (1957, p. 31), a basis for democratic action is "an articulate public opinion, dynamic, fluid, and translated into action through the participation of the people directly and through their own representatives." When public opinion fails to materialize or is uninformed, the operation and structure of a democratic government are threatened. When government takes place irrespective of and/or contrary to public opinion, the same threat to the governmental organization applies. Only as information is shared and accepted, interests are identified and resources are pooled, compromises are made and an inter-

action of influence takes place, does a degree of uniformity come into being. Moehlman concluded, "thus the factors which influence opinion formulation are part of the process of arriving at the consensus called public opinion--the collectively held opinion of a limited, a majority, or a general public."

While few writers question the importance of establishing a communication structure that will be effective in bringing about a cooperative and supportive public opinion, communication remains one of the least understood areas in administration (Knezevich, 1972). Yet, communication is the single most important influence in determining the survival of both the superintendent and the organization. Bass and Klauss (1975) supported this concept when they pointed out that it has been estimated senior executives spend as much as 80 percent of their time communicating. "Therefore the effective use of communications has a great deal to do with the success or failure of managers" (Klauss, 1975, p. 32). As environmental conditions become increasingly complex, the administrator, as the system gatekeeper responsible for maintenance of two-way communication between the organization and the environment, must use communication to gain support and cooperation for the organization from the environment, and, at the same time, make decisions based on inputs to adjust the organization to the needs of the environment (Maurer, 1971).

Without this exchange and the ensuing support on the part of the environment and adjustment on the part of the organization, no system can long survive (Emery and Trist, 1965). In the school organization institutional failure occurs when public reaction brings a substantial change in membership on the board of education. The turnover is

considered complete when a majority of votes is garnered among board members for the firing of the superintendent and an establishment of a new administration that will make the organizational adjustment required to satisfy the needs of the environment.

Leadership, according to Robert K. Merton (1969, p. 2615), is "some sort of social transaction." Social transaction, if not synonymous with communication, is at least so inextricably interwoven with communication that the two cannot be considered separately. This may be why research has shown studies of traits fail to predict leader behavior. In a review of 125 research studies of leadership generating 750 findings is about the personality traits of leaders, R. D. Mann (1959) found many of the studies contradicted one another as to which traits were determined to be desirable to good leadership. Earlier studies by Ralph M. Stodgill (1948) and Cecil A. Gibb (1952) concluded there are either no general leadership traits, or the desirable traits are situational. As a result of findings such as these, Merton (1969) concluded traits of leaders are not as important as the attributes of the transactions between those who lead and those who follow, this constitutes a social transaction, or process of communication.

Executives who seek ways to improve leadership through improved communication methods may find a great deal of advice written in both popular and professional publications. Yet, a common complaint of those investigating this area of study is the lack of research to support the writers' speculative recommendations. What little support is available consists principally of case studies, isolated and limited examples developed from efforts without empirical basis: what worked for a specific problem in one small town in Iowa, or New Jersey, etc.

The need for studies focused on the administrator's gatekeeping role appears in numerous articles. Scribner (1970) called for new research needed to determine something of the transactions that take place between individuals and groups in society and the educational decision makers in local school systems. Bidwell and Kasarda (1975, p. 55) echoed, "We badly need empirical studies, conducted in a variety of organizational settings, that use well-defined models of the links between input and output." The most serious deficiency in research in this area, according to Becker, McCombs and McLoen (1975), concerns the pertinence, timing, and organization of information. Wirt and Kirst (1975) pointed out that least often found in the recently developed analytical data about the school's outreach into the community is explanation--suppositions and supporting evidence about the causes, consequences, and interrelationships of that which is found in reality. While some causal theory of this kind is found in educational psychology and sociology of education, it is seldom found in educational administration. In fact, very little causal theory is found in the study of politics of education.

Specifically lacking is research on the influence the organizational gatekeeper has on the agenda of public discussion. While current communications students accept the media as a primary influence in setting the agenda of public discussion, Becker, McCombs and McLoen (1975, p. 64) for studies that will "go beyond the study of media content and audience reactions and focus on newsroom behaviors and the flow of information from the political news makers to the political news consumers." Very little is known about the influence of news makers on reporters and editors as they go about their selection of news items for

transmission. One critical element in such influence is, of course, behavior itself; not the leadership behavior as perceived by the leaders themselves, but the leadership behavior as perceived by the reporters and editors who work with those organizational leaders on a regular basis. As Halpin (1966) concluded in the major findings emerging from the Ohio State University studies, there is only a slight relationship between how leaders say they should behave and how subordinates describe they do behave. And, as Hemphill and Coons sought to develop in the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire an instrument that would effectively measure certain dimensions of leader behavior, so this study will seek to develop an instrument that will effectively measure certain dimensions of leader behavior in external communications situations. The importance of the facts presented above makes mandatory an intensive investigation of the superintendent as an organizational gatekeeper.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the effect of certain communications behaviors of superintendents in 12 school districts upon relationships with reporters and editors with whom they work on a regular basis. These 12 school districts are located in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas.

The specific question under consideration in this study is: Is there a relationship between selected communications behaviors of the superintendent and the communications satisfaction expressed by key media representatives?

## Assumptions

The first assumption of this study is that the superintendents involved in the study are representative of other, similar, superintendents. A second assumption is that the media representatives identified by the public information officers as those with whom the superintendent works on a regular basis are representative of other media representatives. A third assumption is that the responses of the media representatives to the questionnaire accurately describe their true perceptions of the communications behavior of the superintendent. Finally, it is assumed that the panel of judges accurately validated the survey instrument to be meaningful and appropriate in gathering the necessary data supporting or rejecting this study's hypotheses.

## The Objectives

The objectives of this study are (1) to identify communications behaviors shown by superintendents in relationships with reporters and editors, (2) to determine whether effective communications behavior of superintendents tends most often to be associated with high performance on either dimension.

## Definition of Terms

Many of the terms used in this investigation are relatively common in their usage. The following definitions are given more precise meanings for a better understanding within the framework of this investigation.

Sentiments. Internal states of the human body including all positive or negative oral expressions of motivations, feelings, or attitudes

(Homans, 1950).

Key Media Representatives. Representatives of area newspapers, radio news departments, and television news departments who have regular contact with the superintendent.

Consideration. Relationship-oriented leadership behavior indicating friendship, warmth, trust, helpfulness, respect, and a free, two-way flow of information between the chief executive officer and representatives of the media (Hoy and Miskel, 1978). Also, leader behavior in providing media representatives guidance in understanding the organization, its problems, the educational philosophy behind existing situations, decisions, and trends, and direction in recognizing and analyzing future developments expected to affect the school-community relationships.

Structure. Task-oriented leadership behavior that organizes and defines roles and established patterns of organization and ways of getting the job done (Hoy and Miskel, 1978).



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE, RATIONALE, AND HYPOTHESES

#### Introduction

McCloskey (1967) concluded that, based on recent research in social psychology and group dynamics, leadership is now perceived as a process of stimulating a two-way flow of influence between members of groups-- a process of social interaction. He also found that studies dealing with the functions of leadership are proving more fruitful than studies of traits. Using McCloskey's assertions as a guide, this chapter will be devoted to the construction of a framework to study the communication activities and sentiments that link the superintendent and the organizational environment as he acts to fulfill the role and goals of the gatekeeper. This purpose is accomplished by reviewing closely related literature, developing a rationale, and deducing research hypotheses.

#### Review of Literature

##### The Changing School Environment

"The need to consider environmental forces is obvious, widely accepted in the literature and easily asserted" (Downey, Hellriegel, and Slocum, 1975, p. 627), but presents difficulties in that the elements "are themselves changing, at an increasing rate, and toward increasing

complexity" (Emery and Trist, 1965, p. 21). Adaptability to these environmental changes appears to present a two-edged sword to organizational leaders. First, failure to adapt to new needs in the environment threatens the survival of the organization, and second, adaptability itself exists "to the extent that a system can survive externally induced change in its transactional interdependencies in the long run" (Terreberry, 1968, p. 610).

Few organizations survive for any great length of time. Most have specific purposes, and once they accomplish this purpose they disintegrate. Even an organization with a continuing purpose, such as an educational organization, when it has effective coordination and "when the preponderance of public opinion lies on the positive side, as it does for most of the purposes of education, the survival of the organization often depends upon the efforts of the administration" to obtain both material and psychological support for organization needs (Walton, 1969, pp. 134-135).

### The School Organization As

#### A Quasi-Open System

Hall and Fagen (1956) defined a system as a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes. A general summation of literature on closed systems would lead to a conclusion that closed systems are generally considered apart from and non-interacting with the environment. Open systems are considered to be importing-transforming-exporting systems that transact with environmental elements in order to achieve this process. In an effort to cope with the first threat to organizational survival outlined above,

theorists turned away from the closed-system approach and initiated an open-system approach that would make possible the necessary change of information to track environmental changes and make the necessary internal adjustments. The second threat, the ability of the organization to survive internal change induced by external influences and the vast amount of uncertainty and chaos inherent in a totally open-system approach, brought about another shift in theory, a compromise between open- and closed-systems theories. "Some degree of closedness is necessary to prevent system disintegration and collapse," was the summation of Maurer (1971, pp. 4-5). Katz and Kahn (1966) noted that not all inputs can be absorbed by the system. Boundary maintenance, "a process whereby the identity of the social system is preserved and the characteristic interaction pattern maintained," was suggested as a solution by Loomis (1960, pp. 31-32).

Parsons (Thompson, 1967) suggested that organizations exhibit three distinct levels of responsibility and control: technical, managerial, and institutional. When this concept is applied to school organization, teachers represent the technical level, administrators, the managerial level, and the board of education the institutional level. It is at the institutional level that the organization deals largely with elements of environment. Here also occurs the greatest level of uncertainty, since the organization has little or no formal authority or control over environmental elements.

The closed-system of logic is prevalent at the technical level to maintain maximum stability and low levels of uncertainty that the work of the organization might proceed with greatest efficiency. It is up to the "Managerial level to mediate between the two extremes and the

emphases they exhibit" (Thompson, p. 12). Specifically, it is the school superintendent who determines how open or how closed the system will be. It is in carrying out this function that we refer to him as the "gatekeeper."

### The Role of the Superintendent

#### As System Gatekeeper

System gatekeepers are a major bulwark of system stability, according to Monance (1967). He views gatekeepers as agents of a system's power structure. Pellegrin (1965) further defines the school power structure:

In the long run, the power structure of education revolves around the administration and the school board. These people make up the vast majority of those who are concerned with educational matters on a sustained basis. Potentially the most influential are the administrators--especially the superintendent and his top aides. They are the ones who initiate action, who make proposals for change, who recommend that this or that be done. The school board and the community may accede wholly or in part to these proposals, or they may turn any of them down. But in the main the school board and the public pass upon the alternatives proposed by the administration. They rarely initiate proposals themselves. On a long-run basis, those who initiate the proposals will be the top figures in the educational power structure (pp. 11-12).

While the school board represents the institutional level of the organizational structure, no one board member is in a position to have available the channels of information open to the superintendent. Stewart and Gelberd (1976) found, in a study of the ways in which each person integrates various items of information into a single judgment, that city council members could not predict the judgments of even the most vocal interest-group members. Often the only contacts a board member has with the community are friends, neighbors, and such vocal interest-group members as make themselves known.

Neither does the board member have the decision-making power possessed by the superintendent. A board member has power only when he votes with the majority of other board members during an official meeting. Even then, the power lies with the board as a whole and not the individual. Current literature and training for school board members advises individual members not to speak out publicly on school matters unless they are a duly appointed spokesman for the board. The reasoning behind this advice is that the board is stronger when speaking with one voice in presenting an orderly and cohesive front to the public.

Therefore, no board member can be as effective in the gatekeeping role as the superintendent. According to Barnard (1938),

The coordination of efforts essential to a system of cooperation requires . . . an organizational system of communication. Such a system of communication implies centers or points of interconnection and can only operate as these centers are occupied by persons who are called executives. It might be said, then, that the function of executives is to serve as channels of communication so far as communications must pass through central positions (p. 215).

Barnard, in an earlier chapter, related this system of cooperation to the environment:

An inspection of the concrete operations of any cooperative system shows at once that the physical environment is an inseparable part of it. To the extent that there are variations in the physical aspects of cooperative systems an adjustment or adaptation of other aspects of cooperation is required. It is in most cases evident that the social elements are an important aspect of a concrete situation (pp. 66-67).

He noted that in educational organizations the complexity of the variation of meaning of the membership aspect of the group concept is greater than that of business. In essence, this indicates a greater overlapping of the organization and the environment.

Walton (1969, p. 207) defined administration as consisting of three

distinct activities: (1) the discernment of an organization's purposes; (2) the direction of the internal affairs within an organization in their reciprocal relations and toward the accomplishment of these purposes; and (3) public relations in the sense of obtaining material and moral support for an organization. He saw

One of the crucial and indispensable responsibilities of the administrator, particularly the top administrator, in established education organizations--lower and higher, public and independent--is to provide mechanisms whereby social needs are elucidated, reconciled, and expressed in terms of organizational purposes or objectives (p. 149).

The principal authority, as Walton pointed out, is the public will. It is up to the administration to provide the means for the public to voice opinion about education. The administrator cannot afford to be on the defensive; he must expect and welcome differences of opinion. When the administrator becomes too involved in "answering criticisms of the schools, he is likely to subvert legitimate criticisms and to dull his own sensitivity to legitimate public demands" (p. 149). He must be able to translate public demands into specific and intelligible objectives for the organization, an ability that has been lacking in school leadership, according to critic J. D. Koerner (1968). This new aim must be expressed publicly so the public may evaluate it in terms of whether it should be an educational objective. Differences of opinion at this point also should be accepted. The administration and the board must conform to what they believe is majority opinion, while remaining sensitive to dissenting minority opinion. "Only in this way can administration perform its social function in discerning the changing purposes of the organization and, at the same time, conform to the values of a democratic society"(p. 166). When old organizations fail to perform functions needed by society, they often fail and new organizations are created to fulfill the void. This is

a chaotic process, according to Walton, disrupting continuity and wasting social energy.

Theoretically, then, we are compelled to say that it is the responsibility of administration in all organizations to work effectively at the task of public relations so that society enjoys the maximum stability in its institutions, and a kind of interorganizational equilibrium is achieved (p. 166).

Justification for the public relations activities of the administrator has traditionally been considered as (1) the right of the people in a democracy to know what their schools are doing; (2) the obligation on the part of those who run the schools to know what the people want from their schools; and (3) the necessity of securing public support for education. Walton adds a logical justification:

. . . if administration is given the responsibility for the maintenance and effectiveness of an organization within a society of competing organizations, it follows that the administrator is called upon to inform, solicit and persuade, by legitimate means, both subtle and direct, in order to obtain outside support. As the number of organizations competing for support increases, and as their legitimate purposes expand, administration's quest for public support becomes more urgent and intense (p. 128).

### Leadership Styles in Communication

According to Fiedler (1967), leadership style refers to the underlying attitudes toward people that motivate behavior in various leadership situations. Style may remain constant in motivating need-structure, but behavior is situational. Fiedler identified two leadership styles: task-oriented and relationship-oriented.

Similar dimensions are found in the research of Barnard (p. 60), Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (1953), Amitai Etzioni (1961), Talcott Parsons (Etzioni, 1961), Hemphill and Alvin Coons (1950), later refined by Halpin and B. J. Winer (1952), and others. Hoy and Miskel (1978) found

that even when researchers identified more than two dimensions of leadership, the greater number still fell basically within two categories: structure and consideration. Hoy and Miskel summarized their findings this way:

The concept of leadership constitutes a set of functions or behaviors, carried out by individuals, or leaders, to assure that tasks, group climate and individual satisfaction relate to the organization's objectives. Leader effectiveness, therefore, is the relative level of goal achievement.

To the practicing administrator, effectiveness is even more complicated and subtle than goal attainment. The process of administration also becomes an important leader effectiveness criterion. In other words, perceptual evaluations of performance are important outcomes, at least to the individual leader. Subjective judgments of the leader by subordinates, peers and superiors yield a second effectiveness type. Leadership effectiveness then has an objective dimension--accomplishment of organizational goals--and a subjective dimension--perceptual evaluations of significant reference groups (p. 180).

Knezevich (1975, p. 339) says, "Communication is one of the least understood areas in administration . . ." Yet, according to Bass and Klauss (1975, p. 32), "The effectiveness of their communications bears heavily on their success or failure."

Likert (1961), found that, not only do better managers communicate more effectively, but their subordinates see them as having more influence in the organization. In fact, Likert seemed to think the supervisor's ability to communicate and his influence were closely related. Pelz (1952) found that when the manager with influence tries to help others achieve their goals he is usually successful.

Little is known about specific managerial behavior as he/she engages in communication with someone who is not a subordinate or superior. However, it is this researcher's position that much of the literature on leadership styles and internal communication can be extended to include



external communication when the leader is acting in his/her official capacity in representing the organization and when the communication is directed at achieving an organizational goal. For instance, when the superintendent is working with a reporter, his official capacity is that of the organizational gatekeeper and the organizational goal is likely well within that described earlier by Walton.

Because leadership is situational, the concept of effectiveness is complex and sometimes difficult to measure. Stodgill and Coons (1957) defined the effectiveness of a group to include morale, output and satisfaction. Fiedler (1967) disagreed. He said these elements contribute to performance but were not in themselves criteria of performance. These arguments deserve some consideration in this study, since we are looking at communication as one critical element of leadership style.

### The Evolvement of the Communications

#### Satisfaction Concept

Essentially, the concept of communication satisfaction grew out of studies in job satisfaction. Based on the traditional theories of Maslow, Herzberg, Sergiovanni, Nathan King and the Hawthorne Studies, research in the area of job satisfaction delves into the many social variables that may increase worker satisfaction. However, the first accepted theory that satisfied workers are more productive workers quickly gave way to disagreement.

While evidence presented by Vroom indicates that a low but consistent relationship exists between satisfaction and performance (Lawler and Porter, 1969), Cummings and Scott are quoted in this same reference as stating,

. . . good performance may lead to rewards, which in turn lead to satisfaction; this formulation then would say that satisfaction, rather than causing performance, as was previously assumed, is caused by it (p. 161).

According to Likert (1961, pp. 223-233) the end result of job satisfaction is determined at least in part by the intervening variable communication.

Among the operating characteristics that Likert identified as being related to communication satisfaction are

- extent to which superiors have confidence and trust in subordinates,
- extent to which subordinates have confidence and trust in superiors,
- extent to which superiors display supportive behavior toward others,
- extent to which superiors behave so that subordinates feel free to discuss important things about their jobs with them, and
- extent to which immediate supervisor in solving problems generally tries to get subordinates' ideas and opinions and make constructive use of them.

These same characteristics should, theoretically, be applicable to other communication relationships such as that being investigated in this study: the communications relationship between the organizational leader and the representatives of the organizational environment.

The latest development in relating job satisfaction to communication has been a movement toward studying managerial communication behavior. In fact, measuring the effectiveness of a manager by employee satisfaction

has been based on the manager's skill in face-to-face communication. A study by J. D. Batten (1976) dealt with the results of some of those studies in an article entitled "Face-to-Face Communications." He reported that such communication is not a science, but it is an art that may be mastered. He isolated nine elements as effective in one-to-one relationships: vulnerability, openness, positive listening, kinesics, high expectations, forming conclusions, reinforcement, caring, and integrity.

Research by Paul Keckly (1977) indicated that the most important cause of breakdowns in business and industrial communication was due to three major factors: lack of management ability to communicate, withholding of information by management, and inadequate use of channels.

Today job satisfaction is being treated as an end result goal desirable in itself...the examination of the communication-satisfaction relationship has produced a construct called 'communication satisfaction' which is becoming a common reference in organizational literature (Downs, 1979, p. 4).

Cal Downs (1977) concluded that three criteria were necessary for effective communications: qualities of the message, its presentation, and achievement of the desired results.

The four primary goals of administration communication, according to Lee O. Thayer (1961), are to inform, to instruct or direct, to evaluate, and to influence.

Downs, in an unpublished letter to the Oral Roberts University speech communications department written just before his article, "The Relationship Between Communication and Job Satisfaction," was printed, stated there is no formula for effective communication. That leaves us, he wrote, with the contingency approach. "Appropriate solutions DEPEND on the situation" (p. 1). This concept creates tension because it calls for adapting to the receiver versus treating everyone equally.

He outlined eight dimensions of communication satisfaction: personal feedback, organizational integration, organizational perspective, relation with supervisor, relation with subordinate, horizontal-informal communication, media quality and communication climate. These dimensions were divided into two types. The first three were categorized as kinds of information and the latter five were categorized as relationships.

Wiio (1976, n.p.) concluded that job satisfaction and communication satisfaction were correlated but clearly separate things. He pointed out that while too little communication is a negative factor in job satisfaction, so is too much. "It would seem . . . that after a certain threshold has been reached the quantity of communication is not important anymore."

In his study involving twenty-two organizations in Finland over a three-year period, he found four dimensions of communications satisfaction: job satisfaction, message content, improvements in communication, and channel efficiency.

With Wiio the study of communication satisfaction was elevated to an area separate and distinct from the study of job satisfaction as a measure of leadership effectiveness.

Suggestions for future direction in the study of communication satisfaction were offered by Michael Hecht in a 1978 article, "Measures of Communication Satisfaction." Hecht concluded that measurement of communication satisfaction had not progressed far, and that, in fact, the only significant advances had been made within the organizational area. "As a result," he wrote, "research of the most basic nature is necessary" (p. 352). Points he offered that hold a significance for this study include:

- Approaches to measurement must be linked to theoretical orientations,

- Measures of communication satisfaction should be written to include descriptions of the communication process rather than traits or attitudes, and
- Measures should be content specific and include such distinctions as public and private communication, level of intimacy, goal or purpose, and level of relationship.

#### Rationale

Educational organizations exist in an environment that is changing at an increasing rate and toward increasing complexity. Adaptability to these environmental changes is necessary for any organization to survive. Even an organization with a continuing purpose that is largely supported by the public, such as that of education, must often depend upon the efforts of the administration effectively to obtain both material and psychological support for organizational needs. The administrator with the key responsibility for maintaining system stability is the chief executive officer of the organization, identified in this role as the system gatekeeper. The organizational gatekeeper carries out this responsibility by establishing a system of communication (centers or points of interconnection) between the organization and the environment. Through such a communication system the organizational gatekeeper is able to fulfill the principal activities of organizational administration as defined by Walton (1969):

1. discernment of an organization's purposes;
2. direction of internal affairs within an organization in their reciprocal relations and toward the accomplishment of these purposes; and

3. public relations in the sense of obtaining material and moral support for the organization.

Generally lacking is leadership shown by systems gatekeepers in establishing effective linkages for communication between the organization and the environment. Specifically lacking is research on the influence the organizational gatekeeper has on the agenda of public discussion. Communication students generally accept the media as a primary influence in setting the agenda of public discussion, but Becker, McCombs and McLoen suggest further research in the area of "the flow of information from the news makers to the political news consumers." Very little is known about the influence of news makers on reporters and editors as they go about their selection of news items for transmission.

Likert (1961) closely relates influence and the ability to communicate well. Similarly, McCloskey (1967) says the process of stimulating a two-way flow of influence between members of groups--a process of social interaction--is a definition of leadership.

The study of managerial communication behavior is the latest development in relating job satisfaction to communication. In fact, measuring the effectiveness of a manager by employee satisfaction has been based on the manager's skill in face-to-face communication (J. D. Batten, 1976). Downs (1976) said the examination of the communication-satisfaction relationship has produced a construct called "communication satisfaction" which is becoming a common reference in organization literature. Suggestions for future direction in the study of communication satisfaction offered by Hecht (1978) called for approaches to measurement that included descriptions of the communications process, or communication behaviors.

On the basis of this reasoning, it may be assumed that the superintendent plays the role of gatekeeper, whether planned or unplanned. His ability to communicate the goals and needs of the schools makes a definite difference in whether the community supports the educational organization. His ability to influence public opinion should be related to exhibited communications behavior, qualities that can be identified and measured for effectiveness by the amount of communication satisfaction expressed by the persons with whom he communicates.

The ability to influence public opinion should be related to influence on the reporters and editors who select the news items that, in effect, set the agenda of public discussion. If influence and communication ability are closely related, as suggested by Likert, the identification of certain measurable qualities of communication behaviors that result in communication satisfaction for reporters and editors may have significant implications as to the effectiveness of the superintendent in his ability to influence public opinion (effective gatekeeping).

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were deduced from the preceding rationale and will serve as a model for data collection.

H.1. The more consideration perceived in the superintendents' communication behavior by the media representative, the more communication satisfaction will be expressed by the media representative.

H.2. The more structure perceived in the superintendents' communication behavior by the media representative, the more communication satisfaction will be expressed by the media representative.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### Introduction

The research design will be described in this chapter, including the sampling techniques, the instrumentation, the pilot study, the method of administering the instrument and collecting the data, and a description of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data.

#### Sampling

Twelve school superintendents in Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, were selected for this study. For a number of reasons, selection was limited to urban and suburban superintendents with at least 18 months tenure. First, the 18-month minimum tenure ensured the superintendent had had time to establish characteristic behavior patterns in working with members of the local press. This time period also gave him/her time to establish credibility, reputation, and a structured communication program, elements that need to be stabilized for the sake of increasing reliability of data comparison. Second, the selection was limited to urban superintendents and those from suburban districts within large metropolitan areas to ensure the number of news representatives working with the superintendent on a regular basis would be great enough to provide an adequate sampling.



Each superintendent was contacted, either directly or indirectly through his public information officer, and asked to endorse the study. All twelve superintendents were enthusiastic and interested, and they immediately gave their endorsement. The public information officer for each district was then asked to provide the researcher with a list of names of news reporters and editors with whom the superintendent worked on a fairly regular basis. This list, for each of the twelve districts, included representatives of newspapers, representatives of radio news departments and representatives of television news departments. A minimum of eight names was requested from each district; some districts listed as many as twelve. The instrument was administered to those who made up this sample.

#### Instrumentation

The instrument used to measure the superintendents' communication behaviors as perceived by news reporters was developed by the researcher for the purposes of this study and titled the "Communications Behavior Description Questionnaire."

In the initial stages of development, an intensive review was made of research instruments designed to measure comparable or similar properties. These included, but were not restricted to, Dennis's (1975) "Communications Climate Questionnaire" and "Communication Survey;" Downs' and Hazen's (1973) "Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire;" Pace's (undated) "Organizational Satisfaction Inventory" and "Communication Climate Inventory;" the "Your Organizational Survey" used by Phillips Petroleum Company Engineering (undated); Roberts' and Oreilly's (1971) "Communications Dimensions Survey;" Brayfield's (1951) "Job Questionnaire;" Wiio's (1976) "Questions from the LTT Audit;" and the

Ohio State Universtiy "Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire" (Halpin and Winer, 1952).

Each item on these surveys was carefully analyzed for applicability to the measure of a leader's communication behavior with representatives of the organizational environment in a formalized setting. Items selected were carefully reworded as necessary. In addition, other items were added to the list through an interview process with superintendents, news reporters and communication specialists. A total of eighty-three items was compiled in this fashion.

To narrow the list to more suitable length and to eliminate those items of questionable value or clarity, a panel of judges was convened. The panel was comprised of news reporters who work on a regular basis with various school superintendents and of school public information officers.

A final list of twenty items was reached, a process giving the instrument content validity as outlined by Kerlinger (1964). Ten of the items dealt with the dimension of structure. In addition, one item was added to the list to measure the communications satisfaction of the reporter with the superintendent's communication in general. This item was adapted from the "Communication Dimensions Survey" for which it was specifically identified as measuring satisfaction. A four-point numerical rating scale was used to measure the perceived behaviors, with 1 representing "often," 2 representing "sometimes," 3 representing "seldom," and 4 representing "never."

#### The Pilot Study

Four urban and suburban school districts in Oklahoma were selected for the pilot study. The superintendent of each of the four districts

had at least 18 months tenure in the position and had broad access to urban media. The superintendent of each district or a key administrator (the public relations officer) was contacted, informed of the study, and asked to endorse it. The first four superintendents contacted readily gave that endorsement. The public relations officer for each of the four districts supplied the researcher with a list of media representatives who had regular contact with the superintendent. All lists included reporters and/or editors from newspapers, radio news departments, and television news departments. A total of 53 names was provided by the four districts.

Each of those 53 reporters and/or editors was contacted by the researcher or an assistant and given a written questionnaire. Fifty of the media representatives completed the form.

Factor analysis was used to confirm the factor or dimension hypotheses. After rotation with Kaiser normalization, it was determined that eight questions were loaded on the side of Factor I, the dimension of structure. Seven of the questions were loaded in Factor II, the dimension of consideration. Only items loading in excess of .44 were utilized in the final questionnaire design (Appendix D). Loading was inadequate for four questions and those four questions were removed from the survey form (Appendix C).

Using the Cronbach procedure, reliability for structure and consideration were determined, yielding a .86 reliability coefficient for the dimension of structure, and .93 for consideration.

TABLE I  
 RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS OF STRUCTURE,  
 CONSIDERATION AND COMMUNICATION  
 SATISFACTION

Structure	.86
Consideration	.93
Communications Satisfaction	.94

#### Administration of the Instrument

The superintendent of each of the selected school districts was contacted by telephone by the researcher and the proposed project was explained. When the superintendent agreed to endorse the project and furnish a list of news representatives as described earlier in this chapter, the researcher promised results would be anonymous, both to the superintendent and the district, and to the individual reporters who would furnish the data. This assurance was made because of the somewhat sensitive nature of the subject matter.

The instrument, a cover letter and a stamped, self-addressed envelope were mailed to all reporters named by the public information officers for the twelve school districts. A total of 103 reporters were included. The cover letter explained the purpose of the study and assured the recipient that the superintendent was aware of and supportive of the study. The anonymity of all responses was assured.

Within ten days 60 percent of the questionnaires had been returned.

Personal phone calls were made at that point to those individuals who had not yet returned their questionnaires to remind them to do so. Within the next week another 26 questionnaires were returned. In all, a total of 86 questionnaires were completed and returned, a response of 84 percent.

#### Scoring and Processing of Data

Responses to the seventeen items of the Communications Behavior Description Questionnaire were punched into data cards and scoring was done by computer using facilities at Oklahoma State University. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

Both hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson's Bivariant correlation procedures. Correlation matrices were constructed and data were measured against the .05 level of significance.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

The analysis of data will be presented and discussed in this chapter. The data collected were central to the two hypotheses presented in Chapter II. The stated hypotheses were as follows:

H.1. The more consideration perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative, the more communication satisfaction will be expressed by the media representative.

H.2. The more structure perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative, the more communication satisfaction will be expressed by the media representative.

The statistical measure used to determine the relationships between the consideration and structure factors perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior and the communication satisfaction expressed by the media representative was the Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation. The data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program at Oklahoma State University computer facilities.

Hypotheses were accepted when the results were supported at or below the .05 level of significance.

#### Analysis of the Data

There was a high positive relationship between the factor of

consideration perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative and the amount of communication satisfaction expressed by the media representative. As the amount of consideration perceived increases, the amount of satisfaction expressed also increases.

Results also showed a high positive relationship between the amount of structure perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative and the amount of communication satisfaction expressed by the media representative. As the amount of structure perceived increases, the amount of satisfaction also increases.

Both hypotheses in this study were supported at the .05 level of significance. Data related to this test are presented in Table II.

TABLE II  
PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS  
FOR STRUCTURE, CONSIDERATION,  
AND SATISFACTION

	Satisfaction	Structure	Consideration
Satisfaction			
r	1.0000	0.7534	0.7255
p	0.000	0.000	0.000
Structure			
r		1.0000	0.6022
p		0.000	0.000
Consideration			
r			1.0000
p			0.000

The Pearson Bivariate Correlation Coefficient test results revealed that:

When the amount of consideration perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative was greater, so was the amount of communication satisfaction expressed by the media representative.

When the amount of structure perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative was greater, so was the amount of communication satisfaction expressed by the media representative.

The correlations obtained were well beyond the .05 level. Therefore, both hypotheses were accepted, since the correlations obtained fell well outside the realm of chance.

In an attempt to determine the continuing reliability of responses to items appearing on the instrument, the Cronbach procedure was used to measure the reliability of the two dependent factors.

TABLE III  
RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS OF STRUCTURE,  
CONSIDERATION, AND COMMUNICATION  
SATISFACTION

Structure	.80
Consideration	.80



The Cronbach procedure yielded .80 reliability for structure and .80 reliability for consideration. The same test yielded .86 reliability for structure and .93 reliability for consideration in the pilot study. While the decline in reliability coefficients between the pilot study and the final study was more than expected, a reliability of .80 was considered quite adequate.

#### Additional Analysis of Data

All participants in this study were identified as representatives of (1) newspapers, (2) television, or (3) radio. One-way analysis of variance was conducted to see if there was a difference in the responses of representatives of the three groups. The Scheffe Multiple Comparison Procedure produced the results shown in Tables IV, V, and VI. The data showed that in responding to the item expressing the amount of communication satisfaction, there were no significant differences among the groups at the .05 level of confidence.

Similarly, in responding to the items dealing with the factor of structure, there were no significant differences among the groups at the .05 level of confidence, although a definite trend could be noted.

However, there was a significant difference at the .05 level of confidence between newspaper representatives and those representing radio and television in their responses to the variable of consideration. The print media representatives perceived more consideration in the superintendents' communication behavior than did representatives of the electronic media.

TABLE IV  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE  
FOR SATISFACTION

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F. Ratio	F. Prob.
Between Groups	2	1.9015	0.9508	1.818	0.1687
Within Groups	83	43.4007	0.5229		
Total	85	45,3022			

TABLE V  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE  
FOR STRUCTURE

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F. Ratio	F. Prob.
Between Groups	2	90.4868	45.2434	3.089	0.0508
Within Groups	83	1215.6467	14.6463		
Total	85	1306.1333			

TABLE VI  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE  
FOR CONSIDERATION

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F. Ratio	F. Prob.
Between Groups	2	194.6761	97.3381	5.426	0.0061
Within Groups	83	1488.8447	17.9379		
Total	85	1683.5208			

Scheffe Multiple Range Procedure:

Mean	
13.6579	Group 1 (Print Media Representatives)
16.6667	Group 2 (Television Media Representatives) *
16.7037	Group 3 (Radio Media Representatives) *

### Summary

The findings of this study were presented in Chapter IV. Both hypotheses of the study were supported at the .05 level of confidence. Reporters representing the electronic media were shown to differ significantly from newspaper reporters in their perception of the consideration factor in the superintendent's communication behavior. However, there was no significant difference between any of the groups at the .05 level of confidence in their responses to the factors of structure or satisfaction.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The main purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of media representatives as to the communication behaviors of superintendents of schools compared to the communication satisfaction of those media representatives with the overall communication of the superintendents. Twelve urban and suburban school superintendents in Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri and Texas were asked to cooperate with and to support the study. The public information officer in each of those twelve school districts supplied a list of names of news reporters and editors from newspapers, radio news departments, and television news departments who worked on a regular basis with the superintendent.

The instrument, comprised of 17 Likert-type statements, was mailed to each of the media representatives after acceptable reliability coefficients were established by using a similar group of subjects in a pilot study.

The data provided by the instrument dealt with the structure and consideration factors in perceived communication behaviors of specified school superintendents, and with the communication satisfaction of the media representative with the overall communication of the superintendent. These data were tested statistically to determine the correlation between the amount of structure perceived and the degree of

communications satisfaction expressed, and the amount of consideration perceived and the degree of communication satisfaction expressed.

Additional analysis of data revealed a significant difference in the way electronic media (radio and television) reporters perceived the consideration variable in the superintendent's communication behavior from the way newspaper reporters perceived the same variable. No significant differences were demonstrated between any of the three groups in the way they perceived structure or ranked communication satisfaction.

The two hypotheses relating to positive correlations between the structure and consideration factors in perceived communication behaviors of school superintendents and the amount of communication satisfaction expressed by media representatives were tested by applying the Pearson Bivariant Correlation Procedure.

#### Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one stated the more consideration perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative, the more communication satisfaction will be expressed by the media representative. For this hypothesis the calculated  $r$  was .7255. With two degrees of freedom an  $r$  of .217 was needed to show significance at the .05 level. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported at the .05 level of confidence.

#### Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two stated the more structure perceived in the superintendent's communication behavior by the media representative, the more communication satisfaction will be expressed by the media

representative. For this hypothesis the calculated  $r$  was .7534. With two degrees of freedom an  $r$  of .217 was needed to show significance at the .05 level. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported at the .05 level of confidence.

During additional analysis of data, it was determined that television and radio reporters differed significantly in their perceptions of the amount of consideration shown in the superintendent's communication behavior from that perceived by newspaper reporters. The Scheffe procedure for one-way analysis of variance established the difference at the .05 level of significance. However, the same test showed there were no differences at the .05 level of confidence between any of the groups in their perception of the amount of structure exhibited by the superintendent's communication behavior. There were no statistical differences among the groups at the .05 level of significance for the amount of satisfaction expressed for the superintendent's communication in general.

In summary, it was found there is a high degree of correlation between the amount of structure and consideration perceived in a superintendent's communication behavior and the amount of communication satisfaction expressed by the media representative. There was a significant difference between electronic media reporters and print media representatives in the way they perceived the consideration elements of the superintendent's communication behavior. No significant differences were found to exist among the three groups in the way they perceived the structure exhibited in the superintendent's communication behavior or in the amount of communication satisfaction expressed.



## Discussion

"In a democratic social order where people freely read, listen, speak, formulate opinions, and vote, leadership is largely a matter of communication . . ." according to McCloskey (1967, p. 248). In fact, he said, the "relationship between leadership and communication is so close that in many respects the two are synonymous." Rarely, however, is a school superintendent chosen primarily for communication ability. Nor do training programs for school administrators often provide special help in improving communication techniques. Fortunately, behavior can be learned. Katz (1955) stressed identifying administrative skills for use in training executives. Therefore, an appropriate conclusion to this study would seem to be that greater emphasis should be placed on providing both current and future school administrators with the necessary training to develop those communication behaviors deemed both helpful and appropriate for a variety of situations in which influence is a key factor.

If, as Barnard maintained, the first essential function of the executive and the first task of the organizer is to provide the system of communication for the organization, then it follows that training in organizing and conducting communication should be given a priority treatment in the training of school executives.

It is basically accepted in the literature of management that the leadership exhibited by the chief executive officer of the organizational unit sets the tone for organizational climate. This climate has an overlapping effect with that of significant reference groups outside the parameters of the organization itself. Teachers, other employees and students live in the community and carry overtones of that climate

with them wherever they go. Parents, business and civic leaders and members of various other publics existing in the organizational environment who interact with administrators also carry away overtones of attitudes formed while communicating with those administrators.

Anyone who has played the old game of "gossip" will be aware of the ripple effect of specific phrases, of attitudes communicated by word and body language, by whole concepts that intrigue the imagination of the public. The school administrator, in occupying a position of authority, is in a unique position to influence others by being aware of and taking advantage of the communication he or she initiates. For instance, the communication initiated in reaction to crisis fosters a reaction in the community to that communication. A message communicated with behaviors that signify good will, sympathy, trust, openness and leadership, could create a sympathetic tide in the community that would help the administrator successfully move toward a common goal. On the other hand, a message communicated with behaviors that signify a defensive attitude, closedness, and a lack of trust, might have the opposite reaction of breeding distrust and hostility within the community that becomes a force working against the administrator and the organization. While it might be argued that communication is situational, this researcher would provide counter-argument that with imagination, good timing, control of communication behavior, careful and credible message construction, and insight into the broad perspective of the organization and its goals, any situation may be used to the benefit of the organization. Two basic elements in communication behavior isolated in this study were consideration and structure, elements that are related to, if not synonymous with the two basic elements of leadership identified in the literature.

Structure was defined as leadership behavior that organizes and defines roles and establishes patterns of organization and ways of getting the job done. Examples of items taken from the instrument that signify the structural element of communication behavior include:

- seeing that others receive information on time so that they can complete their assignment,
- establishing practices adaptable to emergencies,
- providing clear and concise information,
- anticipating the needs of others,
- creating a general atmosphere of candor and frankness,
- providing easy access to information directly related to others' work,
- spending more time planning for the future than in reacting to daily crisis,
- organizing and maintaining a formal communication program, and
- providing accurate information.

Such practices basically fulfill Barnard's first essential function of the executive and first task of the organizer. Without structure, organizational communication would be hit and miss, a shotgun approach. An old law of physics says that nature abhors a vacuum. Without structure a communication vacuum exists and nature will fill that vacuum with something. Rumor and chaos are likely to result. Structure can fill that vacuum with communication that can be channeled, assisting the organization toward its goals.

The second element of communications behavior identified in this study was that of consideration. Consideration was defined as leadership behavior indicating friendship, warmth, trust, helpfulness,

respect, and a free, two-way flow of information between the chief executive officer and others. Also, leader behavior in providing media representatives guidance in understanding the organization, its problems, the educational philosophy behind existing situations, decisions, and trends, and direction in recognizing and analyzing future developments expected to affect the schools and school-community relationships. Examples of items taken from the instrument that signify the consideration element of communication behavior include:

- showing knowledge and understanding of the problems faced by reporters,
- exhibiting trust and confidence in others,
- winning the trust and confidence of others,
- assisting by providing ideas (helps channel thought and gives direction)
- discussing educational philosophy for a better understanding of the issues at hand,
- sharing projections for the future, and
- maintaining a level of communication that does not overwhelm or confuse others.

While structure provides the organization and the channels for communication, and establishes credibility, consideration establishes understanding and perhaps a bond, a human element that can have far-reaching effects.

Representatives of the electronic media did not rate the superintendents as high in the consideration aspect of their communication behavior as did the print media. This may likely have a great deal to do with the difference between the tools used by print and electronic

media. Few people can relax when a microphone is held near their face, or a television camera is turned on them. There is a time element, the entire situation must be summarized in a few key words, often without time for preparation. Every word, every voice inflection, and if television is involved, all body language and aspects of appearance, are recorded for full impact on the public. This causes tension in the administrator and suppresses the kinds of behaviors that show consideration. Behaviors showing consideration are far more easily demonstrated during a more leisurely interview in the familiar surroundings of the office with a newspaper reporter who holds a less threatening pad and pencil.

Consideration, however, remains an important element whether perceived by reporters from the electronic media, the print media, a subordinate or student, or a community group. All human beings have biases. While reporters are taught to suppress their biases, as a matter of good ethics, those biases are there nonetheless. Reporters who have been shown consideration can be very effective in communicating the essence of the intended message. This is not to suggest that administrators should attempt to manipulate others. What is suggested is the establishment of a climate for good communication.

To carry this line of reasoning one step further, the potential for the superintendent to influence the agenda of public discussion through good media relations is excellent. Through the media the ripple effect has maximum impact. The superintendent makes a statement, the media accurately report it, the public discusses it. When credibility exists, the statement is supported with factual information, and there is no opposition to the statement, there is maximum opportunity for inspiring

confidence in the schools and gaining public support for organizational goals. Too often, however, administrators lack confidence in their communication abilities and fail to make use of their communication resources. Training such as that suggested earlier could boost confidence and offer insights into the many possibilities for improved communication.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

This study may contribute to leadership theory in the area of the communication link between the organization and the environment. It may be of value to persons who have the responsibility of maintaining the gatekeeping function for the organization. Those communication behaviors showing structure and consideration can be learned or improved. When greater structure and consideration are shown, greater communication satisfaction should be expressed by reporters and possibly by other community groups. Shown by Wiio to be a measure of leadership effectiveness, communication satisfaction may very well lead to improved community relations and increased influence on the agenda of public discussion. Most of all, this study will have value if it stimulates further research in the area of organizational-environmental relationships and channels of communication. As a result of this study, the following recommendations for further study are made:

1. A further refinement of the instrument may be needed even though the reliability and validity reports were considered acceptable.
2. The area of staff development activities should be investigated, as well as the effect such training may have in boosting confidence in and actual use of the learned behaviors.

3. A study should be made of the communication behaviors of reporters covering the education beat, and the influences affecting their news judgement and story presentation.
4. An interesting study could be made comparing the communication behaviors of superintendents reacting to crisis situations and communicating behaviors of superintendents operating under stable conditions.
5. While demographic data were not included in the study, the researcher was aware of the ages and tenure of most of the superintendents involved. There appeared to be some interesting differences in communication behavior demonstrated by those under the approximate age of 45 and those who were in their last decade before retirement. This perceived difference provides an interesting possibility for further study.
6. A study should be made of the differences in the way the administrator perceives his/her own behavior and that perceived by significant reference groups such as reporters, parents, teachers, students or other administrators.
7. A study should be made of the communication behavior of upwardly mobile administrators.
8. Since evaluation consists primarily of two approaches, goal attainment and perceptions of significant reference groups, research should be conducted in developing an effective evaluation instrument containing both these approaches for the purpose of providing administrators feedback as to the effectiveness of their communications behavior.
9. Research should be conducted to find the correlation between

communication behaviors exhibited while the administrator interacts with subordinates and communication behaviors exhibited while the administrator interacts in a formal role with representatives of the organization environment.

Public sentiment can mean the difference between success or failure of any idea, organization, or administrator's career. The first step in affecting public sentiment for the public school administrator is the ability to communicate both intellectual and emotional information, and thereby influence those who set the agenda of public discussion: reporters and editors representing the media. Results of this investigation showed when consideration and structure factors in the superintendents' communication behavior were perceived as high by media representatives, their communication satisfaction was also high. Communication satisfaction has been developed as a measure of leadership effectiveness. Therefore, the superintendents who create greater communication satisfaction with significant groups should be more effective in influencing those groups.



## A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnard, Chester I. The Functions of the Executive. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.
- Bass, Bernard M. and Rudi Klauss. "Communication Styles, Credibility and Their Consequences." The Personnel Administrator, 20 (October, 1975), pp. 32-35.
- Batten, Joe D. "Face-to-Face Communications." The Personnel Administrator, 21 (February, 1976), pp. 51-54.
- Becker, L. B., M. E. McCombs, and J. M. McLoen. "The Development of Political Cognitions." Political Communication. Ed. S. H. Chafee. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1975, pp. 21-64.
- Bidwell, Charles E. and John D. Kasarda. "School District Organization and Student Achievement." American Sociological Review, 40 (February, 1975), p. 55.
- Brayfield, Arthur H. "An Index of Job Satisfaction." Journal of Applied Psychology, 35 (October, 1951), pp. 307-311.
- Cartwright, Dorwin and Alvin Zander. Group Dynamics Research and Theory. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1953, p. 549.
- Dennis, Harry. "Communication Climate Questionnaire: and "Communication Survey." (Unpublished research materials, Oral Roberts University, Department of Speech Communications, 1979.)
- Dennis, Harry. "The Construction of a Managerial 'Communication Climate' Inventory for Use in Complex Organizations." (Unpublished paper presented to the I.C.A., Chicago, 1975; Oral Roberts University, Department of Speech Communications, 1979.)
- Downs, Cal W. Organizational Communicator. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.
- Downs, Cal W. Unpublished follow-up letter to the Oral Roberts University Speech Communications Department after appearance as guest lecturer. Includes "Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire" by Downs and Michael D. Hazen, 1973. Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1979.

- Downey, Kirk H., Don Hellriegel, and John W. Slocum, Jr. "Environmental Uncertainty: The Construct and Its Application." Administrative Science Quarterly, 20 (December, 1975), p. 627.
- Emery, F. E. and E. L. Trist. "The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments." Human Relations, 18 (February, 1965), pp. 21-32.
- Etzioni, Amitai. A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations. New York: Free Press, 1961, p. 91.
- Fiedler, Fred E. A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 8.
- Gibb, Cecil A. "Leadership." Handbook of Social Psychology. Ed. Gardner Lindzey, Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954, pp. 877-920.
- Hall, A. D. and R. E. Fagen. "Definition of System." General Systems: The Yearbook of the Society for General Systems Research. 1 (1956), pp. 18-28.
- Halpin, Andrew W. Theory and Research in Administration. New York: Macmillan, 1966, pp. 86-90.
- Halpin, Andrew W. and B. J. Winer. The Leadership Behavior of the Airplane Commander. Washington, D.C.: Human Resources Research Laboratories, Department of the Air Force, 1952.
- Hecht, Michael L. "Measures of Communication Satisfaction." Human Communication Research (Summer, 1978), pp. 350-368.
- Hemphill, John K. and Alvin E. Coons. Leader Behavior Description. Columbus: Personnel Research Board, Ohio State University, 1950.
- Homans, George C. The Human Group. New York, 1950, pp. 34-40.
- Hoy, Wayne K. and Cecil G. Miskel. Educational Administration: Theory, Research, and Practice. New York: Random House, 1978, p. 180.
- Iannaccone, Laurence and Frank Lutz. Politics, Power, and Policy: The Governing of Local School Districts. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970.
- Katz, Daniel and Robert L. Kahn. The Social Psychology of Organizations. New York: Wiley, 1966, pp. 59-62.
- Katz, R. L. "Skills of an Effective Administrator." Harvard Business Review, 33, 1 (1955), pp. 33-42.
- Keckly, Paul. "The Increasing Importance of Employee Relations." Public Relations Review, 3 (Fall, 1977), pp. 70-76.

- Kerlinger, Fred N. Foundations of Behavioral Research. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964.
- Knezevich, Stephen J. Administration of Public Education. New York: Harper and Row, 1975, pp. 339-347.
- Koerner, James D. Who Controls American Education? Boston: Beacon Press, 1968, p. 166.
- Lawler, Edward E. III and Lyman W. Porter. "The Effect of Performance on Job Satisfaction." Readings in Organizational Behavior and Human Performance. Eds. Cummings and Scott, 1969.
- Likert, Rensis. The Human Organization: Its Management and Value. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, pp. 197-211.
- Likert, Rensis. New Patterns of Management. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961.
- Loomis, Charles P. Social Systems. Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1960, pp. 31-32.
- Mann, R. D. "A Review of the Relationships Between Personality and Performance." Psychological Bulletin, 56 (1959), pp. 241-370.
- Maurer, John G. Readings in Organizational Theory. New York: Random House, 1971, pp. 4-5.
- McCloskey, Gordon. Education and Public Understanding. 2nd Ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- Merton, Robert K. "The Social Nature of Leadership." American Journal of Nursing, 69 (1969), p. 2615.
- Moehlman, Arthur B. School Public Relations. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1938.
- Monance, Joseph H. A Sociology of Human Systems. New York: 1967, pp. 78-100.
- Pace, Wayne and the Organizational Associates. "Organizational Satisfaction Inventory" and "Communication Climate Inventory." (undated) Oral Roberts University, Department of Speech Communications, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1979.
- Pellegrin, Roland J. Community Power Structure and Educational Decision-Making in the Local Community. Eugene, Oregon: Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, University of Oregon, 1965, pp. 11-12.
- Pelz, Donald C. "Influence: A Key to Effective Leadership in the First-line Supervisor." Personnel, 29, 3 (November, 1952), pp. 209-217.

- Roberts, K. H. and Charles A. O'Reilly. "Measuring Organizational Communication." Journal of Applied Psychology, 35 (1974), pp. 321-326.
- Sanford, Fillmore H. "Research on Military Leadership." Psychology in the World Emergency. Ed. J. C. Flanagan. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1952, p. 51.
- Scribner, Jay D. "The Politics of Educational Reform." Urban Education, 4 (January, 1970), pp. 348-374.
- Snyder, Leonard J. "Uses and Gratifications to Implement a PR Program." Public Relations Review, 4 (Summer, 1978), pp. 32-39.
- Stewart, Thomas R. and Linda Gelberd. "Analysis of Judgement Policy: A New Approach for Citizen Participation in Planning." Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 42 (January, 1976), pp. 33-41.
- Stogdill, Ralph H. Manual for the Leader Description Questionnaire--Form XII. Columbus: Bureau of Business Research, Ohio State University, 1963.
- Stogdill, Ralph M. "Personal Factors Associated With Leadership: A Survey of the Literature." Journal of Psychology, 25 (1948), pp. 35-71.
- Stogdill, Ralph M. and Alvin E. Coons. Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement. Columbus: Research Monograph No. 88, Ohio State University, 1957.
- Terreberry, Shirley. "The Evolution of Organizational Environments." Administrative Science Quarterly, 12 (1968), pp. 590-593.
- Thayer, Lee O. Administrative Communication. Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1961, pp. 133-205.
- Thompson, James D. Organizations In Action. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968, pp. 3-13.
- Walton, John. Administration and Policy-Making in Education. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969.
- Wio, Osmo. "Organizational Communication: Interfacing Systems in Different Contingencies." (Unpublished paper presented to the annual convention of I.C.A., Portland, Oregon, April, 1976.)
- Wirt, Frederick M. and Michael Kirst. Political and Social Foundations of Education. Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1975, p. 11.
- "Your Organizational Survey." Developed by Phillips Petroleum Company Engineering, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1979.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
CORRESPONDENCE

22117 East 63rd Street  
Broken Arrow, OK 74012  
April 20, 1981

I am working toward a doctorate in Education Administration with a specialization in communications under the direction of Dr. Carl Anderson at Oklahoma State University. At the present time I am gathering data for my dissertation, a study of the communications behavior of chief executive officers of urban school districts.

To learn more about the communications behavior of urban school superintendents, I need some information from a number of people like yourself. The administration of school districts involved in the sample are aware that I am making this study.

Your name was given to me by \_\_\_\_\_ You are one of eight reporters and/or editors requested to complete the attached survey. Please direct your responses to your perception of the communications behavior of Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_

All information given will be completely confidential. No names of reporters, superintendents or school districts will be used in my dissertation or any article stemming from the findings of this study. Neither will I reveal your personal opinions to anyone else.

Please take ten minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it before May 1, 1981 in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. Your response is important to the success of this study!

Sincerely,

Frances Powell  
Doctoral Candidate  
Education Administration

APPENDIX B

INSTRUMENT



### COMMUNICATIONS BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Following are some statements about the communications behaviors of school superintendents. Please respond with your personal opinion about each statement as you perceive the communications behavior of the superintendent named in the cover letter. Please circle the appropriate response at the right of each statement.

Your answers are completely confidential so be as frank as you wish. Do not sign your name. Answers will be combined into groups for statistical analysis and reporting purposes.

1 = Often      2 = Sometimes      3 = Seldom      4 = Never

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I receive on time the information needed to complete my assignments.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. The superintendent knows and understands the problems faced by reporters.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. School district communications practices are adaptable to emergencies.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Information given me is clear and concise.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. School personnel anticipate my needs for information.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. The superintendent seems to have a great deal of confidence and trust in me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Reporters seem to have a great deal of confidence and trust in the superintendent.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. A general atmosphere of candor and frankness seems to pervade relationships between reporters and school personnel through all levels of the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. All reporters have relatively easy access to information that relates directly to an assignment.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. The superintendent often gives me ideas for stories that are of current interest.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. The superintendent discusses with me current philosophy in education.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. The superintendent discusses with me future trends he/she sees in education.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. The superintendent spends more time reacting to existing situations than he/she does planning for the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. The school district has a formal communications program.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. When receiving information from the superintendent, I always find it to be accurate.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. I often feel I receive more information than I can efficiently use.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

I am very satisfied with the superintendent's communication.	1	2	3	4
--	---	---	---	---

APPENDIX C

REJECTED QUESTIONNAIRE STATEMENTS

## REJECTED QUESTIONNAIRE STATEMENTS

The superintendent gives district personnel freedom to discuss information with me.

When I have to print an unfavorable story I am in fear of being shut out of further contact with the superintendent.

The superintendent readily gives me all the information needed to complete a story assignment.

The superintendent tries to keep me informed on matters important to the public interest.

VITA<sup>2</sup>

Frances Kay Powell

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

**Thesis:** PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS AND COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

**Major Field:** Educational Administration

**Biographical:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Gilroy, California, October 18, 1942, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Orval Vannest.

**Education:** Graduated from Ponca City High School, Ponca City, Oklahoma, 1960; received the Bachelor of Arts from Central State University, Edmond, Oklahoma, with majors in journalism and English, in January, 1968; attended the University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, from 1971 to 1973; received the Master of Education degree from Central State University, Edmond, Oklahoma, with a major in English Education, in July, 1973; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1981.

**Professional Experience:** Copy editor and writer for the Oklahoma City Times and the Daily Oklahoman, 1968-69; Secondary English and journalism teacher for Oklahoma City schools for the spring semester of 1968 and from September, 1969 to June, 1971; English and journalism teacher, department head, and yearbook/newspaper advisor at George Washington High School, Mangilao, Guam, 1971 to 1975; part-time editor and writer for the Pacific Daily News, Agana, Guam, 1973-75; part-time English instructor at the University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 1973-75; English instructor at the University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1975-76; part-time English instructor at Tulsa Junior College, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1976; Director of Community Relations for Union Public Schools, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1975-1980; Coordinator of Public Information for Tulsa Public Schools, 1980 to present.

Professional Organizations: Phi Delta Kappa, National School  
Public Relations Association, Oklahoma School Public Relations  
Association, Women in Communications, Cooperative Council of  
Oklahoma School Administrators.