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## Patterns of Communicative Openness among Secondary School Principals in Illinois

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PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATIVE OPENNESS  
AMONG  
SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ILLINOIS

by

Leslie R. Wilson

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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1991

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## VITA

The author, Leslie R. Wilson, is the daughter of the late Paul Koerper and Lorraine (Lorey) Koerper. She was born March 9, 1948, in Mendota, Illinois. She has a sister, Cheryl Ginder, of Rochester, Illinois, and a brother, Kevin Koerper, of New York. She is married to Dennis Wilson and has two children, Katharyn and Mark. They reside in Crete, Illinois.

Her elementary and secondary education were obtained in Mendota, Illinois. In September, 1966, she entered Illinois State University, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts in June, 1970. While attending Illinois State she majored in speech and minored in English. Mrs. Wilson has since been named by the Speech Communication Faculty at Illinois State University as the Outstanding Speech Communication Alumnus 1984 for her exemplary contributions to the field of speech education. In September, 1970, Mrs. Wilson was granted an assistantship in speech communication at Bowling Green State University, enabling

her to complete the Master of Arts in August, 1971.

Mrs. Wilson began teaching speech and English at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School in Flossmoor, Illinois, in the fall of 1971. Concurrently, she taught part-time for three years at Prairie State College and one year at Governors State University. In the fall of 1979 she was named Director of Instruction of the English Department at HF. In 1983 she was promoted to a twelve-month position as Director of Instruction-English and Instructional Materials Center. While at Homewood-Flossmoor she received the superintendent's award for meritorious service to the district three times.

In September, 1988, Mrs. Wilson was appointed principal at Crete-Monee High School in Crete, Illinois. She is currently in her third year in this position.

Her professional contributions include: project director and co-author of Determining Validity and Reliability of Locally Developed Assessments: 1988, an Illinois State Board of Education funded school improvement project; respondent to the 1988 Speech Communication Association Flagstaff Conference which resulted in

the publication of The Future of Speech Communication Education;  
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Community High School Peer Tutoring Based Language Arts Center",  
Illinois School Research and Development, Winter, 1990; "English  
Synergistic Series", Illinois English Bulletin, Fall 1989; "Our  
Responsibility to the College Bound or English 2 by Any Other Name  
May Not Smell as Sweet!", Illinois English Bulletin, Winter 1986;  
and "Should Students be Well Read or Read Well: Considerations in  
Desinging a Secondary Literature Curriculum", NASSP Bulletin,  
March 1986; author of "Dealing with Plagiarism", CSSEDC  
Quarterly, Spring 1983; and contributor to Speaking and Listening  
Activities in Illinois Schools: Sample Instructional and Assessment  
Materials, a publication of the Illinois State Board of Education.  
Additionally she has delivered numerous convention papers. Finally,  
her leadership of curricular change is featured in "A Curriculum  
Overhaul at Homewood-Flossmoor" by Charles J. Shields in  
Curriculum Review, May/June, 1988, pp. 7-11.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	i
VITA.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
CONTENTS OF APPENDICES.....	ix
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	13
Self-disclosure.....	13
Organizational Communication.....	27
Principals' Communication.....	36
III. METHOD.....	45
Pilot Study.....	45
Communication Questionnaire.....	51
Hypotheses.....	59
IV. PRESENTATION OF DATA.....	61
Demographics of Respondents.....	61
Findings.....	66
V. DISCUSSION.....	78



VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	94
Implications for the Educational Profession.....	97
Implications for Further Research.....	102
REFERENCES.....	105
APPENDIX A.....	112
APPENDIX B.....	121
APPENDIX C.....	129
APPENDIX D.....	147
APPENDIX E.....	156

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Distribution of Items by Cell.....	54
2. Question Order According to Random Number Table.....	55
3. Enrollment.....	62
4. Type of School.....	62
5. Location.....	63
6. Type of District.....	63
7. Tenure as Principal.....	64
8. Terms as Principal.....	64
9. Gender.....	65
10. Number of High Schools in District.....	65
11. High/High Cell Means.....	67
12. High/Low Cell Means.....	68
13. Low/High Cell Means.....	69
14. Low/Low Cell Means.....	70

15. Regression Analysis Using Sums.....	71
16. Regression Analysis Using Item Means.....	73
17. Regression Analysis Using Cell Means.....	74
18. High/High Cells.....	80
19. High/Low Cell Means.....	81
20. Low/High Cell Means.....	81
21. Low/Low Cell Means.....	82
22. High/High Cells.....	84
23. High/Low Cell Means.....	85
24. Low/High Cell Means.....	86
25. Low/Low Cell Means.....	86

## CONTENTS FOR APPENDICES

	Page
APPENDIX A Notes for Interview One.....	112
APPENDIX B Notes for Interview Two.....	121
APPENDIX C Pilot Survey.....	129
1. Letter.....	129
2. Pilot Instrument.....	130
APPENDIX D Communication Survey.....	147
1. Letter.....	147
2. Instrument.....	148
APPENDIX E Follow-up Questionnaire.....	156

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

School effectiveness research identifies the role of principal as a key determinant of how successful a school becomes. A secondary school principal is the individual who is most responsible for a given school building and everything that happens therein. Most of a secondary school principal's time is spent in oral communication. In fact, a recent book on the principalship, Principals in Action, by Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz, suggests that principals spend eighty-three percent of their time talking and listening. (1984, p. 55) As Wood, Nicholson, and Findley (1985) note, "The school principal, as the center of the communication network in a school, is in a position to facilitate communication leading to understanding and concerted effort by organization members. Communication is considered by many writers the essence of the administrative process." (p. 105)

Despite the importance and frequency of oral communication to a secondary school principal, very little appears to have been written which examines the direction, amount, or content of principals' interaction. Principals are necessarily privy to confidential information and they have reason to be protective of self-information which may be of potential harm to them. Openness, the sharing of information, and secrecy, the purposive withholding of information would both appear to be reasonable if not necessary options for the discourse of principals. The question would seem to be one of appropriateness, of being open or closed in the "right time and place with the right people." No systematic rating of the outcomes of principal talk is currently available however.

Recent research on self-disclosure and openness has indicated that differences exist in the level of intimacy and the degree of purposive withholding which occur during the course of communication. Differences in context, target, message, and appropriateness can all have a major impact on the reciprocity of disclosure, the quality of decision making, the potential for advancement, subsequent communication(s), the climate of

communication context, and interpersonal relationships. To date, this research has not been directly tested in nor applied to an education setting. However, clearly both "by role" and "by topic" determinants exist in the content of principals' messages which warrant further examination. Pearce and Sharp underline the importance of a working knowledge of self-disclosure to professionals who rely on communication as centrally as principals do:

To the extent that high levels of disclosure facilitate organizational effectiveness, mutual understanding, helping relationships, and personal satisfaction, those whose concern is to improve communication behavior in particular situations must include a knowledge of self-disclosure in their repertoire of professional competence. (1973, p. 422)

The withholding of information, secrecy, can also impact decision making, policy, and interpersonal relations. Bok, in a recent book on secrecy, Secrets, examines the moral dimension of withholding information:

Not only does the ethics of secrecy mirror and shed light on much of ethics; in ways that seem paradoxical, secrecy both protects and thwarts moral perception, reasoning, and choice. Secret practices protect the liberty of some while impairing that of others. They guard intimacy and creativity, yet tend to spread and to invite abuse. Secrecy can enhance a sense of

brotherhood, loyalty, and equality among insiders while kindling discrimination against outsiders. And in situations of moral conflict, secrecy often collides principles supporting it be capable of open statement and defense. (1982, p. xvi)

Certainly in a school, both openness and secrecy could provide consequences worthy of note. How open are principals? Are there topics which are best left uncovered in principals' conversations? Do principals consciously choose to reveal or to conceal? If so, is that decision made on the basis of the content, context, or object of the communication? Are there situations in which principals have been unable to justify decisions without betraying a confidence? Does a principal's communicative behavior affect his job status or job security? Do principals have a clear sense of appropriateness for oral discourse?

The purpose of this study is to examine patterns of communicative openness among secondary school principals in Illinois. The communicative choices, to whom do principals feel it is appropriate to say what, which principals make are the foci of this examination.

Lasswell in 1948 defined communication as "Who? Says What? In Which Channel? To Whom? With What effect?" Lasswell



explains:

The scientific study of the process of communication tends to concentrate upon one or another of these questions. Scholars who study the 'who,' the communicator, look into the facets that initiate and guide the act of communication. We call this subdivision of the field of research control analysis. Specialists who focus upon the 'says what' engage in content analysis. Those who look primarily at the radio, press, film and other channels of communication are doing media analysis. When the principal concern is with the persons reached by the media, we speak of audience analysis. If the question is the impact upon audiences, the problem is effect analysis. (1964, p. 37)

Despite, the intervening forty-two years of theorizing and researching the topic of communication, this early, primitive definition still provides a framework from which one can view communicative settings.

The answer to the "Who?" for the purposes of this dissertation, is Illinois secondary school principals who number approximately one thousand. The principal is the instructional leader and the building manager of a high school. Simultaneously, he leads a group of subordinates and is subordinate to at least one other individual in the system. He represents the school to the public. In many ways, his role affects his identity and dictates his behavior.

The answer to "Says what?" is part of the question of this

research effort. The subject matter varies in terms of intimacy (and therefore risk) and job-(or task) relatedness. No systematic detailing of the specific content of principals' communication has yet been completed.

In the course of a normal day, a principal will speak with students, teachers, classified staff, central office personnel, parents, family members, salespersons, taxpayers, parents, bus drivers, professional colleagues, friends, law enforcement personnel, and community leaders. The question of how much messages change based on the intended receiver is part of this research effort.

The effects of principals' communication have not been examined precisely either. One might well assume that if effects are considered too negative by one's employer the person would no longer be principal. Surely, a principal who is an effective communicator enhances the image of his school. But no clear rating of the outcomes of principal talk are currently available.

Given the proportion of time principals spend in communication, the significance of the principal's role in a school, and a void in the research studying the communication of principals, further study

would appear to be in order. In an effort to more clearly define the parameters and critical factors in self-disclosure and openness in the principalship, two interviews were conducted with former principals on April 25, 1984. The goal of the interviews was to identify the salient aspects of openness in a principal's communication. Transcripts of the interviews are in the appendix. The two individuals selected were chosen because they had each served as principal for a relatively long time, they were known by the interviewer to be trustworthy and open, and they each had advanced to the superintendency. The first interviewee (Appendix A) served as the principal of an elementary school for three years and of a junior high school for five years. He had also been a teacher and counselor during his years at the junior high. The second interviewee (Appendix B) had been in another high school system as an assistant principal before spending nine years as a high school principal. The combined experience of the two men in the role of principal includes: elementary, junior high, and secondary; head and assistant; promotion from within and recruitment from outside; promotion from an assistantship to the role and stepping from a certified staff position into the role; and a

reasonable degree of success measured by promotion to the superintendency. In addition, the interviewer judged the two men to have contrasting styles of communicative behavior as observed from their classroom behavior in a graduate program.

In the interviews, the principals seemed to have a very clear, though somewhat individual, notion of what subjects one should discuss with various target people. The concept of "appropriateness" emerged as a categorical descriptor for the decisions these two made regarding sharing information. Three major determinants of appropriateness of subject matter were obviated. First, the intended receiver clearly affects the message. In both cases, the communicating person involved and the role of that person within the school enterprise were considerations in the decision to share information. The first interviewee made it a practice to avoid discussing school-related topics with subordinates unless the subordinate and he were friends prior to the time he assumed the principalship. The second interviewee seemed to reserve access to his personal life for his close friends who were not involved in school settings. In both cases, the interviewer observed a keen sense of awareness of target. The

second interviewee seems to rely on and trust his assistant principal most. The first interviewee relies on his secretary whom he terms, "my closest friend in the district" and with whom he and his wife socialize once a month. The second interviewee, too, relies heavily on his secretary.

A second area of import is the context or setting of the exchange. The first interviewee very clearly stated that he did not discuss school-related issues beyond school hours. For example, he said that he reserved racquet ball time for the sport. He also stated that he avoids happy-hour-with-staff situations. Both men clearly saw a difference between parties in the school building, parties in someone's home, school time and non-school time, and work-related conversations inside and outside the school.

Each principal has a clear set of communication ethics relative to oral discourse. The "rules" governing topics which emerged from the interviews include: (a) never gossip, (b) do not talk about administrative colleagues with subordinates, (c) some topics such as family or sex may best be left out of conversations altogether, (d) never share information if told not to, (e) if in receipt of high intensity information, share it if it will hurt the school in some

way, (f) if possible, talk directly to a person rather than about him, (g) encourage openness, but never forget the organizational hierarchy, and (h) in all cases exercise good taste and judgment.

Both men exhibited a keen awareness towards their communicative leadership as the model for the communicative behavior for the school. (i.e. If a principal gossips, everyone gossips. A principal must model the kind of communicative behavior he expects and desires.)

Both interviewees were most cognizant of the role of communication in their positions. Both of them feel the preponderance of their work is via oral communication as opposed to the written mode. Both were most interested in the interviewer's research idea and asked for follow-up information.

The concept of communicative appropriateness also has a moral dimension. Wolfson and Pearce's research defines self-disclosing communication as "...persons intentionally tell others something about themselves which the others would not normally know and which makes the speaker vulnerable to those others. The two important attributes of this concept are the topic is private and the act is risky." (1983, pp. 250-251) On the assumption that, as

Goldhaber, et al. express, "...the organization as a whole limits complete openness..." (1982, p. 82), and that as Bradac, Tardy, and Hosman note in 1980, "...individuals vary in many dimensions of disclosure in addition to the quantitative one" (1980, p. 229) and in the desire to learn more about the patterns of communicative openness in schools, the interviewer decided to pursue the specific parameters of communicative appropriateness further.

Specifically, what is the operational definition of appropriate communication for a secondary school principal? Does the secondary school principal correlate openness of communication to the hierarchical rank of the intended recipient in assessing communicative appropriateness? Does the secondary school principal consider the intimacy of the content and therefore the risk in sharing it in judging the communicative appropriateness of sharing information?

The purpose of this study is to operationally define communicative appropriateness as it relates to secondary school principals' communication. Specifically:

(1) To what extent does the secondary school principal relate openness of communication to the audience (hierarchical rank) of

the intended recipient in assessing communicative appropriateness?

(2) To what extent does the secondary school principal determine communicative appropriateness by the task-relatedness of the information?

(3) To what extent does the secondary school principal consider the risk in sharing information in judging communicative appropriateness?

An examination of research on self-disclosure, organizational communication, and principals' communication follows.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of the research on the patterns of communicative openness among secondary school principals is divided into three sections: self-disclosure (or openness), organizational communication, and principals' communication.

#### Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure as originally defined by Sidney M. Jourard in his landmark book on the subject, The Transparent Self, is "The study of information a person will tell another person about himself." (1964, p.10) The original context for Jourard's consideration of the subject was psychology; he felt the healthy personality was dependent upon self-disclosure. Halverson and Shore extend this definition to "social accessibility." They write, "The readiness to confide personal information has been known to contribute to the development of social relationships." (1969, p. 213) They conclude

later, "It follows that there should be more openness in communicating to others in an interdependent rather than a unilateral interaction." (p. 216) The term self-disclosure has also been used extensively in communication research where it has come to mean the sharing of self-information verbally (and generally at some risk.) Wheelless offers this definition:

"Self-disclosure is communication which occurs in reference to a specific individual or individuals. Disclosiveness is a generalized characteristic or trait of the individual representing that person's predilection to disclose self to other people, in general-his or her openness. Some people are predisposed toward more openness than others. While self-disclosure is a communication phenomenon and disclosiveness is a personal predisposition, both are most often measured by self-reports of perceptions of the messages involved." (1976, p. 47)

Chelune identifies five basic parameters of self-disclosure:

"(1) the amount or breadth of personal information disclosed, (2) intimacy of the information revealed, (3) duration or rate of disclosure, (4) affective manner of presentation, and (5) self-disclosure flexibility." (1979, p. 7) Chelune defines the final trait, self-disclosure flexibility, as, "...the ability of an individual to modulate his or her characteristic disclosure levels according to the interpersonal and situational demands of various social

situations..." (1977, p. 286) Because the conceptual framework of the term self-disclosure is so broad, the operational definitions of the term in the research vary greatly from questionnaires to simulations. As Chelune notes, "For better or worse, self-disclosure, when empirically defined, is simply whatever the assessment device measures." (1979, p. 8)

A summary of some of the findings is relevant to the current research effort as long as the caution about differing research techniques is heeded. Richard Archer synthesizes the findings of studies relating personality and situational correlates to self-disclosure in "Role of Personality and the Social Situation." Generally, he suggests that females are more likely to disclose than males (Archer, p. 30); that later born siblings are more likely to disclose than first borns (Archer, p. 32); and that disclosure levels seem to increase with age (Archer, p. 32). Situational factors including the target and the setting of the disclosure are determinants of the disclosure itself. He cites Brooks' 1974 study of the counseling dyads to show that the gender and status of the target affect the predictability of intimacy on the part of the discloser. Archer notes that "At least for the layperson, intimacy

has always been a question of where, when, and with whom. Some of our naive notions about the circumstances that are conducive to disclosure—for example, the physical characteristics of the room—have been supported by research." (Archer, p. 41) He also indicates that alcohol, physical attractiveness, gaze, and distance are determinants of disclosure. Finally, individuals are more willing to disclose to superiors than to subordinates. (Archer, p. 44)

One of the most researched phenomenon of self-disclosure is the reciprocity effect. The observed pattern is simply that individuals tend to disclose self-information in return for having had such information shared with them. This is sometimes referred to as the dyadic effect of self-disclosure. Three hypotheses have been advanced to explain this phenomenon: trust-attraction, social exchange, and modeling. The trust attraction theory, originally advanced by Jourard, posits that sharing intimate self-information with another makes the recipient feel trusted and therefore liked. In turn, the recipient discloses. The social exchange theory is based on the notion that there must be an equitable balance between the level of disclosed intimacy between the two parties in communication. In other words, the recipient of

disclosure feels obligated to respond in kind to make the conversation or relationship equal. Proponents of the modeling theory including Bandura and Z. Rubin explain that since much of the reciprocity research was conducted in laboratories, the results are merely a reflection of participants' "model subjects' behavior" Simply put, the subjects guessed what behavior the researchers wanted to elicit and provided it. Archer observes,

After examining the evidence for the three hypotheses, it appears that the social exchange explanation can claim the most, if indirect, support; the modeling hypothesis has been attacked, although not absolutely disconfirmed; and the trust-attraction account has virtually been refuted. This is not to say that any of the three could not produce reciprocity under some circumstances. In fact, all three may contribute to reciprocity in a combinative fashion in many settings. (1979, p. 51)

Kreps adds:

Based on the norm of reciprocity, people communicate with others in accord with the way they perceive these others communicating with them....The more you treat someone as an object, the more likely that person is to treat you with disrespect; conversely, the more you communicate with another person as a person, the more likely he or she is to treat you with respect. (1986, p. 165)

Later (p. 192), he expands the impact writing, "Honest self-disclosure in organizational relationships implicitly invites

reciprocal honesty by relational partners."

The degrees of intimacy in self-disclosure go from little or none to the state of knowing. Some attempts to codify the intensity of intimacy have been made. One such list, an adaptation of John Powell's, appears in Galvin and Book's Person to Person: (1) small talk, (2) public information, (3) opinion, (4) revealed feelings, (5) shared feelings, and (6) total understanding. (1978)

Amidon and Kavanaugh (1979) provide the Levels of Verbal Intimacy Technique (LOVIT) category system for analysis of verbal interaction in terms of intimacy. The ten levels of conversation itemized from least to greatest intimacy are: (1) no group focused verbal interaction, (2) cocktail, small or nonpersonal talk, (3) general discussion of people and their relationships, (4) individual life experience, (5) discussion about a part of the group-past, future, or in general, (6) discussion about the group-past, future, or in general, (7) expression of feelings about individual life experiences, (8) indirect expressions of feelings and attitudes toward the group, (9) descriptive discussion of present group experience, and (10) direct expression of feeling about the group or members of the group. Although the list is intended primarily for

group interaction, the progression to feelings about the other is very similar to Powell's. To understand a principal's openness then, one must be mindful of the inter-relatedness of self-disclosure determinants, the parameter of flexibility, and the degrees of intimacy.

Communicators make judgments about which level of communication is appropriate to the specific communication context. The concept of appropriateness in relationship to self-disclosure has, according to Derlega and Grzelak (1978), two salient dimensions: "(1) the discloser's and the target person's perceptions of the appropriateness of self-disclosure for goal satisfaction; and (2) cultural expectations about appropriate self-disclosure." Their theoretical analysis of self-disclosure appropriateness is based on two approaches: functional-the expressive value and/or the instrumental effectiveness of self-disclosure as perceived by the discloser and the recipient; and normative-the conditions under which it is acceptable in terms of existing social norms for people to reveal personal information about themselves to others. (p. 152)

The authors subdivide the functional approach into five functions:

expression, self-clarification, social validation, relationship development, and social control. (p. 154) An assessment of communicative appropriateness as defined from a functional basis would be in terms of the value of the material related to a specific purpose. Derlega and Grzelak's discussion of the normative approach centers on maintaining cultural values, regulating intimacy, and controlling behavior. (pp. 163-5) A normative measure of appropriateness is thus in terms of the relationship of the communicative content to the social structure or relationships in the communication context. Another delimiter of appropriateness in self-disclosure is described by Brown and Van Riper (1973), destruction of a community relationship. They explain:

Nor are we suggesting a philosophy of openness that means indiscriminately saying everything to everybody. Our sex relations belong to those we are sexually related to. They need not be shared verbally with everyone. Our financial arrangements belong to those with whom we are financially related. The words of our friends should often not be repeated. If our communication is to produce the relationships of a cohesive community, we must have this underlying ethic: that we do not say that which is destructive to community relationship.

One measure of appropriateness would seem to be degree of



disclosure in relationship to the target individual. Chaikin, Derlega, Bayma, and Shaw (1975) report for example,

...neurotics were neither more or less intimate than normals. Instead, differences appeared only when context (the confederate's intimacy level) was considered. Neurotics appeared to maintain a characteristic middle level of intimacy, regardless of what had been disclosed to them first. In contrast, normal subjects used the confederate's intimacy level as a cue or signal regarding what was appropriate for their own disclosure, and closely matched this level with a similar level of intimacy. (p. 17)

In addition to those who always disclose at one level regardless of context for the communication, there are also those who disclose too much. Bok (1982) elucidates,

Many are compulsive disclosers of intimacies. They may gossip about personal affairs and reveal the confidences of former friends or spouses to every new acquaintance. What happens to them is instructive. They find themselves increasingly isolated and less and less trusted. Studies have shown that whereas self-disclosure usually invites reciprocation, so that people match openness with openness, this breaks down if one of the interlocutors is felt not to be selective. (p. 42)

In effect, the decision to disclose or not to disclose information is a determinant of the parameters of the interaction. Derlega and Chaikin explain,

Self-disclosure...contributes to the boundary regulation process. Briefly stated, adjustment in self-disclosure outputs and inputs is an example of boundary regulation, and the extent of control we maintain over this exchange of information contributes to the amount of privacy we have in a social relationship.

In our view privacy represents control over the amount of interaction we choose to maintain with others. If one can choose how much or how little to divulge about oneself to another voluntarily, privacy is maintained. If another person can influence how much information we divulge about ourselves or how much information input we let in about others, a lower level of privacy exists. (1977, pp. 102-103)

Gilbert and Horenstein (1975) note that "the communication of intimacies is a behavior which has positive effects only in limited, appropriate circumstances." (p. 321) Culbert summarizes the interpersonal dimension of appropriateness of self-disclosure as follows:

(Appropriateness) refers to whether or not an individual discloses self-information with relevance and meaning for the events in which he is currently participating. Self-disclosure which changes a topic or mood without a reason that is clearly understandable and/or acceptable to the intended receivers is not likely to be considered appropriate. Relationships quickly establish norms or expectations that govern the appropriateness of the type and intensity of self-disclosures the participants anticipate exchanging. These norms may be unique to the specific relationship....

A self-disclosure may deviate from agreed-upon norms; but to be appropriate within the context of a specific relationship, its discloser should acknowledge or be cognizant of the nature

of these norms. Appropriateness of self-disclosure probably increases the likelihood of positive reactions from the other participants. (1970, p. 77)

The dimension of self-disclosure appropriateness is role dependent. As indicated above, there is a relationship between the social norms and appropriateness. This relationship extends to the role a person fills as well. Derlega and Chaikin (1975) clarify further:

The appropriateness of different types of self-disclosure depends on the particular role we are playing. As Goffman has noted, it is singularly inappropriate for a salesperson to disclose personal information to a customer unless it is directly related to the transaction. Similarly, intimate self-disclosure by a student to a professor, although much more appropriate than disclosure by professor to student, is inappropriate unless it is relevant to their relationship. For example, it might be appropriate for a student to disclose a personal crisis only if such a recital is necessary to explain why he missed an exam. Sometimes, however, the participants do not agree on the operative norms in the situation. One of our colleagues, an experimental psychologist, told of his amazement when a student in his introductory psychology class talked about his sexual problems during an appointment to discuss an assignment. Apparently, the student perceived the relationship as one of therapist-client rather than student-professor. But other role relationships—such as doctor-patient and priest-confessor—institutionalize and even demand self-disclosure. (pp. 29-30)

By-role determinants of self-disclosure appropriateness for secondary school principals have not been itemized to date.

While most of the preceding discussion has been descriptive of the degree of intimacy or personalness of the disclosure, it is important to recognize that the valence of the content of the disclosure may affect the consequences of that disclosure.

Gilbert and Whiteneck have demonstrated that, "personalness and valence interacted...demonstrating their influence on the time of disclosure in human relationship development and on the likelihood of disclosure to various recipients" (1976, p. 354). In Baird's investigation of the perceptions of open communication, he notes,

On message receiving openness, subordinates perceived their supervisors as more willing to listen on positive rather than negative topics; a significant positive correlation was obtained between trust and actual openness on task topics for subordinates only; for subordinates only a significant positive relationship between trust and perception of willingness to listen; significant positive correlations between general satisfaction and actual openness on task; impersonal and positive topics, for peers, the negative direction of the correlations was indicative of an inverse relationship between actual openness and general satisfaction, for supervisors, a positive correlation between openness and positive topics and general satisfaction was found; and subordinates' general satisfaction scores correlated positively with potential openness scores on non-task on impersonal, on personal and on positive topics. For subordinates, significant positive correlations emerge between general satisfaction and willingness to listen on all the topic dimensions. (1973)

Secrecy, the concealment of information, is more than the

absence of disclosure. Bok (1982) suggests that to "keep a secret from someone, then, is to block information about it or evidence of it from reaching that person and to do so intentionally: to prevent him from learning it, and thus, from possessing it, making use of it, or revealing it." (pp. 5-6) She goes on to explain "intimacy and privacy represent another aspect of secrecy: one expressed in the German word 'heimlich'." (pp. 6-7) In a discussion of the morality of secrecy she describes three hypothetical worlds of which one is a world of transparency. She queries:

Might there be benefits in such universal transparency, as long as all could avail themselves of it? It would not only rule out secrecy but the very possibility of deceit and hypocrisy. Would such a state of openness among human beings not be nobler than the concealment we live with, and all the dissimulation it makes possible? Openness and sincerity, after all, are qualities we prize. As Meister Eckhart said, we call him a good man who reveals himself to others and, in so doing, is of use to them.

On reflection, even those most in favor of openness among human beings might nevertheless reject the loss of all secrecy; or else advocate it only for certain exceptional persons who choose it for themselves and are able to tolerate it. Advocates of universal transparency have usually envisioned it for some future society free of the conflicts and contradictions of our own....Yet the desire for such mutual transparency, even when relegated to a future, idealized world, should give pause. We must consider the drawbacks of too much information as well as those of being kept in the dark. And we must take into account our responses to all that we

might learn about one another in such a world. Would we be able to cope with not only the quantity but also the impact upon us of the information thus within reach? And if secrecy were no longer possible would brute force turn out to be the only means of self-defense and of gaining the upper hand? It is not inconceivable that the end result of a shift to the ...imagined society would be chaos. (pp. 17-18)

In The Knowledge Executive, Harlan Cleveland posits,

Openness has costs as well as benefits. In a closed society, openness works as a change agent. In an open society, openness is often a way of saying 'no' to innovation. But usually, two heads are better than one, three heads are better than two, and so on for quite a number of heads before the nth addition to the circle of knowledge-based responsibility adds nothing more to wisdom. (1985, p. 222)

How much openness is necessary or desirable in a school?

We do know that school personnel come in contact with

confidential information. "Schools, for instance, are looking into the home conditions of students with problems, sometimes even requesting psychiatric evaluations of entire families, regardless of objections from health professionals on grounds of confidentiality."

(Bok, p. 117) She further submits:

In schools...confidential information may be casually passed around. Other items are conveyed 'off the record' or leaked in secret. The prohibition against breaching confidentiality must be especially strong in order to combat the pressures on insiders to do so, especially in view of the ease and frequency with which it is done. (p. 122)

## Organizational Communication

This examination of organizational communication literature is primarily limited to communication considerations within an organization. "The major elements that define an organization's social architecture are its origins, its basic operating principle, the nature of its work, the management of information, decision making and power; influence; and status." (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, p. 118) Accompanying the management of information is the communication system in the organization. The three major communication systems in an organization are downward, upward, and lateral. Downward communication flow emanates from the individuals at the top of the organization and trickles down through the administrative hierarchy. Upward communication moves up from lower levels of workers through the system to upper levels of the hierarchy. Lateral communication occurs between parties at the same level of the hierarchy. This review focuses primarily on those aspects of organizational communication which relate to openness, hierarchy including gender, and intimacy.

In Lewis' description of Excellent Organizations, he explains the

nature of trust within an organization. He suggests that managers should work to establish a high level of "disclosure trust" with employees.

Disclosure trust is the belief that information shared between a manager and employee will not be used to hurt either party. This type of trust implies that both parties have entered into a psychological state or written agreement to abide by the clandestine principle expected of each other. Disclosure trust deals with values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. It can range from a low-risk level when either person merely expresses an opinion, idea, or suggestion, to a high-risk level when either person divulges personal or intimate information either about himself or herself, or someone else. In the work environment, managers should aspire to establish a high disclosure trust level with employees in two specific ways: (1) Become friendly with employees and (2) Become job-oriented with employees. (1985, p. 40)

He also outlines two other kinds of trust, contractual and privacy, which are significant in an organization. Privacy trust is relevant to this discussion. Lewis defines the concept as

...the belief that neither the person, personal information, or wares of either an employee or manager will be violated. This manner of trust implies that a person will not invade the privacy of another person nor harm the other in any manner; it means both parties have a high degree of integrity, honesty, and respect for each other. Privacy trust tends to gravitate from a low-risk orientation in which a manager might search the workplace of an employee, without prior knowledge, to a high-risk orientation whereby a manager keeps a diary of the activities of an employee without prior knowledge. (p. 41)



One of the fifteen trust indicators identified by Lewis is "keeping confidences". (p. 43) One of the earlier studies examined the relationship of openness in superior-subordinate communication to job satisfaction in a large utility company. Authors Burke and Wilcox found that "...the greater openness of communication by one or both members of the relationship was associated with increased satisfaction. In addition, openness of one member of the pair was significantly related to openness of the other members." (1969, p. 319) One of the most interesting of their findings was that, "The perceived openness of superior communications to subordinate was significantly and positively correlated with stated openness of subordinate communications to her superior.... It seems likely that superior openness of communication 'caused' subordinate openness...." (p. 326) A study conducted by Athanassiades (1971) involving twenty-nine members of a university faculty and twenty-six members of a large city police department, included administration of the Gordan Personal Profile and Inventory and the S-1 Inventory. Significant relationships were found between subordinate's distortion of upward communication and his insecurity, ascendance drive, and the authority structure

under which he works. The subordinate intentionally distorts because he feels it enhances his self-interest.

Open communication in an organizational setting is not risk-free. McMurry advised in 1973, "Avoid too close superior-subordinate relationships. While he (the superior) must be friendly with his subordinates, he is never intimate with them." (p. 144) He goes on to warn, "...his personal feelings must never be a basis for action concerning them." He also suggests that one "Limit what is to be communicated-many things should not be revealed. He specifies, "...for instance, bad news may create costly anxieties or uncertainties among the troops; again, premature announcements of staff changes may give rise to schisms in the organization." Stull concludes as a result of his doctoral study (Purdue, 1974), that "acceptance" is a desirable supervisor response to task and nontask relevant communication, supervisors and subordinates respond with reciprocal openness in task and nontask matters, supervisor acceptance is greater than reciprocation, supervisors and subordinates disagreed on the frequency of response, and supervisors and subordinates preferred sending and receiving accepting and reciprocal messages, not neutral-negative ones.

Jablin's (1977) examination of superior-subordinate communication through the use of videotaped scenarios, lead him to draw the following four conclusions: (1) disconfirming responses are not acceptable in superior-subordinate communication, (2) the combination of confirming and disagreeing responses was more preferred than that of acceding, repudiating, and disconfirming responses, (3) the subordinate's perception of an open versus closed climate did affect evaluations of the appropriateness of a superior's response, and (4) openness of communication between superiors and subordinates is a multi-dimensional construct.

Sussman, Pickett, Berzinski, and Pearce observe that a "...series of studies concerned with upward communication have resulted in a pattern of findings convulging on a single thesis: Subordinates tend to filter information to their superiors so as to project the most favorable image possible." (1980, p. 113) Kreps notes two reasons why workers might be reluctant to disclose information freely. He writes, "First, it is often very risky for workers to tell their bosses about problems that exist in the organization or gripes that they have with management's downward communication. Since higher-ups in the organizational hierarchy wield power over those

below them within the organization, lower-level employees fear retribution from superiors when providing unpleasant messages...the workers might jeopardize their jobs." (1986, p. 200) He goes on to note, "...managers are often unreceptive to honest employee feedback and react angrily and defensively to unpleasant subordinate feedback, evaluation, and upward communication." (pp. 200-201) Charlene Mitchell and Thomas Burdick (1986) warn that the smart manager will use "smart talk". They suggest,

You can have great control over how your co-workers perceive you. Casual conversations and socializing can reveal a lot about you, so it's a good idea to give your colleagues positive information about yourself.

As far as your problems are concerned, however, you should keep them to yourself. Don't cry on your associates' shoulders about personal difficulties. Anything that suggests you are not in complete control can have a negative effect on your career. Problems denote weakness, and your 'secret' problem could reach your boss's ear just as he is considering you for a promotion. (1986, p. 35)

They detail a list of topics a person should share with co-workers which includes: any situation handled well, professional memberships and coursework, holding office in a professional club, excelling at an extracurricular activity, and any civic awards or positions received. They suggest that co-workers should not know

if a person or her spouse are having an extra-marital affair, real opinions about a boss, financial problems, shakiness of a marriage, boredom in the job, difficulty handling job responsibilities, cheating on income tax, spouse transfer plans, nor "looking into" other career opportunities.

Because there is a gender specific variation in the amount of self-disclosure, the findings of Day and Stogdill relative to the effectiveness of leaders in similar positions becomes important. In their examination of the male and female leaders among the civil employees of the United States Air Force Logistics Command, they found that "male and female supervisors who occupy parallel positions and perform similar functions exhibit similar patterns of leader behavior and levels of effectiveness when described and evaluated by their immediate subordinates." (1972, p. 359) Through administering Fiedler's Least Preferred Co-Worker scale to 206 members of the military and 77 civilians, Chapman found no difference between the genders in terms of leadership style. He suggests that while there may be a behavioral difference, there is not a stylistic one. (1975) In Murray's analysis of 2,959 respondents included in the ICA Audit data bank at Purdue

University, she examines the communication profiles for women and men who scored high and low on the dimensions of perceived job autonomy, supervisor satisfaction, and perceived career advancement. She concludes that source of information is a more critical factor than gender in the three job-related variables of perceived job autonomy, satisfaction with immediate supervisor, and perceived opportunities for career advancement. She writes, "As communication researchers we should be concerned with the pragmatic outcomes of communication with various sources and examine the effects employee sex has on important components of his or her job." (1983, p. 165)

One "rule" of appropriateness emerges from Howard's (1980) work: "If a communicator wishes his/her behavior to be judged as appropriate in a peer evaluation situation, she/he should give a non-deceptive evaluation of the performance in question."

Perceived and actual communication within an organization are not always congruent. Goldhaber explains that bosses and their subordinates may have differing perceptions of how open their communication is. He relates research within a police organization, in a manufacturing company and in another

organization where subordinates felt the systems were considerably less open than the managers had portrayed them. (1983, p. 135)

Finally, one way in which Theory Z management suggestions differ from traditional firms is in the level of intimacy between managers and employees. For example, in the book, Excellent Organizations: How to Develop and Manage Them Using Theory Z, by James Lewis, Jr., the fourth chapter develops the topic, "Intimacy in the Work Environment." The author describes intimacy as "...the process by which managers establish a personal and earnest relationship with employees through the initiation of frequent social contacts, the nurturing of mutual trust, and the maintenance of security and good will. It cannot be acquired unless there are adequate contacts of sufficient duration between employees and managers." (p. 47) He states "The extent to which managers obtain information about their employees will depend largely on how much they are willing to 'expose' themselves through the sharing of personal information." (p. 49) He lists ten subject areas that managers should know regarding their employees: name, date of birth, likes and dislikes, names of members of immediate family,

educational level, important dates of employees and family, hobbies and interests, strengths and weaknesses, books read, and happy and unhappy occasions. Lewis is very clear in pointing out that "The prerequisites for establishing a private relationship between managers and employees are frequent dialogue sessions which are open and honest." (p. 50) He also notes that it is the managers who must take the initiative to establish intimacy. He lists "...five factors for fostering intimacy: (a) acquire knowledge about employees; (b) become friendly with employees; (c) be private with employees; (d) socialize with employees; and (e) be a companion to employees." (p. 55)

### Principals' Communication

Even though the school principal is the center of the communication network in a school, the specific subject of principals' communication has been largely unresearched. As Wood, Nicholson, and Findley note,

What guidelines should the educational leader follow in organizing the school for effective communication? The literature does not reveal any concrete answers to this question, but the recent increased emphasis on communication



study and other aspects of administrative behavior provides important clues for the administrator in designing an effective communication system. (1985, p. 105)

While authors frequently include the ability to communicate effectively on lists of criteria for effective principals, definitions of what effective principal communication is are not as ready. One recent and notable exception is the description provided by Smith and Andrews in Instructional Leadership: How Principals Make a Difference. They discuss four areas of strategic interaction between principals and teachers: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence. In the section covering communicator, they explain,

Effective communication must be displayed at three levels--one-to-one, small group, and large group--to articulate the vision of the school to the school district, parents, and the larger community. The principal as communicator has mastered confrontation and active listening skills, can facilitate the work of leaderless groups, and understands how to communicate school direction to outside forces that would move the school away from the direction the staff and principal have chosen.

The principal uses communication as the basis for developing sound relationships with staff through behavior that is consistent, objective, and fair. The principal communicates so that both the content and processes for communication are explicit. What topics, for example, may be discussed openly by the entire staff, by parent-staff councils, by students and staff, or by supervisor-teacher dyads? (p. 15)

The discussion centers primarily on the principal as the leading communicator of a school's vision or mission. Over a decade earlier, Jerry L. Pulley (1975) analyzed principals' communication in terms of the Shannon and Weaver linear communication model (source, message, medium, receiver, and reaction). He illustrates the points at which communication can go awry. He implies that principals should and could benefit from a complete understanding of the communication process. (pp. 50-54)

In a school setting as in other organizational settings, a principal would need to communicate upwards, downwards, and horizontally. In the upward mode, at a minimum, he would be responsible to a superintendent and a board of education. In the downward mode, a principal must communicate with certificated staff, clerical personnel, and custodians. The lateral communication within one building is not really purely lateral. In other words, the principal is likely to supervise other building administrators, so that relationship is not truly lateral. In order to have a lateral relationship, there would have to be another principal in the district at the same level. Even then, the communication is not internal to the building.

Edwin L. Rawn and Jerry W. Valentine explore the nature of the downward communication from two vantage points, the differences in the way certificated staff view their principal's communication at different grade level centers and the relationship of faculty member evaluations of the effectiveness of principals' communication and various demographic factors. They arrive at three conclusions:

(1) There is a significant difference in the ways in which the communication skills of elementary principals were perceived by elementary teachers when compared to senior high school principals communication skills as perceived by senior high teachers. The communications skills of junior high principals are perceived by junior high teachers as being very close to significance when measured against communication skills of senior high principals as perceived by senior high teachers. Means and profiles indicate that elementary principals and junior high principals are more alike in their communication skills as perceived by their teachers.

(2) Principals at all levels are viewed as being good communicators of decisions to their faculties, while teachers perceive principals as scoring low in the affective domain. Thus, a review of the data suggests the concern over the contrast of the higher scored 'task-oriented, decision-making' types of communication and the lower scored 'humaneness or socio-emotional' concepts.

(3) Demographic factors were minimally involved with the major concept of administrator-teacher communication. Other factors, therefore, appeared to be contributing large amounts of variance to this concept. Further research should pursue the relationship of organizational rather than demographic variables to the concept of principal communication. (1980, p. 194,196)

In "Ethics, Evaluation, and the Secondary Principal", Clement A. Seldin leaves little doubt as to whether or not a principal should share the content of communications with staff members. He writes,

All communication with teachers (verbal and written) is privileged and confidential. Only when the educational welfare of the student is genuinely threatened should the principal break confidentiality. Thus, a principal's primary responsibility is to the public and then to the teacher.

Cogan (1973) uses a medical analogy to illustrate this point. Cogan compares the principal/supervisor's position to that of a doctor employed by the school system to assist teachers with their health concerns. The doctor must maintain strict confidentiality regarding all discussions with teachers.

This is absolute unless a teacher contracts a disease that poses an immediate and significant threat to the students. Then, and only then, must the doctor share this problem with the higher level administrators in order to protect the students. Of course, the teacher must first be advised of the doctor's intent and rationale. The rules of privilege and confidentiality are of profound importance." (1988, p. 10)

Another group of subordinates supervised by principals is secretaries. In an article titled, "What Does Your School Secretary Really Want?", Carol Sweeney observes, "It was apparent to the interviewer that communication flowed and, indeed, flowered in the schools where open communication abounded." (1987, p. 49) She explains,

While the study revealed several statistically significant elements that school secretaries and principals wanted from one another, their importance faded in comparison to the one factor that permeated most of the interviews: open communication is the cement of long-term, productive, positive working relationships. (p. 50)

She defines open communication as:

...reading the feelings as well as the words of the other. Open communication meant being sensitive to the well-being of the other. Open communication meant being able to ask open-ended questions and offering to be receptive to a point of view that did not necessarily coincide with their own. Obviously, open communication meant a lot more than clarifying, paraphrasing and summarizing what the other had said. Yet, considering the harmony and loyalty that were demonstrated by the teams, the investment in open communication was paying off. (p. 51)

This review of the literature of self-disclosure, organizational communication, and principals' communication from the vantage point of communicative openness demonstrates the incompleteness of scientific research in the area of secondary school principals' communicative openness.

The purpose of this study is to narrow that void through operationally defining the parameters of communicative appropriateness as they relate to the role of secondary school principals. Specifically:

(1) To what extent does the secondary school principal relate communicative appropriateness to the audience (hierarchical rank) of the intended recipient?

(2) To what extent does the secondary school principal determine communicative appropriateness by the task-relatedness of the information to the school system?

(3) To what extent does the secondary school principal determine communicative appropriateness by the degree of risk in sharing the information?

The three of the most used measures of self-disclosure, the Jourard Self-disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ), the Taylor and Altman Intimacy-Scaled Stimuli, and the Self-Disclosure Situations Survey (SDSS) were each judged inadequate for this research purpose. The JSDQ (Jourard, 1964, pp. 160-163) is a sixty-item questionnaire devised to determine how much an individual has disclosed to five specific targets: mother, father, same-sex friend, opposite-sex friend., and spouse. The sixty items cover a wide range of topic areas including attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work or studies, money, personality, and body.

Because the purpose of the present research effort is not concerned

with the amount of disclosure to the specific targets noted in the instrument, it was judged inappropriate. Taylor and Altman's (1966, pp. 729-730) instrument was developed to further refine the concept that some specific subject prompts may inherently be more or less intimate. A battery of 671 statements arranged in thirteen categories were scaled by naval recruits and male undergraduates according to intimacy. While the instrument itself is not applicable to the present research effort, the thirteen categories provide a range of subject matter. The categories are "Religion, Love and sex, Own family, Parental family, Hobbies and interests, Physical appearance, Money and property, Current events, Emotions and feelings, Relationships with others, Attitudes and values, School and work, and Biography." (Taylor & Altman, 1966, p. 730) Finally, the SDSS (Chelune, 1976, pp. 1-21) provides situations which include a target person and a setting condition. The respondent is to rate the item on a one through six Likert scale in which a one means "I would be willing to discuss only certain topics, and on a superficial level only, if at all, in this situation" and a six means "I would be willing to express, in complete detail, personal information about myself in such a way that the other

person(s) truly understand(s) where I stand in terms of my feelings and thoughts regarding any topic." (p. 3) Twenty situations, including "You are on a blind date" are included. From this model, the researcher gleaned the idea of using situations with settings and target persons as the subject matter.

On May 4, 1984, the researcher contacted Gordon J. Chelune, an expert in self-disclosure, by phone to verify the unavailability of an instrument to collect the type of information necessary for the present research effort. He said, "I know of no direct research that has done that; it is a novel approach." Because there is no known instrument to measure appropriateness in principals' communication, the first stage of research was to develop one.



## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The author's review of the most frequently used instruments for measuring self-disclosure in Chapter Two has strong methodological implications concerning content of an instrument to measure communication of personal information. In order to ascertain with whom secondary school principals feel it is appropriate to share what information, it was decided to first determine by a pilot study what specific topics varied in their task-relatedness and riskiness sufficiently enough to serve as a basis of the design for a secondary school principals' communication instrument. Task (task-relatedness) is role-specific and risk (riskiness) is inherent to self-disclosure. The results of the pilot study were used to create the instrument for the main study.

#### Pilot Study

A pilot instrument including fifty different communication

topics rated on the two dimensions of task and risk was distributed to seventy randomly chosen secondary school principals from among the approximately one thousand individuals in the target population, high school principals in Illinois. The survey was mailed on November 3, 1986, to these individuals with a cover letter (Appendix C). Data were tabulated during April of 1987 for the thirty respondents to the survey.

The letter explains the purpose of the pilot study as researching two dimensions, content and direction, of secondary school principals' communication. The promise that the results would be completely confidential was also made.

Instructions (Appendix D) direct the respondent to assume that the information in each item is true and becomes known in the principal's workplace. The respondent is then asked to rate the content of each item in terms of its task-relatedness (task) and riskiness (risk). Task-relatedness is defined as whether the information would affect the principal's ability to perform his job in any way; would he be more or less able to do his duties were this information known? The rating scale for task-relatedness has four levels. Level one is "knowledge of this information would have no

bearing on a principal's work." Level two is "knowledge of this information would have little bearing on a principal's work." Level three is "knowledge of this information would have some bearing on a principal's work." Level four is "knowledge of this information would have extreme bearing on a principal's work."

The second scale is for riskiness (risk). Riskiness refers to how knowledge of this information would impact the principal's position; were the information known would the principal be more or less likely to be promoted, retained, or fired. Riskiness is considered to be a dimension of intimacy because the ultimate test of the intensity and personalness of information is whether knowledge of the information could cost a person his job or result in promotion. The riskiness scale also has four levels. Level one is "disclosure of this information would have no impact on a principal's job status." Level two is "disclosure of this information would have little impact on a principal's job status." Level three is "disclosure of this information would have some impact on a principal's job status." Level four is "disclosure of this information would have extreme impact on a principal's job status."

In both scales the degree of the effect is sought rather than the direction or valence of the information. The selection of an answer indicates no judgment about whether the impact is positive or negative. The response only indicates to what extent the principal's work and employment status could be affected were the information known. For example, extreme impact on a principal's job status might mean promotion or dismissal.

Packets included the letter, directions, pilot instrument, a Scan-Tron (Form 884) answer sheet, a pencil, a response form, and a stamped self-addressed envelope for returning the form. The pilot questionnaire (Appendix E) contains fifty different topics each to be rated on both scales. The fifty topics in order are:

- 1.) a principal's political preferences,
- 2.) a principal's desire to change jobs,
- 3.) a principal's problem with an alcoholic family member,
- 4.) a principal's moonlighting,
- 5.) a principal's feelings about a staff member he likes,
- 6.) a superintendent's written evaluation of the principal's performance,
- 7.) a principal's enrollment in graduate courses in educational administration,

- 8.) a principal's feelings about the direction of ongoing contract negotiations,
- 9.) a principal's application for an individual award,
- 10.) a principal's suspicions about a staff member's sexual preference,
- 11.) a principal's undergraduate g.p.a.,
- 12.) a principal's feelings about a superintendent he does not like,
- 13.) a principal's feelings about a superintendent he likes,
- 14.) a principal's knowledge of the alcoholism of a staff member,
- 15.) a principal's hobbies,
- 16.) a principal's desire to become superintendent,
- 17.) a principal's feelings about another principal in the district,
- 18.) a principal's dislike of a school board member,
- 19.) a principal's own health problems,
- 20.) a principal's financial affairs,
- 21.) a principal's knowledge of the pregnancy of an unwed mother who is a teacher,
- 22.) a principal's feelings about his own shortcomings,
- 23.) the principal's submission of an article for publication,
- 24.) the principal's positive feelings about other principals in the district,
- 25.) the principal's negative feelings about other principals in the district,

- 26.) a principal's feelings about his own strengths,
- 27.) a principal's religious beliefs,
- 28.) a principal's history of psychiatric help,
- 29.) an extra-marital affair of a principal's spouse,
- 30.) the accomplishments of the family members of a principal,
- 31.) rumors about school board members,
- 32.) specific details from administrative meetings,
- 33.) specific details from job interviews of prospective staff members,
- 34.) a principal's appraisal of the performance of staff members,
- 35.) a principal's knowledge of the mayor's family problems,
- 36.) a principal's personal ambitions,
- 37.) a principal's plans for improving the school,
- 38.) the drug addiction of a principal's child,
- 39.) the financial affairs of a staff member,
- 40.) a principal's suspicions about a co-worker's motives,
- 41.) the names of students who complained to the principal about a teacher,
- 42.) the identity of students who were arrested for drug possession,
- 43.) the identity of an unwed pregnant student,

- 44.) the identity of National Merit Semifinalist Qualifying Test finalists,
- 45.) the political maneuverings within a church in the district,
- 46.) the fact that a principal's spouse is in therapy,
- 47.) the fact that a principal's child is in therapy,
- 48.) the principal's feelings about his salary,
- 49.) the principal's age, and
- 50.) and the principal's commission of a felony.

The fifty topics include the "forbidden" topics of sex, politics, and religion. They cross the boundaries of the categories listed earlier in the JSDQ and the Taylor and Altman list. They are all relevant to the role of a secondary principal. Subjects of both negative and positive valence are listed.

Thirty completed forms were returned to the researcher for a participation rate of forty-three percent on the pilot study. The reliability of the instrument was calculated at .733, using a Kuder-Richardson formula.

## Communication Questionnaire

Each of the respondents' ratings was given a numerical value of one to four where one was a low rating. All responses were ranked one through fifty on the appropriate dimension, task-relatedness or risk, using the calculated totals per item. For example, the first item on the questionnaire is, "A principal's political preferences." Sixteen respondents answered "a", seven answered "b", seven answered "c" and zero answered "d". Weighting the responses so that "a" has a value of one, "b" a value of two, "c" a value of three, and "d" a value of four, and multiplying the value times the number of respondents who chose each response, and then calculating the total yields a sum of sixty-one for the item. Ranking all of the totals on the task-relatedness scale yields an overall ranking of fifteen for the item. Item number two was similarly ranked on the risk scale. Thirteen respondents chose answer "a", ten chose answer "b", six chose answer "c", and one chose answer "d". Using the same numeric values for the responses, multiplying, and adding yields a total of fifty-five for the item which is placed eighth on the risk scale. In addition, the totals of paired items were



calculated and the totals were similarly ranked. In this case the total for the paired item is one hundred and six which ranks seventh among all ranked pairs. Finally, the differences in the totals and ranks were calculated, totaled, summed, and ranked. In this case, the sum of the differences is negative thirteen which tied for a rank of ninth.

Through this method, the items to be used in the communication questionnaire were determined. The survey, titled Principal's Communication Survey, is an eight page document. Sixteen items were chosen for inclusion in the final instrument. These items were divided into the four cells for the study: high task/high risk, high task/low risk, low task/high risk, and low task/low risk. In the high risk/high task cell items xx, l, f, and kk were placed. In the low risk/low task cell items ii, o, mm, and ss were placed. In the high task/low risk cell items cc, c, u, and v were placed. In the low task/high risk cell items bb, r, i, and y were placed. Notably, six of the thirteen Taylor and Altman categories are represented in the sixteen items. The following table, Table 1, shows the relationship of the content of each item to its placement in the four cells.

Table 1  
**DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS BY CELL**

RISK	TASK	ITEM
High	High	<p>A superintendent's written evaluation of the principal's performance</p> <p>A principal's plans for improving the school</p> <p>A principal's feelings toward a superintendent he does not like</p> <p>The principal's commission of a felony</p>
High	Low	<p>A principal's plans to apply for an individual award</p> <p>The principal's negative feelings toward another principal in the district</p> <p>A principal's history of psychiatric help</p> <p>A principal's dislike of a board member</p>
Low	High	<p>A principal's knowledge of the pregnancy of an unwed mother who is a teacher</p> <p>A principal's problem with an alcoholic family member</p> <p>An extra-marital affair of the principal's spouse</p> <p>A principal's own shortcomings</p>
Low	Low	<p>A principal's knowledge of the mayor's family problems</p> <p>The financial affairs of a staff member</p> <p>The political maneuverings within a church within the district</p> <p>A principal's hobbies</p>

After determining which of the content items would be on the final instrument, in order to make the instrument as nonbiased as possible, the items were rearranged in their original order.

Original Order	Questionnaire Placement
1	5
2	4
3	2
4	6
5	16
6	12
7	1
8	13
9	10
10	11
11	8
12	3
13	7
14	9
15	14
16	15

The items were then assigned a revised placement according to a Table of Random Numbers. As indicated in the preceding table, Table 2, the first item from the pilot instrument was placed in the fifth position and so on until the sixteenth item from the original placement was placed in the fifteenth position for the final instrument. Thus, the first item on the Principals' Communication Survey was originally in the seventh position among the sixteen items chosen from the original fifty. The third independent variable is the target audience of the communicated content. Four targets were identified: his superintendent, another principal, a member of the faculty, and his secretary. Because the principals who had been interviewed in the initial stages of the research had made clear distinctions between these four target groups, the independent variable of audience is divided into the levels of superintendent, fellow principal, faculty, and clerical. The groups vary in hierarchical rank and are all part of the educational enterprise. Despite the size of the school for example, every high school principal would be able to relate to these four groups of colleagues.

Each item is listed in the following form: "How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss (topic) with

his superintendent? with another principal? with a member of the faculty? with his secretary?" Each sub question is accompanied with four possible ratings: "(a) Very appropriate, (b) Appropriate, (c) Inappropriate, and (d) Very inappropriate."

In addition to the independent variables risk, task-relatedness and audience, the final instrument includes both a series of demographic items and an additional dependent variable, communicative appropriateness. The demographic items which were chosen all have roots in the research on communicative openness or in the demography of high schools. Item one divides student enrollment into five levels: 1-500, 501-1,000, 1,001-1,500, 1,501-2,000, and 2,000+. Item two describes the school as being private or public with choices: public four-year, public three-year, private four-year, private three-year, and other. Item three queries whether the school is urban, suburban, or rural. Item four asks if the district is unit, dual, or neither. The fifth item asks the duration of the respondents' years as principal with options: 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, and 21+ years. Item six asks if the individual has been a principal in more than one school. Item seven asks for gender of the respondent. Item eight

was included due to the specific nature of the third independent variable, audience. It was thought to be necessary to inquire as to whether or not there were any other high schools (and therefore high school principals) in the district because it may make a difference as to their accessibility, availability, or willingness to share with the respondents. In short, the presence of other high schools, might affect the respondent's decision as to how appropriate it would be to discuss certain subjects.

Respondents are directed to assume that the information is true of a secondary school principal. They are informed that they are being asked how appropriate it would be for a principal to share this information with each of the persons mentioned. The principals are also told they are not being asked how likely they are to share the information if it actually applied to them. Further, they are told they are not being asked if the information is true. They are only asked how appropriate they feel it would be for someone in the position of high school principal to share this kind of information with the category of people listed.

On March 23, 1988, 797 questionnaires (Appendix E) were mailed to high schools on the Illinois State Board of Education

(ISBE) mailing list. The ISBE list contains 1,040 entries.

Duplicative, pilot study, and non-IHSA schools were purposefully excluded. The packet included a letter on Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School letterhead (Appendix F), a pilot questionnaire, a Scan-Tron Form 882, a response request form, and a prepaid postage envelope.

Thus, the data were gathered on a 2 x 2 x 4 (Risk X Task X Audience) design. The demographic items provide a vehicle for obtaining data relative to the secondary considerations of the relationship of gender, tenure, the structure of the school system, enrollment, location, experience, and the nature of the school to communicative appropriateness. At a much more general level, the instrument includes content of both positive and negative valence allowing for examination of communicative appropriateness irrespective of valence.

### Hypotheses

The end goal of the research is to determine a tentative operational definition of communicative appropriateness for secondary school principals. To effect that end, three null

hypotheses were advanced:

(1) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and the audience (hierarchical rank) of the intended recipient.

(2) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and the level of task-relatedness of the specific content.

(3) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and the level of risk in sharing the specific content.

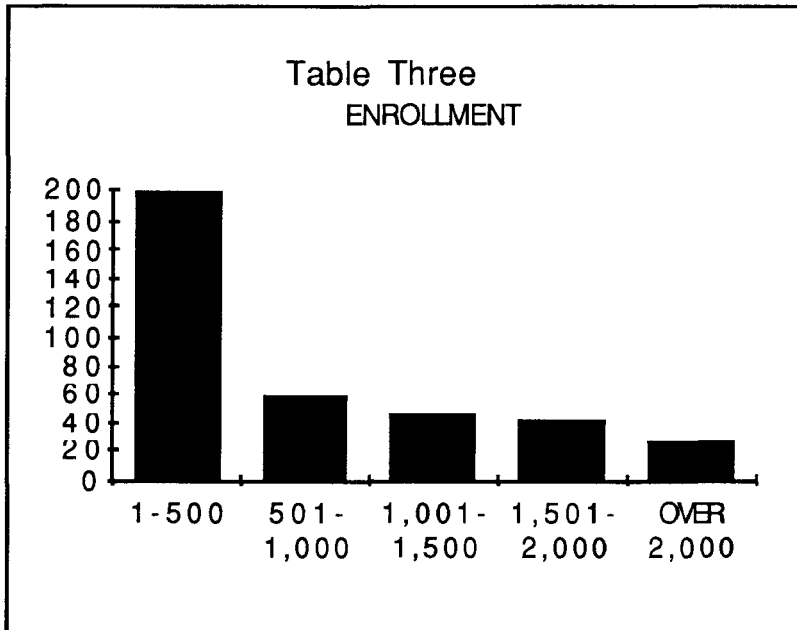


## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

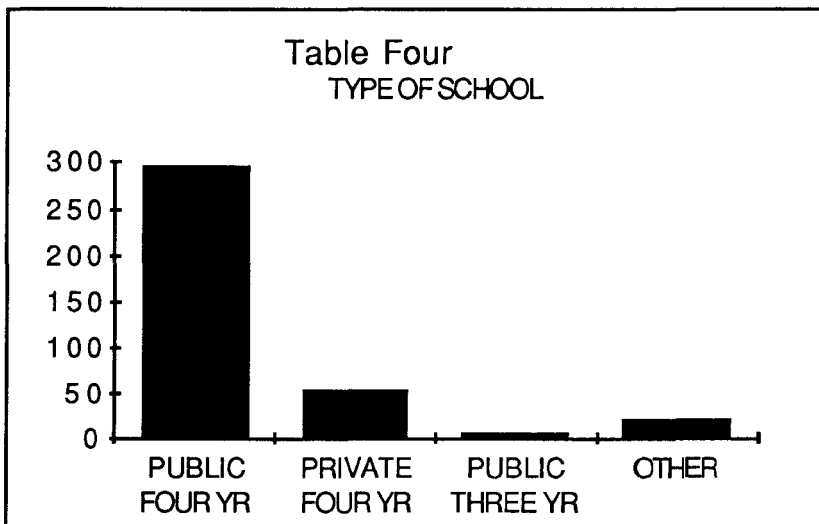
#### Demographics of Respondents

Completed surveys were returned to the researcher by 378 individuals which represents a 47.4 percent return of the 797 surveyed. The first eight items of the survey detail the demographics of the respondents. The first of these items reflects student enrollment. Of the respondents, 200 are principals in schools with enrollment in the 1-500 category, 59 are in schools in the 501-1,000 category, 47 are in schools with between 1,000 and 1,500 students, 44 are in schools with between 1,501 and 2,000 students, 27 are in schools with enrollment greater than 2,000, and one respondent did not complete the item. This preponderance of small schools is typical of the demographics of the secondary school in Illinois.



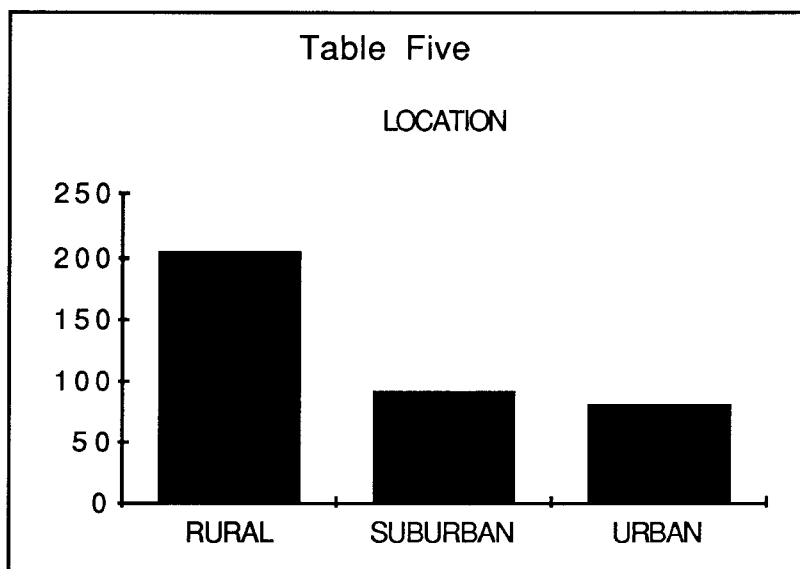
Most of the principals, 298, are in public four-year schools.

Fifty-four are in private four-year schools, six are in public three-year schools and 20 are in other kinds of schools.

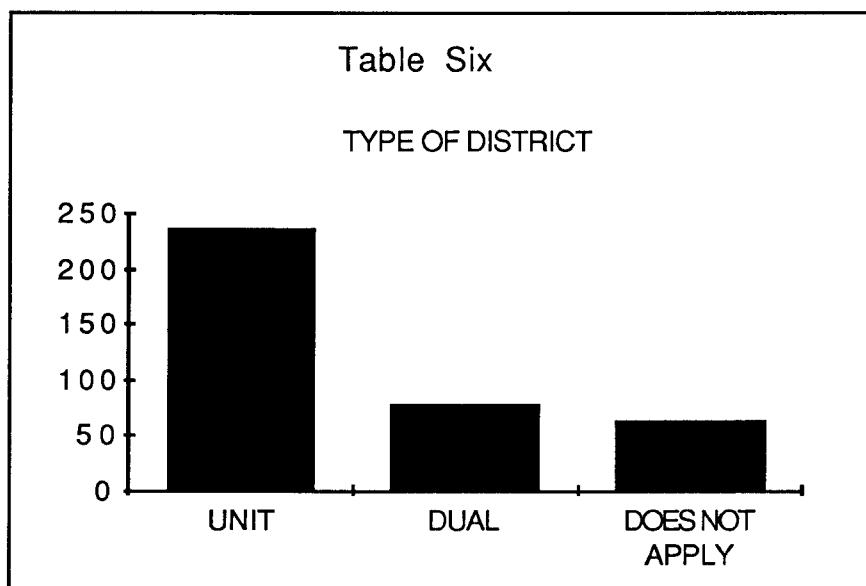


The focus of the subsequent question (Table 5) is the location of the high school where the respondent is serving his or her term as principal. Two hundred and four of the responding Illinois

principals are in rural schools, 92 in suburban schools, and 81 in urban schools. One individual did not mark the item.

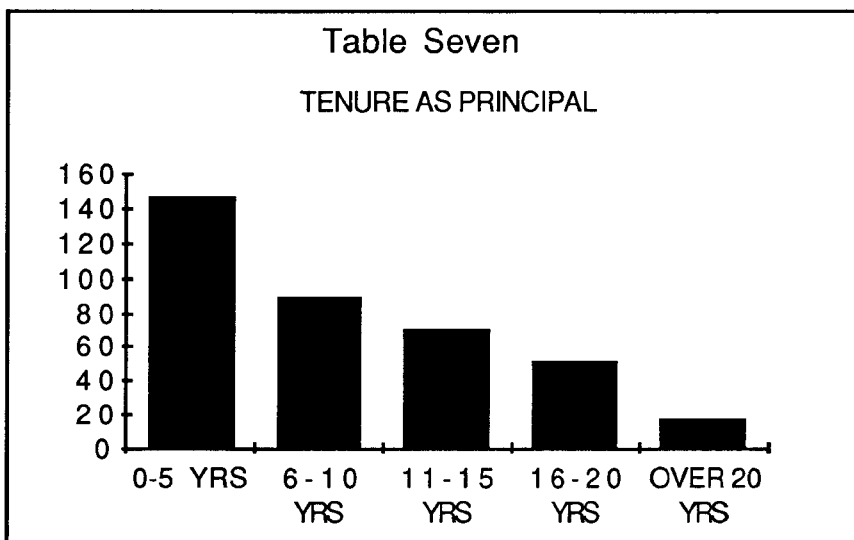


Most of the respondents, 237, are in unit districts, 78 are in dual districts, and 63 respondents marked that the item does not apply.

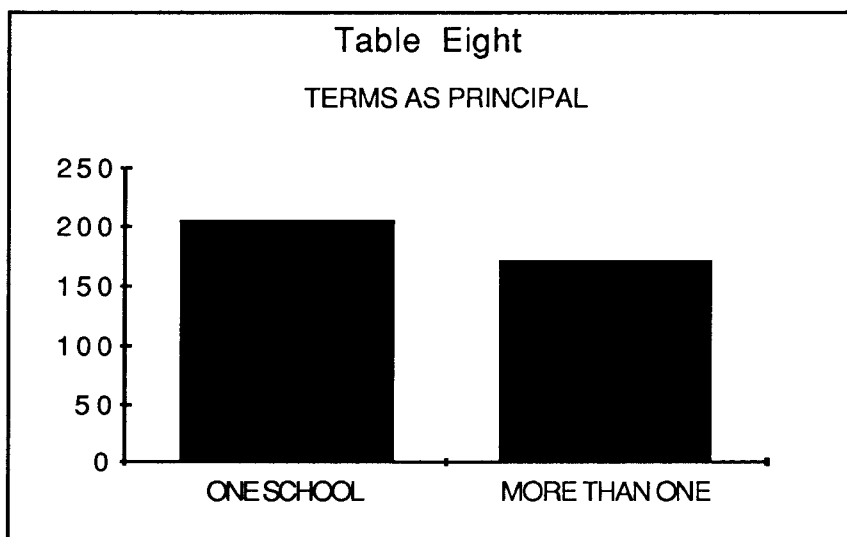


Of the respondents, 148 principals are in within their first five years of being a principal, 89 are in the six to ten year range, 71

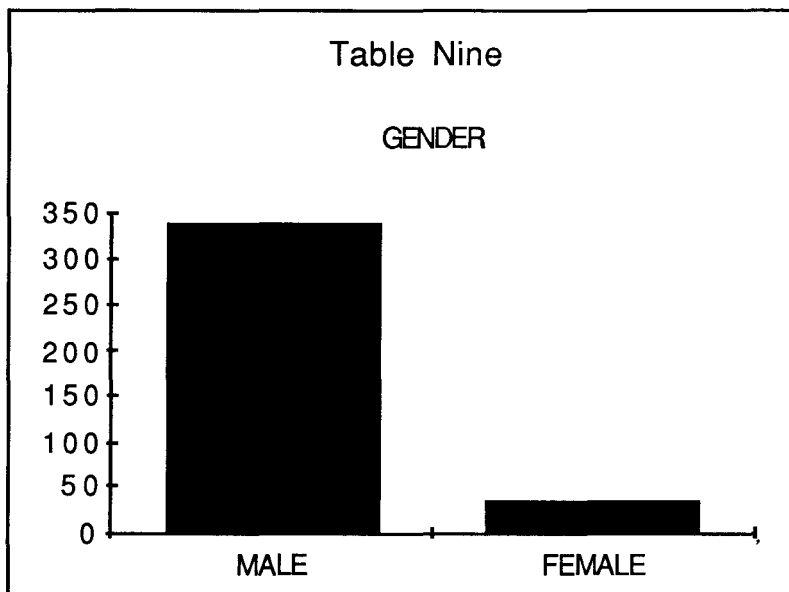
are in the 11 through 15 year category, 52 are in the 16 to 20 area, and 18 respondents have over 20 years of experience as a principal.



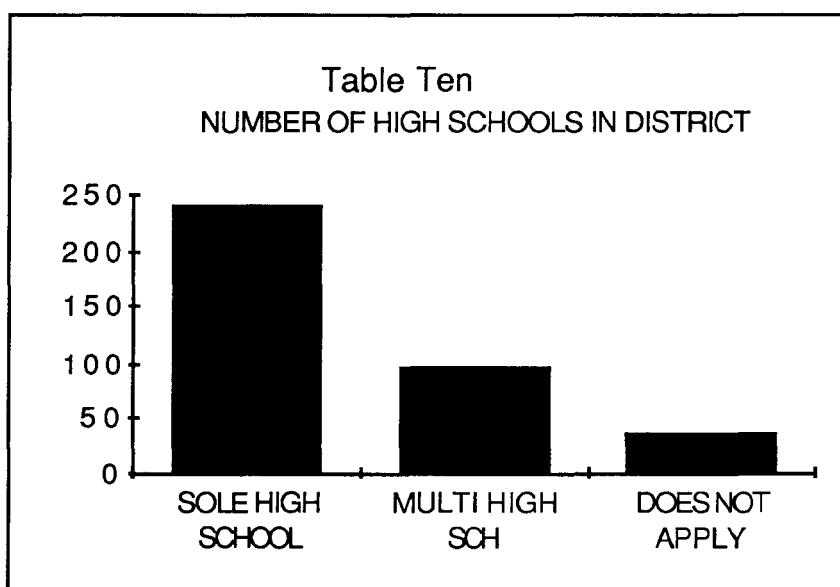
Of those responding, 206 have been in more than one school and 172 have not.



Only 37, approximately ten percent, of the respondents are female.



Most, 243, are in the sole high school in a district. Another 99 are in districts with more than one high school, and 36 marked, "does not apply."



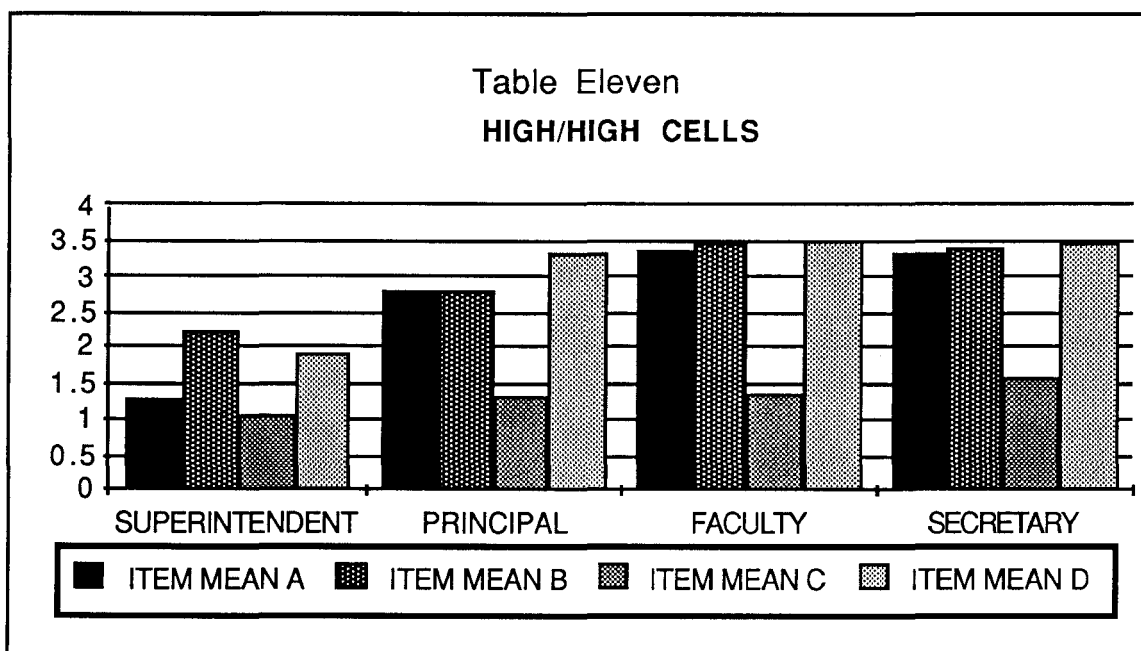
Overall, the "typical respondent" is a male principal with fewer than ten years of experience in a small rural four-year public high school located in a unit district. Through cross tabulation procedures, it was determined that the few female principals among the respondents represent disproportionately more private schools than public, more urban and suburban than rural, fewer unit and dual districts than other, and more multi-high schools than sole schools.

### Findings

Data were gathered on a 2 X 2 X 4 ( Risk X Task X Audience) design with the dependent variable communicative appropriateness. Analysis of the data was computer-assisted with the use of the SYSTAT (Wilkinson, 1988) statistical software package. Data were scanned using ScanBook software and a ScanTron reader. The data were then translated into an ASCII file and imported to the SYSTAT program. Data were analyzed through regression analysis according to the following formula:

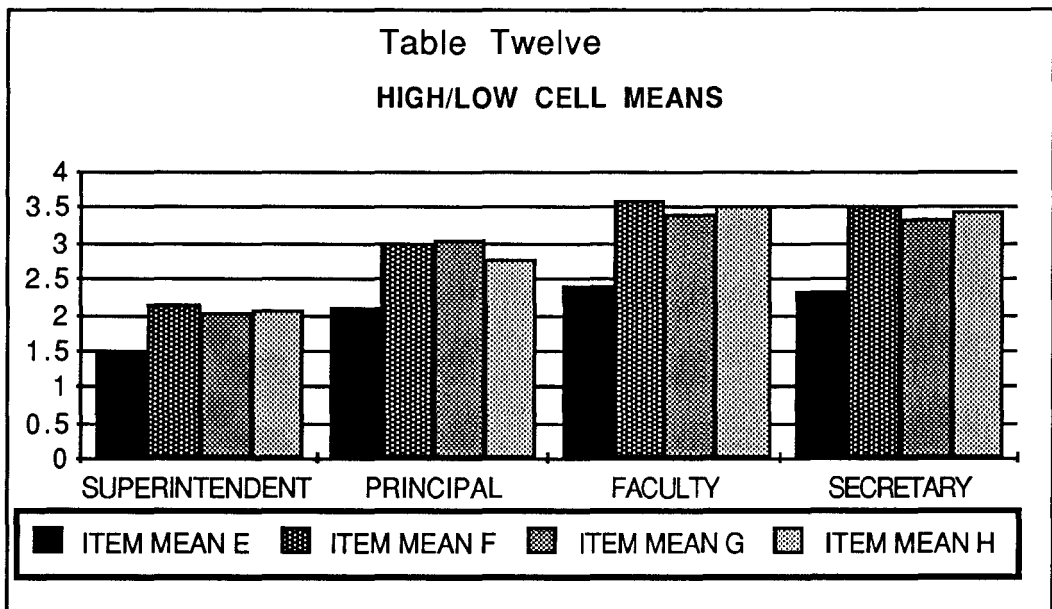
$$\text{Appropriateness} = \text{Constant} + \text{Risk} + \text{Task} + \text{Audience}.$$

Mean scores of each of the 64 survey items were determined and examined by cell. Cells one through four are in the high risk and high task location for each of the four audiences. As pictured in the following column graph, these means appear to have increasing numerical value as the interpreter progresses from superintendent to principal to faculty to secretary. Clearly the most dramatic increase in raw score is between superintendent and principal. The difference between faculty and secretary is less discernable.



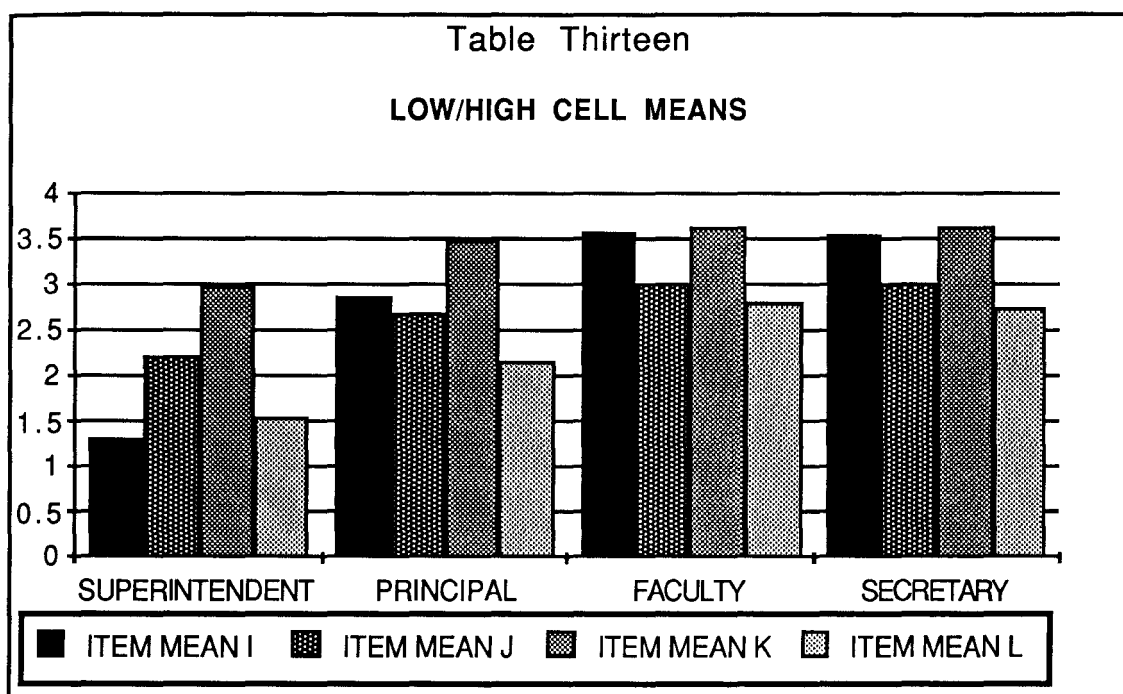
The next set of cells, cells five through eight, represent the high risk/low task grouping. The item means are represented graphically in Table Twelve. Again, the difference between the

means for superintendent varies from the means for principals and the difference between the means for principals varies less from the means for the two groups of subordinates, faculty and clerical.

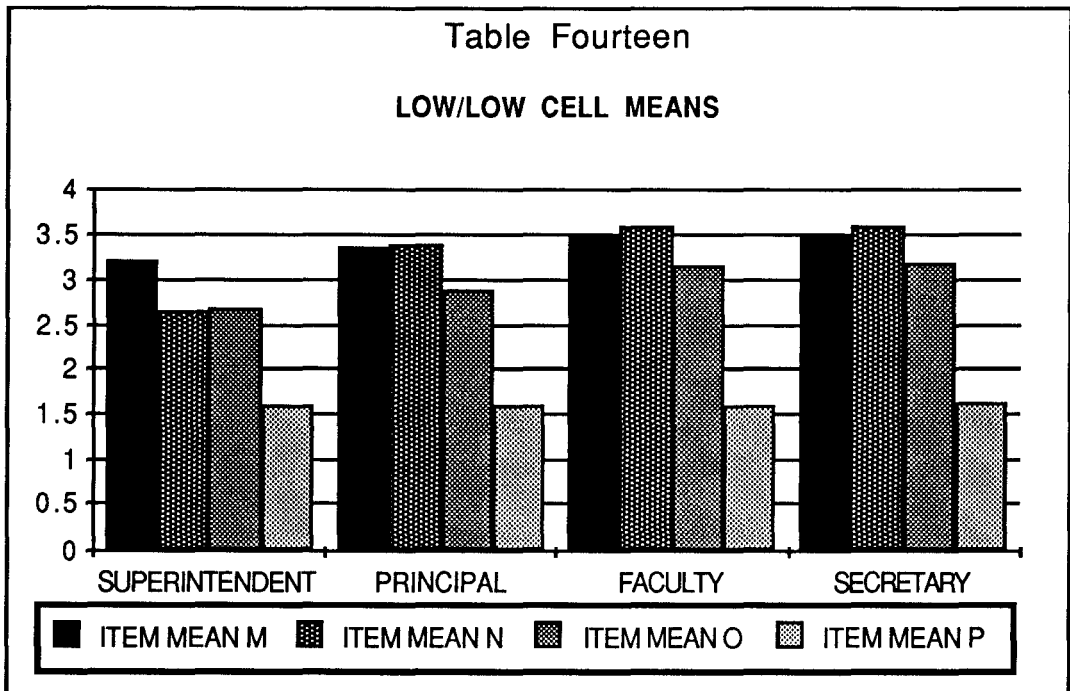


The third set of item means represents the low risk/high task set of subjects. The distribution of raw score means is depicted in Table Thirteen. Despite the appearance that the raw scores included in Table Thirteen are considerably higher for the principal and superintendent columns than the corresponding columns in Table Eleven and Table Twelve, the difference is not statistically significant.





The final set of cells is the low risk/low task set of items. Table Fourteen illustrates the pattern of responses. The columns for faculty and secretary show barely discernible difference from one to another. In fact with means computed to three decimals, if the difference in mean values for the four items is summed, the resultant amount is .059. Again, the apparent higher raw score totals represented in the superintendent and principal columns are not significantly higher than the comparable charts above despite the appearances.



Using 378 summed raw scores for each of the 64 items in the 16 cells, 27.8 percent of the variance can be explained. Using mean scores for each of the 64 items in the 16 cells, 26.9 percent of the variance can be explained. If the data are reduced to the point of the sixteen cell means, 72.8 percent of the variance can be explained.

Specifically, analyzing the 378 summed raw scores for each of the 64 items in the 16 cells yields a Multiple R of .527. The squared R of .278 represents the proportion of variance accounted for by the independent variables of risk, task, and audience. This, of course, corresponds to 27.8 percent of the variance explained.

Table Fifteen (below) contains a summary of the regression analysis using sums.

Table Fifteen					
Regression Analysis Using Sums					
Dependent Variable = Appropriateness      N = 64					
Independent Variables = Risk, Task, Audience					
Multiple R: .527      Squared Multiple R: .278					
Standard Error of Estimate 256.835					
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Regression Coefficient</u>	<u>Stand.Error</u>	<u>Stand.Coeff Beta</u>	<u>P</u>	
Constant	520.219	157.279		.002	
Risk	68.625	64.209	.117	.289	
Task	49.188	64.209	.084	.447	
Audience	132.713	28.715	.507	.000	
Analysis of Variance					
<u>Source</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Ratio</u>	<u>P</u>
Regression	1,523,069.425	3	507,689.808	7.696	.000
Residual	3,957,865.513	60	65,964.425		

Squaring the standard coefficients or beta scores distributes the variance explained among the independent variables at 1.4 percent for risk, .7 percent for task, and 25.7 percent for audience.

Audience explains 92.4 percent of the total variance explained by all three independent variables. Furthermore, the contribution of

risk and task are nonsignificant. The F-ratio of the mean square of regression to the mean square of the residual is 7.357 and the observed significance level associated with it is less than .000. Therefore, the regression is significant at the 0.1 percent significance level.

A second perspective of the data comes in examining the means of each of the sixty-four communication content items. Analyzing the mean scores for each of the 64 items in the 16 cells yields a Multiple R of .519. The squared R of .269 represents the proportion of variance accounted for by the independent variables of risk, task, and audience. Again, this corresponds to 26.9 percent of the variance explained. Squaring the standard coefficients or beta scores distributes the variance explained at 1.2 percent for risk, .5 percent for task, and 25.2 percent for audience. Audience accounts for 93.7 percent of the total variance explained by the three independent variables. The F-ratio of the mean square of regression to the mean square of the residual is 7.357 and the observed significance level associated with it is less than .000. Thus the regression is significant at the 0.1 percent level. Table sixteen is a summary of this second perspective of the data.

Table Sixteen

**Regression Analysis Using Item Means**

Dependent Variable = Appropriateness                      N= 64  
 Independent Variables = Risk, Task, Audience  
 Multiple R: .519    Squared Multiple R: .269  
 Standard Error of Estimate .689

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Regression Coefficient</u>	<u>Stand. Error</u>	<u>Stand. Coef Beta</u>	<u>P</u>
Constant	1.455	.422		
Risk	0.170	.172	.109	.328
Task	0.10	.172	.069	.532
Audience	0.350	.077	.502	.000

## Analysis of Variance

<u>Source</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Ratio</u>	<u>P</u>
Regression	10.474	3	3.491	7.357	.000
Residual	28.475	60	.475		

Further collapsing the data into the sixteen cells using the mean of the item means by cell further confirms the effects noted in the two previous analysis of the data. A mean was computed for each of the sixteen cells from the means of the four items located in each cell. Obviously, the degrees of freedom are reduced to three in this

analysis. Analyzing the mean scores for each of the 16 cells through regression yields a Multiple R of .853. The squared R of .728 represents the proportion of variance accounted for by the independent variables of risk, task, and audience. These results are presented in Table Seventeen.

Table Seventeen					
Regression Analysis Using Cell Means					
Dependent Variable = Appropriateness N= 16					
Independent Variables = Risk, Task, Audience					
Multiple R: .853 Squared Multiple R: .728					
Standard Error of Estimate .304					
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Regression Coefficient</u>	<u>Stand.Error</u>	<u>Stand.Coef Beta</u>	<u>P</u>	
Constant	1.274	.372			
Risk	0.210	.152	.208	.193	
Task	0.148	.152	.147	.349	
Audience	0.367	.068	.814	.000	
Analysis of Variance					
<u>Source</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Ratio</u>	<u>P</u>
Regression	2.963	3	0.988	10.688	.001
Residual	1.109	12	0.092		

Squaring the standard coefficients or beta scores distributes the variance explained at 4.4 percent for risk, 2.2 percent for task, and 66.3 percent for audience and the associated 72.8 percent of

variance explained. The independent variable, audience is responsible for 91.1 percent of the total variance explained by the three independent variables. Again in this third treatment of the data., the contributions of risk and task are not significant. The F-ratio of the mean square of regression to the mean square of the residual is 10.688 and the observed significance level associated with it is less than .001. Thus the regression is significant at the one percent level.

The end goal of this research was to determine a preliminary or tentative operational definition of appropriateness for secondary school principals' communication. To effect that end, three null hypotheses were advanced:

(1) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and the audience (hierarchical rank of the intended recipient).

(2) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and the level of task-relatedness of the specific content.

(3) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and

the level of risk in sharing the specific content.

Data analysis demonstrates that approximately one fourth of the variation in the ratings respondents issued can be accounted for by the independent variable, audience, which is the hierarchical rank variable. Accordingly, the null hypothesis for audience is rejected. The additional independent variables of risk and task as defined in this instrument do not appear to account for a major portion of the variation. Therefore the null hypotheses regarding risk and task are not rejected as a result of this study. The operational definition of the dependent variable communicative appropriateness thus remains incomplete as a result of this research.

Cross tabulations of the demographic data with the cells proved to be of limited utility because there are so many cells with low frequencies. However, through combining a number of cells into eight: high/high, high/low, low/high, low/low, superintendent, principal, faculty, and clerical, significant effects were identified in a few areas: Gender by Superintendent, Multiple High Schools by Superintendent, Type of School by Superintendent, and Terms by Superintendent. In other words, significant



interactions were noted between half of the demographic traits and the highest hierarchical level of audience.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Clearly a relationship between audience (hierarchical rank) and communicative appropriateness is demonstrated in this study. It follows that one can reasonably conclude that the principals who responded to the questionnaire find sharing personal information with their superintendents more appropriate than sharing personal information with their peers or subordinates. No such conclusions can be reasonably drawn from this research about the relationship of risk and task to communicative appropriateness. One could also conclude from the mean scores of the sixty-four items that most of the principals find it inappropriate to share most of the information with any of the audiences in the survey. On the response scale, a "two" is "appropriate" and a "three" is "inappropriate". The mean score as calculated from the 64 item means is 2.74005. Only two items, hobbies and the principal's

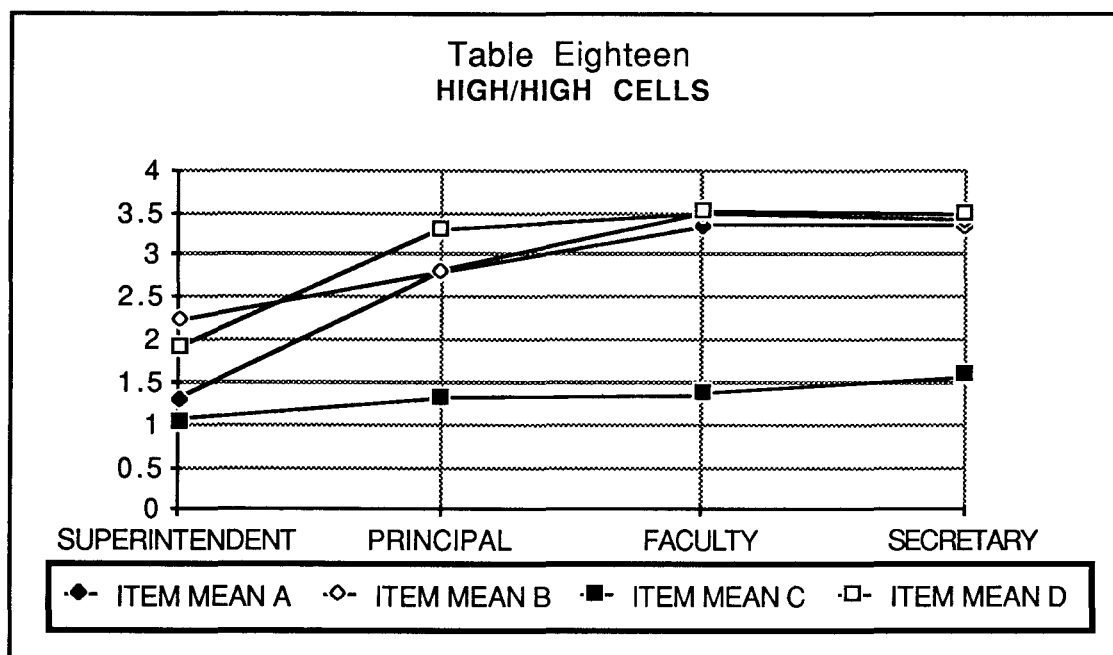
plans for improving the school, have means across all four cells of less than two. Both of them have mean scores less than 1.65. In short, most of the topics are deemed inappropriate for sharing.

Subsequent to this research, ten principals were asked to respond to an informal follow-up interview during which four questions were posed of each of them. (Appendix G) In answer to the question, "Do you find it more appropriate to share personal information with your superintendent than with your peers or subordinates?", salient points were raised by the follow-up group as conditions to the process of sharing: (1) sharing depends on the topic and purpose of the communication, (2) if the principal does not like or has been "burned" by the superintendent, the willingness to share is clearly affected, and (3) some principals feel more comfortable sharing with trusted peers than with their superintendents. These three conditions are unconfirmed in this research. However, all three were reflected in the initial in-depth interviews of the two former principals and may play an important role in principals' communication decision-making.

Examination of graphs of the means of items by cell yields an interesting possibility. Perhaps, principals envision faculty

members and secretaries as being of the same hierarchical rank. Little difference exists between the means for faculty and secretaries across all treatments.

The following line graphs of the four sets of cells illustrate this point. The first graph depicts the mean scores of the four items in the high risk/high task cells.



The second graph portrays the means in the four cells for the high risk/low task condition. Items in this section include: numbers 13 through 16(E), 25 through 28(F), 37 through 40(G), and 57 through 60(H).

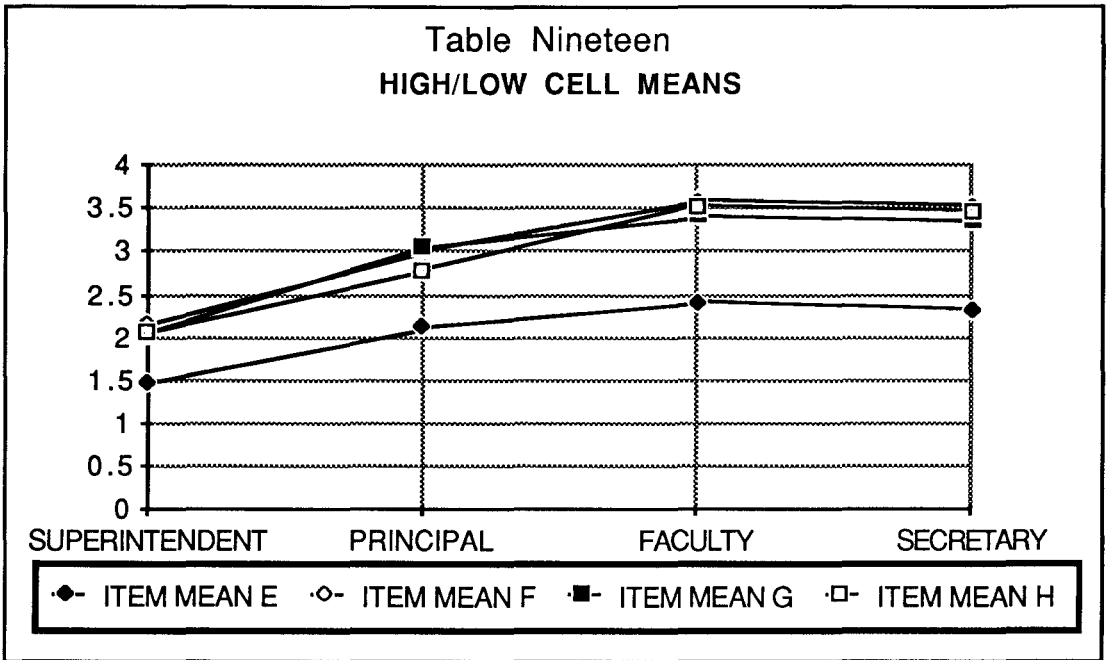
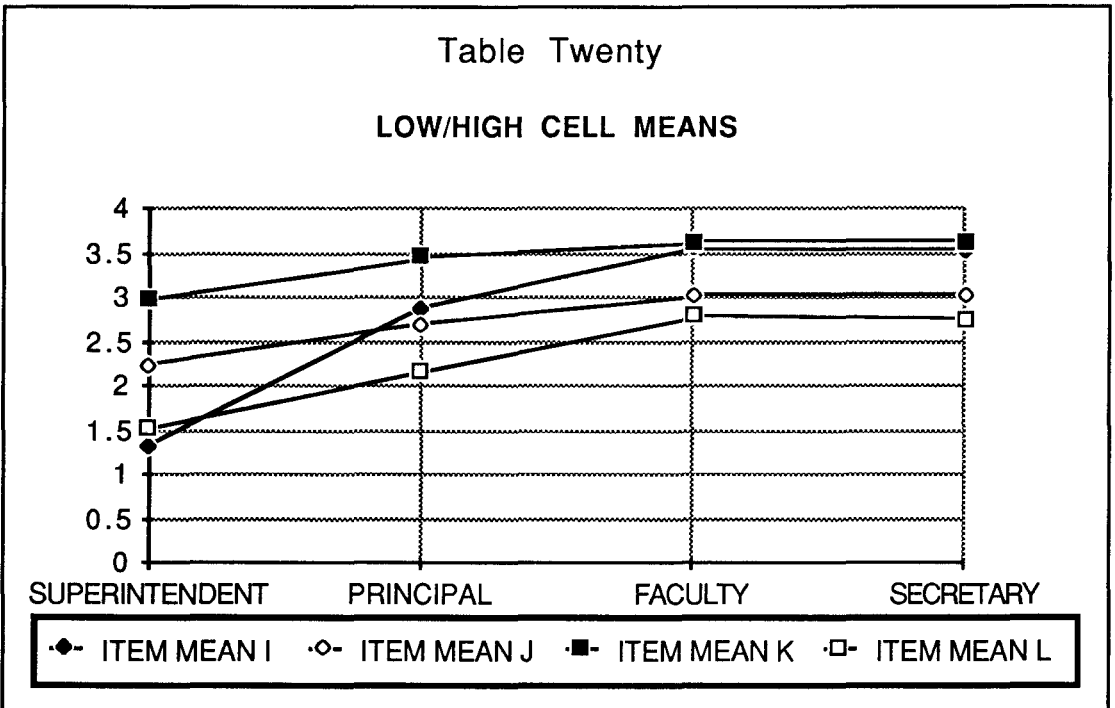
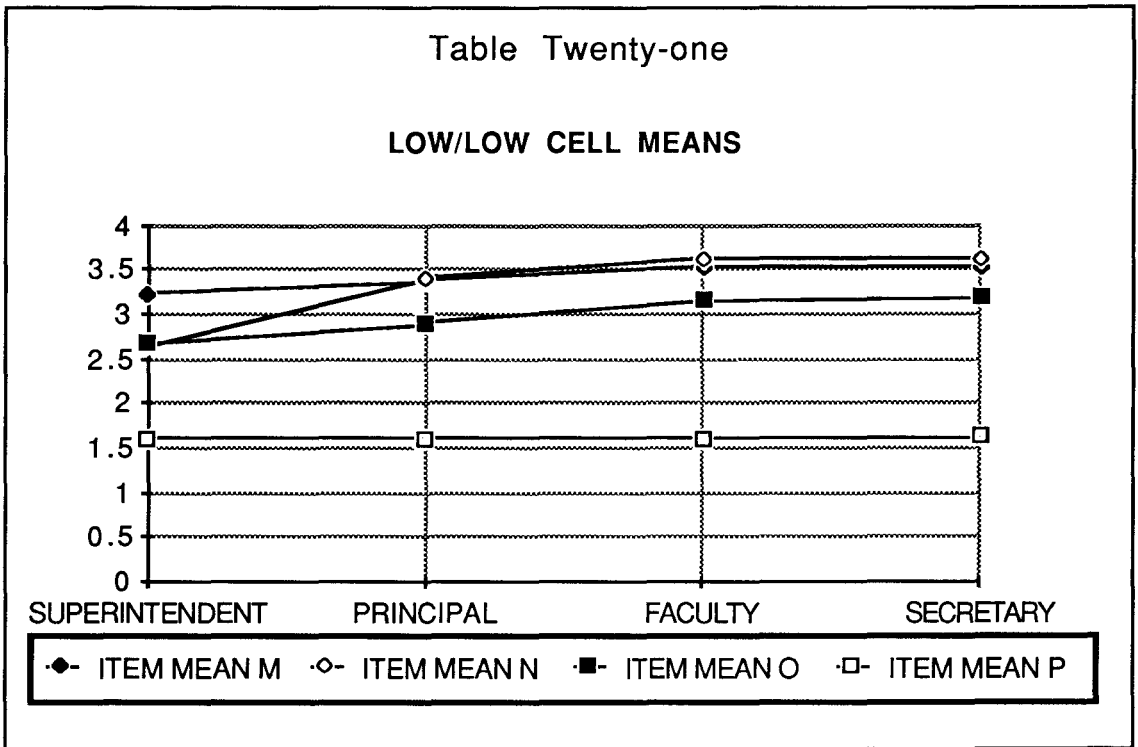


Table Twenty depicts the low risk/high task cells by means.

Very little difference exists between the faculty and secretarial columns.



In the final table, again the slope of the lines evens out from the faculty to the secretary column.

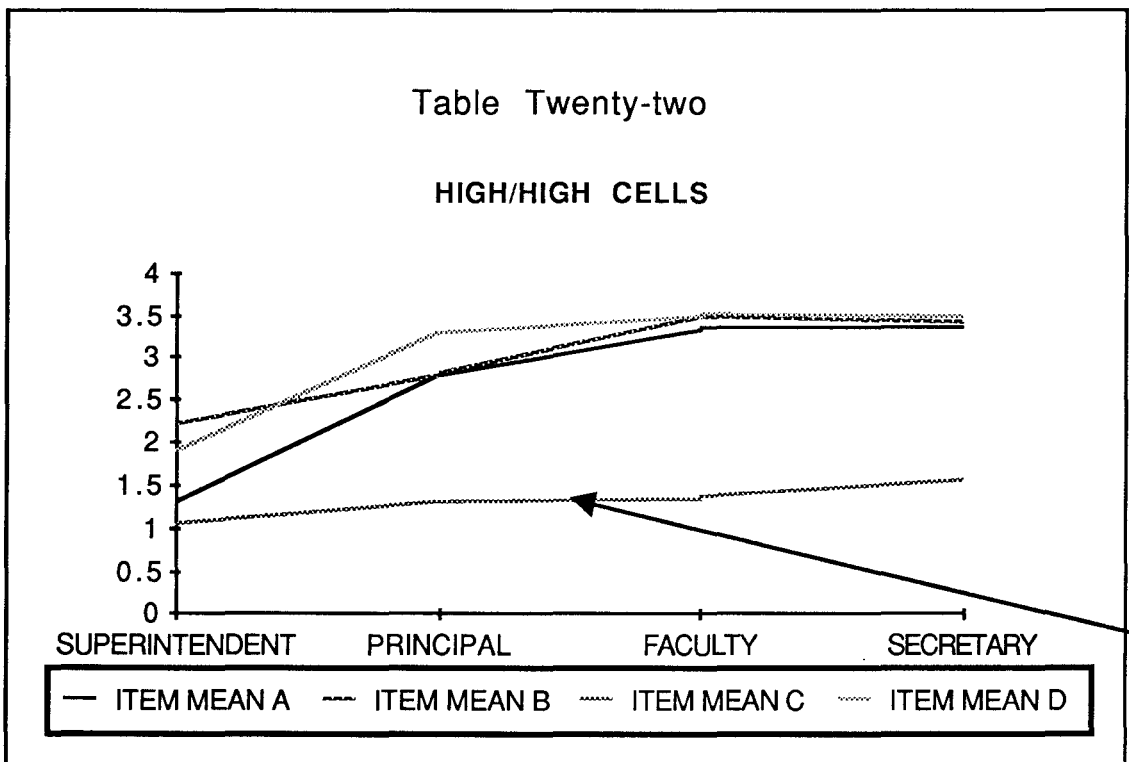


It is worth noting that the difference in mean scores of items ranges between  $-.075$  and  $.018$  when the standard deviation for each of these cells is greater than 1.5. To test this relationship between the two levels of faculty and secretary, the researcher combined the members of the faculty and secretarial cells as though they were one level and reran the regression analysis. The Multiple R increased to  $.561$  rendering the squared Multiple R equal to  $.315$ . In other words, the variance explained when these cells are thus collapsed is equal to 31.5 percent of the total variance.

The independent variable audience accounts for 94.6 percent of the variance explained.

To further understand this relationship, during the informal follow-up contacts previously described, the researcher asked ten high school principals the following questions: "In the day-to-day operation of the school and in your personal communication patterns do you distinguish between faculty and secretaries according to hierarchical rank? Specifically, can you think of any types of personal information which you would appropriately share with one group but not the other? If so, what would they be?" While most of the group indicated that they would not distinguish between the groups, two of them indicated that in the areas of information about students, curricular matters, hiring procedures for certified staff, and faculty or administrative dismissals there would be some differences. By virtue of their positions, teachers might be in a position to need to know confidential information about students and information about curriculum that secretarial staff might not know. Secretaries might be in a position to know more about individual hirings and firings because they may be asked to type confidential personnel communications.

Scrutiny of the patterns of raw score distribution by cell reveals that the items which have either positive or neutral valence (as opposed to negative valence) do not conform closely to the other items in the same cell. Returning again to line graphs of item means, particular lines noted by an arrow in the following tables seem to have a different pattern than the other items in the same cell. In reviewing the content of each of the items which seem out of synch with the others, it becomes obvious that the loading of the item may have had an impact on the results.

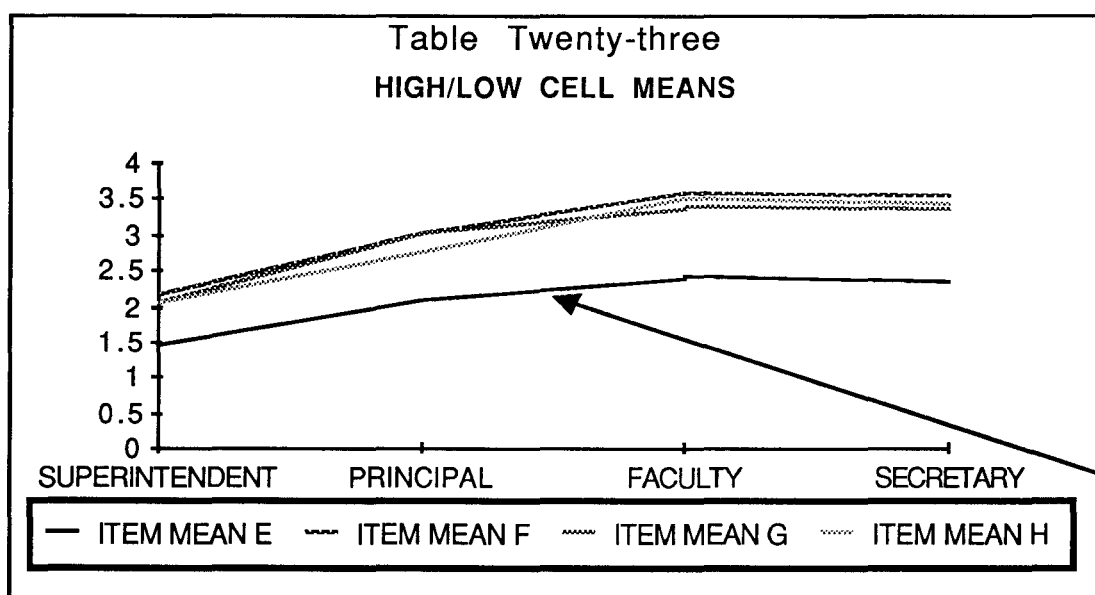


Specifically, in the high/high quadrant, as note above in Table Twenty-two, the item (item mean C) which is up to nearly a

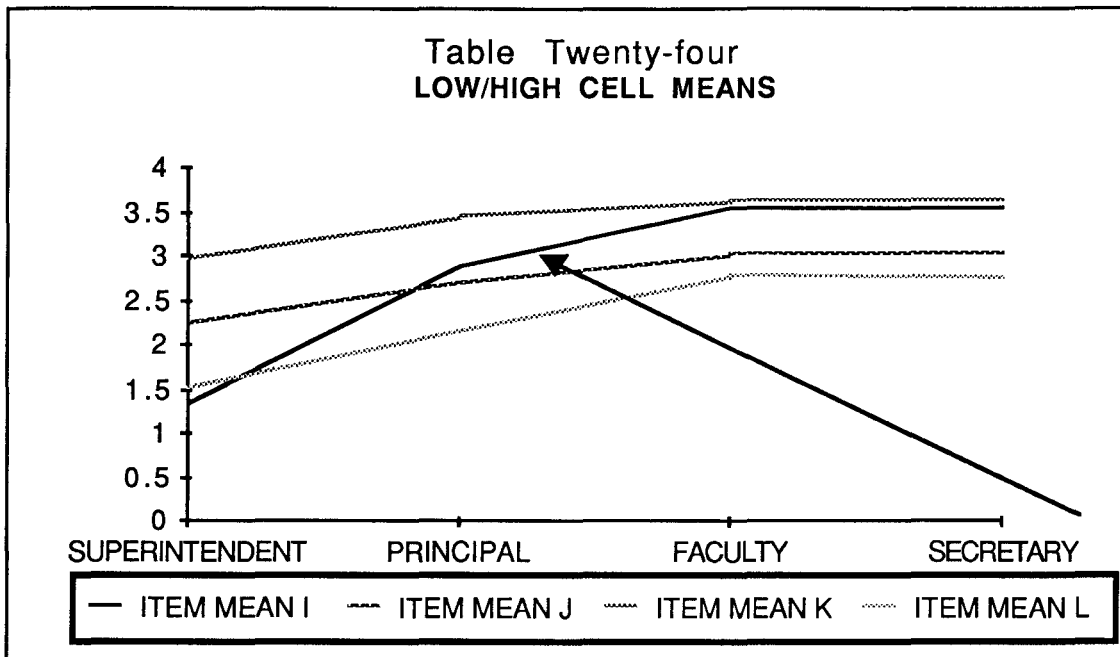


standard deviation from the mean for the quadrant deals with a principal's plans for improving the school.

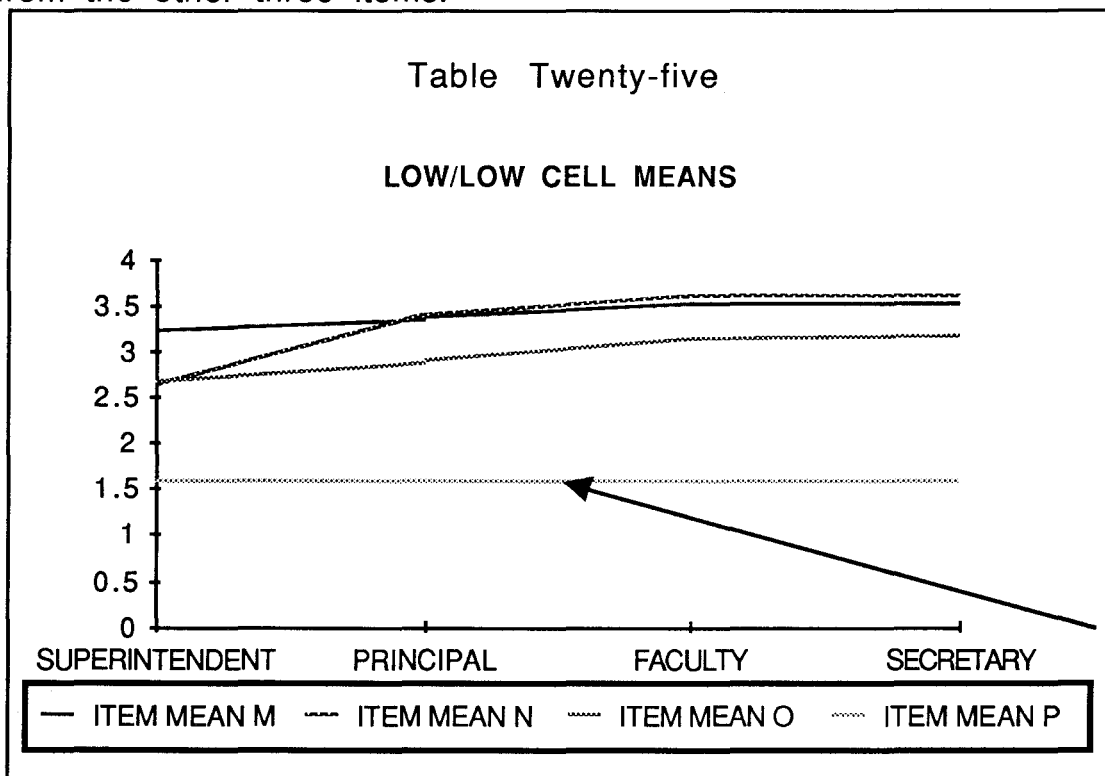
In the high/low quadrant below (Table Twenty-three), the item most deviant from the norm is the item (item mean E) focusing on the principal's application for an award. An application would at least be neutral if not positive.



In the low/high quadrant as noted in Table Twenty-four, the pregnancy of an unwed faculty member plots a different pattern than the other three items in the cell. The item (item mean I) creates the only noticeable intersection with other plotted items in the table. In fact, this intersection is the only such intersection in the entire study.



In the low/low quadrant graphed in Table Twenty-five, the item (item mean P) on a principal's hobbies is significantly disparate from the other three items.



One of the series of items in the low risk/low task cell is worth further comment. The sum of raw scores for survey item 69 is 595 with 371 respondents, for survey item 70 is 598 with 372 respondents, for survey item 71 is 595 with 370 respondents, and for survey item 72 is 600 with 370 respondents. The standard deviation of the items ranges from 0.594 to 0.643. Interestingly, these items are the last four on the instrument.

These patterns prompted the researcher to review all of the items and make a judgment as to their valence. It would appear that only these four items are of positive or neutral valence. Perhaps the appropriateness of sharing positive information differs markedly from the sharing of negative information. This relationship of valence to appropriateness is suggested as noted in Chapter Two by Gilbert and Whiteneck (1976), Baird (1973), McMurry (1973), Stull (1974), Jablin (1977), Sussman, et al . (1980), Kreps (1986), and Mitchell and Burdick(1986).

In addition, when the researcher as follow-up asked ten principals the following question: "Do you find it more or less appropriate to share information of positive (as opposed to negative) valence with others in school?", seven of the ten

principals said that it is more appropriate to share positive information, two said they share both kinds, and one said that if it is a serious concern (and negative) it should be shared; if negative and petty, it should be dropped.

In this examination, there is no accounting for the frequency of communication; there is only accounting for the appropriateness of communication. This distinction is significant because the average principal may indeed be spending most of his time talking to individuals with whom he finds it inappropriate to share content similar to that found in the items on the Principal's Communication Survey. Further, as noted in Chapter Two, duration or rate of disclosure are two of the parameters of self-disclosure which Chelune delineates. (1979) One breakdown of a secondary principal's communication time found in Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz's Principals in Action follows:

...most of the principal's personal exchanges occur with teachers, administrative aides, students and office clerks. Taken together, they account for 60 percent of the principal's face to face contacts during the work day. It is pertinent to point out that the principal spends roughly equivalent time with teachers, administrators and students. Conversely, the principal has very little contact with the building engineer.... The principal also spends very little of the work day in contact

with his staff or line superiors. Only 7 percent of the time is<sup>89</sup> devoted to interchanges with the superintendent or the headquarters staff. (1984, p. 53)

Further, another dimension of frequency would be duration of contact. Morris et al. found that the average duration of a face to face encounter for a principal was approximately 2 minutes and 50 seconds and the average duration of a telephone conversation was 2 minutes and 35 seconds. (1984, pp. 52-53) Many of the topics included in the questionnaire do not lend themselves to relatively brief or infrequent conversations. Many of them may not lend themselves to phone conversations either. Or, quite simply, the principals may run out of time during the course of a normal day to talk with others as much as they might were the demands on their time less consuming and less directed. One could assume that principals must go out of their way to discuss with superintendents the topics they deem appropriately shared from these statistics.

Unfortunately, with 37 females and 341 males among the respondents, it became infeasible to analyze gender differences with sufficient data to draw reasonable conclusions. It should be noted however, that the percentage of female principals responding

to this questionnaire is roughly equivalent to the percentage of female principals at the secondary level. Sadker, Sadker, and Long write,

By the mid-1970s only 13 percent of the nation's principalships were filled by women. In terms of school level, only 18 percent of elementary school principals, 3 percent of junior high school principals, and less than 2 percent of senior high principals were female. By the early 1980s, some gains had been achieved, with women comprising 23 percent of elementary principals and 10 percent of secondary principals. (1989, p. 113)

Myra Sadker in "Do Men and Women Communicate Differently?"

lists three areas which might have had relevance to this study:

(1) men talk more than their fair share of the time, (2) women are more likely to reveal personal information about themselves, and (3) female managers are seen as giving more attention to subordinates. Further with the relative shortage of female principals at the high school level in Illinois, there is an accompanying relative shortage of female superintendents in high school districts. While it is true that subordinates tend to share more personal information with superiors despite gender, that research has never before been completed in the educational arena. In a section of her article querying "Why are there communication

problems?" Gabler (1987) demonstrates a feeling dimension

difference between genders in an educational setting. She shares:

Over the years, I've noticed that men and women have a somewhat different sense of humor. At times, I find male humor unkind, because men will joke about something that is distasteful or about a person's problems. I've come to realize that men use humor to tell a person that they are concerned about him without exhibiting what might be misconstrued as feminine sentiment. But this masculine expression of concern may hurt their more sensitive colleagues.

I became aware of this difference in humor by accident as I walked into a superintendents' meeting many years ago. I met a fellow superintendent on the way in and noticed his hesitation at joining the meeting. I asked him if something was wrong. He said the ridicule and snide remarks he expected about the problem he was experiencing in his school district were almost more than he could face. The problem had been reported on the front page of that morning's newspaper. He went on to say that he had not slept the night before because of the prospect of this morning's meeting. In my naive way, I told him there was nothing to worry about because I was sure the others would be sensitive to the problem. I was wrong. The jabs and harsh comments started immediately. I expected them to die down in a few minutes, but, again, I was wrong. Finally, I said, 'Look, instead of making jokes, let's sit here and discuss the problem. With our collective thinking, we ought to be smart enough to solve the problem. Let's remember, one of us could be sitting in the same chair next meeting.' The laughing ceased. The troubled superintendent received support, we found a solution. For me, that meeting was the beginning of fine relationships and lasting friendships-the product, I think, of a healthy blend of masculine humor and feminine compassion. (p. 74)

According to Derlega and Chaikin (1976, p. 376) "...women value self-disclosure more than men." Perhaps if the trend toward more

females in principalships continues the level of self-disclosure will also increase.

This research effort began with two extensive interviews of former principals about communicative openness. From those contacts, eight "rules" of appropriate principal talk emerged. This research effort strengthens and confirms the conclusion that principals do make communication decisions based on a clear, though perhaps individual, definition of communicative appropriateness. In most instances if a principal is going to share personal information with someone in the educational setting, it will be shared with a superintendent. The relationship of the job (of principal) to the content of the communication is less strong than the two initial interviews suggested.

As follow-up to the research effort, ten principals were asked: If you were listing 'rules' for appropriate principal communication, which two would be at the top of your list? All of the principals indicated that communication is an extremely important component of their jobs. Some of the rules listed follow: be specific, positive, honest, and sincere; always keep the superintendent and your secretary aware of everything possible; be conscious of



communication patterns you use; be open and attend to lateral communication patterns as well as top down and bottom up; communicate crucial information to staff immediately; communicate through a variety of means; listen more than you talk; choose words carefully; write in a positive tone and make it as personal as possible; share equally with all staff; share negatives only with those involved; be willing to share glory; and do communicate and with everyone. This list of rules is more open and less attentive to hierarchy than the full study would predict.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

School principals make communicative decisions based on their notions of what is appropriate. This dissertation examines the qualitative limits of communicative appropriateness as defined through administration of the Principal's Communication Survey to high school principals in Illinois. Specifically, communicative appropriateness serves as the dependent variable to independent variables of risk, task-relatedness, and audience. Risk refers to how knowledge of specified information would impact the principal's position; were the information known would the principal be more or less likely to be promoted, retained, or fired. Risk is considered to be a dimension of intimacy because the ultimate test of the intensity and personalness of information is whether others' knowledge of the information could cost a person his job or result in promotion. Task is defined as whether the

information would affect the principal's ability to perform his job in any way; would he be more or less able to do his duties were this information known? Fifty subject prompts were rated on these dimensions by a sample of high school principals. Based on this research, sixteen subject prompts were determined to be high or low risk and high or low task for a four-cell matrix.

The third independent variable, audience, was then added to form the Principal's Communication Survey. Four audience or receiver groups varying in hierarchical rank and all part of the educational enterprise were targeted: superintendents, fellow principals, faculty members and clerical personnel. Each item in the survey is listed in the following form: "How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss (topic) with his superintendent? with another principal? with a member of his faculty? with his secretary?" Each sub question is accompanied with four possible ratings: (a) Very appropriate, (b) Appropriate, (c) Inappropriate, and (d) Very inappropriate.

Three null hypotheses were advanced:

(1) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and

the audience (hierarchical rank of the intended recipient).

(2) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and the level of task-relatedness of the specific content.

(3) There is no relationship between secondary school principals' determination of communicative appropriateness and the level of risk in sharing the specific content.

Completed surveys were returned to the researcher by 378 individuals representing a 47.4 percent return of the 797 surveyed. Through regression analysis of the data, it was determined that the independent variable of audience (hierarchical rank) accounts for over one fourth of the variation explained through the ratings respondents issued. The additional independent variables of risk and task, as defined in this study, do not appear to account for a significant portion of the variation.

Accordingly, the null hypothesis for audience is rejected. The additional independent variables of risk and task as defined in this instrument do not appear to account for a major portion of the variation. Therefore the null hypotheses regarding risk and task are not rejected as a result of this study. The operational

definition of communicative appropriateness for secondary school principals thus remains incomplete as a result of this research. Secondary school principals in Illinois appear to care more about to whom they are talking than the specific subject matter of the conversation as they make communication decisions.

### Implications for the Educational Profession

Clearly principals do have a sense of communication appropriateness. For all kinds of information examined in this study, principals find sharing with the superintendent more appropriate than sharing with peers and subordinates and sharing with peers more appropriate than sharing with subordinates. Further, overall, principals find sharing most of the information in this study inappropriate altogether. This finding highlights the importance of the relationship between the principal and his superintendent and serves as a reminder of the critical relationship between self-disclosure and mental health.

Lortie (1975) examines the relationship between principals and their superintendents briefly,

The physical deployment of schools, moreover, affects the relationship between the superintendent and the principals; the interaction within a particular school is greater than interaction across its boundaries, and the principal is the key official within that dense network. 'Large decisions' may be made in the central office, but the principal makes many 'small decisions'; which affect the social life of the school and those who work in it.

As the official head of the school, the principal is answerable for all events that take place there; the superintendent calls him when trouble arises. There are grounds for arguing that the principal faces the classic administrative dilemma-his responsibilities outrun his authority. School rhetoric presses him to be assertive; he is said to be 'the instructional leader of the school.' The conditions of his office are such that he is under constant pressure to 'keep things under control' (McDowell 1954; Trask 1964). (p. 197)

If the finding reported in Principals in Action that principals spend only seven percent of their time in communication with the superintendent and headquarters staff is accurate, principals may not be engaging in open communication for a high proportion of their work days. Returning to the Lasswell model of communication, the "to whom" portion would seem to take primacy for principals as they engage in discourse. It would seem to follow that principals carry a great deal of information in their heads which they may not ever share. Consequently, principals may feel very alone and unable to find anyone with whom to share confidential information. This finding is consonant with the

following observation of the second principal interviewed:

...there are a lot of lonely principals out there because there aren't people they can talk to and so as a result when we get together at conventions or get together at conferences, they are very willing to want to talk and it surprises me what they'll say to me on a very personal level. I feel that's probably because they don't have many people to talk to. I mean there are very few people they can share their feelings with, so a lot of the conversation at conferences I've attended will deal with personal issues, which surprised me when this first began to happen. (Appendix B)

One principal shares similar feelings about the isolation of the principalship as he relates an account of a teacher dismissal:

I found I could not expect either sympathy or support, understanding or respect for my actions. For one thing, I was powerless to counteract faculty room gossip. Having to adhere to the highest standards of confidentiality, principals cannot 'give their side,' not that it would probably make much difference....Sometimes I wanted to burst out....It hurt tremendously to hear about fellow teaches who unhesitatingly gave her their support while they crucified me. (Vann, 1990, p. 106)

The loneliness and isolation these principals relate is significant.

Jourard's initial perspective was that there is a relationship between self-disclosure and mental health. He posited that if a person wished to disclose information and were unable to do so, it could lead to a state of mental unhealthiness. If secondary school

principals are unable to share information which they wish to share with someone, then that void in audience may be causing more than a little stress on their mental health. At a minimum, principals must exercise a great deal of control over what they say and to whom they say it if they live the definition of communicative appropriateness they give through this study.

A second consequence of the definition of communicative appropriateness derived from this research is that if principals do not feel it is appropriate to share this information and the norm of reciprocity for self-disclosure is considered, then secondary schools are relatively closed or at least non-disclosive places. Applying all three of the explanations for self-disclosure reciprocity, (1) trust-attraction, (2) social reinforcement, and (3) modeling, yields the same result: if the principal is not open with others, it is unlikely they are open with him. If the teachers do not feel that they are liked enough that they are worthy recipients of self-disclosure, then the building is a closed and cold institution. If the individuals in the school are not shared with, they will not feel a need to share. If the principals' model behavior is non-disclosive, those following the model will not disclose



either. Given that education is a "people business", the picture of an impersonal institution is pretty bleak.

Third, the model of the bureaucratic structure of a secondary school would seem to continue to be very traditional if one considers the results of this research effort. Principals apparently view themselves as part of a very locked-in hierarchy. Even in this time of the increasing efforts at team building in industry and the experimental reform in educational structures such as the Chicago Plan, the secondary principals look at themselves in a very rigid superior-subordinate manner. The educational leadership model these individuals would most likely employ would be top-down. In short, it is difficult envisioning principals working in a spirit of collegiality when they find most of the subjects in the survey inappropriate for sharing with their colleagues. The level of interpersonal trust would not seem to be high enough to support open work groups. The more likely resultant communication would be defensive.

Finally, principals should develop, monitor and refine their ability to communicate with others in the school enterprise. The impact of oral communication on the secondary school

principalship is critical. As John E. Walker, in a recent article, "The Skills of Exemplary Principals", suggests, "If something goes wrong, it usually can be traced to poor communication. One source stated that being an effective communicator, both orally and in writing, was the most important of all administrative skills." (1990, p. 51) Early in this dissertation it was suggested that self-disclosure skills were necessary as part of a professional's repertoire of professional competence. One way in which this knowledge might be used by principals would be to become more consciously monitoring of their communicative behavior. Mark Snyder develops this concept,

Self-monitoring individuals, out of a concern for the situational appropriateness of their social behavior, are particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of relevant others in social situations and use these cues as guidelines for regulating or controlling their own verbal and nonverbal self-presentation. (1979, p. 183)

The principal thus would develop a keen sensitivity to the nature of the content he was communicating as it relates to the situation.

### Implications for Further Research

The operational definition of communicative appropriateness for

secondary school principals remains incomplete as a result of this effort. The review of literature in Chapter II covers published research from the fields of communication, education, organizational studies, business, philosophy, and psychology. The author's effort through this dissertation was to find the intersection of these fields in applying diverse findings to the specific context of the communication of secondary school principals. This effort is initial rather than culminating. Further definition of the contextual limits of appropriateness in addition to audience, risk, and task should also be pursued. Certainly, with the effects of valence in this study, it would seem that further pursuing the role valence plays in determining appropriateness would be a fruitful research effort.

The focus of the present effort is on understanding and defining the parameters of the judgments principals make of appropriate and inappropriate oral discourse. However, the instrument used is hypothetical. Additional research efforts might pursue real communication decisions and additional parameters of self-disclosure. The direction of such research might be "Have you shared "x" information with your superintendent? a fellow

principal? a faculty member? a secretary?" Obviously, there is no way to confirm the accuracy of such research and there is some question as to whether individuals would answer the questions at all if the information were sensitive. For example, were an item from the high/high category such as "a principal's feelings about a superintendent he does not like" used, would a principal respond openly and honestly to the question? Or would he fear the confidentiality of the research effort might be broken to his detriment?

Finally, in this study, principals appear to have a keen sense of communicative appropriateness and an understanding of their roles as models to the communicative behavior of others. Investigation of how principals find an outlet for private information and feelings is in order. Perhaps, the real audiences for principals' self-disclosure are principals' spouses, principals' family members, or others. One hopes if there is any validity in Jourard's original connection between the need to self-disclose and a healthy personality that secondary school principals have opportunity to disclose as necessary without risking loss of job or affecting job performance.

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## APPENDIX A

## Notes for Interview One

Conducted by Leslie R. Wilson

April 25, 1984

Chicago, Illinois

I-I want you to think of your time as a "principal". Let's get you into the setting first.

R-Would you prefer in elementary or in junior high? I was principal of both.

I-Fine, tell me both.

R-I'll start with the elementary school. K-6, four sessions of kindergarten which would be two teachers, three teachers per grade level 1-6. Basic construction of the building is traditional egg crate. However, during the development of our district we had an increased population thus we added an addition which was open space oriented. Primarily, because it was the only thing the state would allow to be built at that time and that they would pay for through what is conceivably a backdoor referendum; substantiating population you do receive the money. The money is then passed on to the taxpayers in the form of a levy without benefit of a vote. The open space housed a learning center which is properly called a library because it was not a learning center but that was its title and four to five teaching sites for classrooms. If you are familiar with open space you have to interchange your titles "classrooms" or "teaching sites." It housed approximately 120-150 students in the fifth and sixth grades. In preparation for the junior high which was 7-8th, an entirely open space.

I-Is it the same junior high where you are now?

R-Yes, it is. I was principal of that elementary school for approximately three years. The approach was an attempt to provide an open education, cross grading. However, there was an effort too, a distinct effort, on individualization. It was extremely difficult because it was not a homogeneous approach but it was a heterogeneous approach so it demanded a great deal of clerical time on the part of the teacher, a great deal of conferencing and a great deal of dealing with each individual child, which in many respects is extremely difficult if not impossible to truly accomplish. So we focused upon three areas and regrettably they were the ones we really delved into on an individual basis and the others were truly "catch as catch can" and grouping by interest and grouping by ability.

The three individualized areas were reading, language arts and math. Although math did turn into a homogeneous ability tracking type of situation through the course of the year; reading and LA did actually remain individualized. The areas that were on a "catch as catch can" basis were science and social studies. Regrettably that was from first grades on up to about fifth grade and then it conceptualizes to a more formal content approach. Because of the nature of the grade, the age of the child and the perspective of the teacher is being closer to the junior high and some of the six to twelve certificated people say they were more content oriented than child oriented.

The second school is a junior high and had approximately 894 students when I came there.

I-How many schools, there are obviously one grade school and one junior high, are there other grade schools?

R-There are four elementary schools. There were five. We regrettably had to close one. We were on the basis of K-6. The junior high was first conceived as a middle school, an ill conceived notion. So it had sixth grade for one year and that's when I was there, 894 students. The elementary has reverted, of course, to a K-5. After that initial year, I very honestly put together a prospectus that indicated both on numbers and both on the premise of the instructional program that it was better to return to a K-6 elementary and keep the junior high seventh and eighth grade. So at that point when I went to the junior high, it was sixth, seventh and eighth. The year thereafter, for all the time up to this time, it's seventh and eighth. So there are five principals in the district.

I-Five principals?

R-Yes, five.

I-Are there any assistant principals?

R-One at the junior high.

I-You had an assistant when you were at the junior high?

R-Yes I did.

I-Is there any step between the principal and the superintendent? Is there an assistant superintendent or curriculum director?

R-There are two people-a director of curriculum and instruction and a business manager.

I-Do the principals report to those people?

R-No.

I-So they are staff people?

R-Yes they are. They are staff, support as opposed to line.

I-How many years were you principal at the junior high?

R-Five.

I-Five and three, so eight years as principal in that district and numbers wise, I know how many positions there are, but numbers wise how many other people fill the principalship when you were principal?

R-Were there four that remained principals for the full either yeas or were there ten different people in the four positions or...?

I-Yes.

R-The turnover was great. In keeping now with the fact that I have been removed from that principalship for four years there is not one person in the principalships that was with me at the time that I was principal.

I-Is there anyone still in the district?

R-At the time that I was a principal?

I-Right. Are they still in....

R-One person out of all of them. We had a turnover at the junior high of one person due to my promotion who was still there. We had a turnover in the elementary schools of everyone except one person and one turnover involved three people, two prior to the one we now have. So there has been a turnover in the last five years equivalent to everyone save one individual.

I-In the time as principal, would you have characterized your relationship with the staff, subordinates, teachers I'm talking about, not secretaries right now but teachers, as close, not close, medium close?

R-There are, it is inconceivable to use as simple an answer as one word. When I went to the elementary school, I had not been, because I was unfamiliar with the elementary school, being a junior high counselor and then being placed in the elementary, with only prior experience of only fifth and sixth grade, my knowledge of K-4 was limited. Therefore, what I did, I would characterize it as I took a very professional and businesslike approach to the school. However, I became actively involved in every committee and in every meeting and instituted an organization which I refer to as grade level chairman whereby I appointed one elementary teacher for each grade to serve with me on a council for a quick disbursement of information and a quick feel for the situation. I did not socialize with the people as a matter of regular course. I was involved in their social activities and contributed to two to three parties during the year that were school parties. I of course attended.

I-On site?

R-On site or at someone's house. But I never, never went for or involved myself in the quick happy hour after school. Never.

I-Did you ever invite a specific teacher or a few teachers to your own home?

R-No. Now at the junior high, it is a different situation.

I-What happened there?

R-I started in the district as a teacher at the junior high and became the counselor at the junior high and then after the elementary school position I was placed in the junior high by necessity because there was difficulty there. Half that staff knew me as a colleague. I maintained my same, what I refer to as a quasi-professional stance. I don't want to say it was strict because I had an open door policy-people could talk to me. But, essentially I functioned with them between 7:30 and 5:00 and, professionally in any meeting. I was very congenial but never any involvement after that. With the middle school staff, they knew me and I adopted again that quasi-professional attitude. However, after the second year, when we did all work through the turmoil of large classes, of organization of getting handbooks and of putting school together and getting the structure in order, it was I felt an interesting relationship. My friends who came to me would be specific and they were my friends before and still continue to be-came to me with specific requests that of a personal nature as could I have this day off, and so forth. I said, "No." When they said, "Why?" I said it was the same rule application to everyone. However, at 4:30 to 5:00 when that time came about an interesting situation arose whereby it was after school hours and I developed a racquetball league with them. I encouraged their membership in a club, we started a running club, we went cross country skiing together, we went boating in Wisconsin. I was invited to three or four of their homes. I invited them to my home. Throughout the three to four years, I was very fortunate where by distinct design we never talked business after 4:30 because if they did I would say this is my time and I don't want to talk about that and I don't feel it is appropriate. Let's enjoy ourselves and forget about that and I never accepted any conversation or comment and never allowed that to come into play, even criticism of fellow administrative colleagues. I would walk away or I wouldn't leave but I would just show by different ways, by distinct conversation or by posture that this is not something that I would accept and uniquely enough that was the relationship that was maintained.

I-Was your relationship to your administrative colleagues-the other four or five people depending on the year that were also in your position relative to the superintendent: What kind of communicative



relationship did you have with them: formal? informal? Oral? written?

R-Everything and very close and we did socialize. A lot of the things we did, a lot of our discussion was after hours where we shared what took place. Rarely did I write them any memos, I always called them they called me, we got together. I was hopefully rather collegial in assisting the individuals to be successful.

I-In that sense, you say collegial, assisting them to be successful, obviously there was only one superintendent and you now have that position and they don't. They are not even there; at least most of them. Was there any sense during that time that there was information that you should either not tell them or just store it or share with them that would somehow either advance or impede the road up? I know it is a big question....

R-That is an interesting one because I never shared any information with them that I was informed of by the superintendent. Not this year. But then again, I don't think I was given any information that I could not share. Maybe it is because I wasn't selectively involved in the inner circle of them and had a more distant perspective. But if told not to share information by my superior, of course I wouldn't. That would just be foolish. I would say no.

I-What about personal information? What about something you, something about yourself, that maybe something that you're not proud of: Would you have shared it with them or would you have found it inappropriate or would you have been reluctant to because of your relative position?

R-I would have been reluctant to and probably would not have done it unless I truly trusted the individual, and there's only, of that whole group, I really picked and chose as to who I was very close to and there was only one individual I would share that with. And I did but I was very cognizant of the fact that an elementary principal I was more in the pot, so to speak, as we all were. And being the only junior high principal; I had no distinct competition. I could afford to be more gracious in what I shared and didn't share because of that.

I-Was there a pay differential? I wasn't thinking about that, but was there between the elementary and the junior high?

R-Initially no, later there definitely was, which they understood when I was in there and didn't, to my knowledge, envy because none of them wanted my position.

I-I see.

R-Partly because they thought it was either too much work or thought they couldn't handle it, but they didn't want it. No one was fired from that position.

I-Was...I'm going to skip a little because of time the relationship then with the superintendent communicating--you've already indicated that if he said something to you and asked not share it you wouldn't have shared it. Was your communicative relationship with him primarily oral or written?

R-Primarily oral.

I-On a-we've talked about private information, personal information, whatever you want to term it. Was there reluctance to share personal information with him?

R-I would not.

I-Would he have shared it with you?

R-No

I-Was that position-related or person-related in your mind?

R-Position-related and the personality of the individuals involved. Although at times he did really want me to, I think, confide in him or be used as a mentor or whatever or he would assist me but I'd just, those things just happened spontaneously. They don't happen by design and if they are to happen by design I am reluctant to become involved in a any design situation especially if I didn't have an equal part in the design of the situation.

I-You mean share on Friday afternoons at 2?

R-Yes.

I-What if you encountered in your position some highly personal information about, make it a subordinate for the moment, something like the person were gay or whatever? If you have that information and it was given to you by that same person as in "I am gay; I wish to remain in the closet...." kind of thing..... So, in other words, some disclosure on their part at some risk to tell you that, but you now have it? What as principal would you feel would be appropriate to do with this information?

R-I would make a decision predicated on if there were any...if with that information or with the disposition of the person or activities of the person there were any problem in the classroom or in the school or in the community. And if there weren't, in that this person were a "closet" individual, I would do nothing with him...I would do nothing with it at all.

I-And if there were an interference with the system, in your mind...?

R-I would try to work out the problem and resolve what the problem of the system was with both parties remaining intact, the system

and the individual. I would attempt to modify the...assist the person in modifying his or her behavior which accounted for the problem and work towards that end before doing anything else.

I-If, (I just want to ask you about two more questions.) If I understand part of what you said when you talked about different groups, roles and so on, you have a notion of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. You had a 9 to 4:30 kind of, or 7:30 to 4:30, whatever context you had, a "not to him as a person, not to him as a role" statement so there have been several notions of parameters for appropriateness and inappropriateness.

R-Definitely.

I-If I ask you directly what would you say is inappropriate for a principal to say to, let's say, a subordinate...Is there some category of information you feel under no circumstance should a principal share with his subordinate?

R-Yes, confidential information about other teachers, other staff members, about students, about fellow colleagues, about the district in general.

I-Like financial?

R-Financial. Things of a derogatory nature. I feel unfortunately that sometimes because of the situation in the principalship, the principal constantly needs the reinforcement of being liked, which is rare, but people strive for that. Part of being liked, which is sometimes confused with loved and respected, is you ingratiate, and that's maybe a poor word, but I use that often, your subordinates with the fact that you share with them information and you are letting them in to establish the fact that you, as a principal, know it and to establish a strong relation-I'm going to tell you something about Harry. I abhor that on the fact that if you are an intelligent person, Leslie, and I am talking to you about me what's to preclude me from going to someone else and telling him about you? And people who are in education, people are intelligent yet they are very emotional and very involved in dynamics. They love to hear confidential things but then they realize that they too, if they share, if a trust is broken by that person with respect to an individual it can be easily broken with respect to yourself.

I-What about the same question regarding fellow principals? Do you have an appropriate/inappropriate division there?

R-I do, but that is a little more, if they are going to share things with me and if they want to share things with me I will respect that confidence and I will not, I'll keep it as open, as liberal and as broad as possible and try to maintain it.

I-Personal information as well as professional?

R-Right. There will be a point in time where depending on how much I like the person, I will probably again in subtle ways not convey to them I don't really want to become party to their personal problems, because when they do then they feel a certain association there that if I don't really want to have it, I'm not going to do them any good and it's not going to be of any benefit to both of us so I'm just not here to learn your secrets.

I-If that happened and this is just a side question, if someone did disclose very personal information, potent information, would you feel that you ought to tell them something too?

R-Only if I saw and could project a complete disaster with regard to themselves or some other people.

I-With relationship to the superintendent, appropriate and inappropriate, don't think of the person for the moment, I mean I know that was a big thing for you.

R-Yes it very much was.

I-In terms of the superintendent, are there principal to superintendent, inappropriate/appropriate communication categories?

R-That is a difficult situation because I would tend to think that they widen, I would tend to think that there are inappropriate things no doubt about that. But that area narrowed and becomes, the list shortens as to what's inappropriate. The appropriate widens. It really basically boils down to, you are talking to only of the positions of superintendent, not the person involved?

I-Right.

R-I would say then the only thing a principal should convey to his superintendent in terms of sharing things what are possible inappropriate would be those things that would have an effect on the district directly. Any personal things of that nature in seeking advise that would be unrelated to the operation of the district would be totally appropriate because if the superintendent and the person wants to share it, then there is that wanting to share. The only problem is when the superintendent, as a role as a physician, is placed in the position of knowing information, he has less latitude to continue and keep it confidential than do people at the lower end of the administrative ladder because he knows more of the operation-information takes on a broader perspective and impact. If I'm telling you something for instance, the same personal element your sphere of knowledge is limited, if you were the superintendent the knowledge, the impact to community, to other parts of the

community, school, to the board, to other organizations, the knowledge is broadened, therefore that person, that same personal element, can have a tremendous impact on the information because of what you do, because of his knowledge.

I-Last question. It is a little different than the others. In the time that you were principal, both positions, if you were asked to identify the role of the person to whom you told the most personal information that could have been damaging to you, would it be either a person outside the district, meaning not in the workings of the school, I don't mean not necessarily living in the district, the person outside the operation of the school, a subordinate who is a teacher, a secretary, a fellow principal or the superintendent?

R-Of all those chosen which would be the one or who would be the one I would first go to that would know information damaging to me? Initially, I would say someone outside the school, outside the district, because in my own personal situation my closest friend in the district is my secretary. She knows more about me and my family and everything and I know more about her and her family. Probably we know more about each other because of the working relationship than anyone else. That is something you might want to check into. That person-spouse is the other question, but I don't think that is a fair question. Oh no. A spouse may even know less than the secretary. Well, I don't mean your spouse particularly, exclusively or anything but I think it develops too many other.... (Note The tape machine became garbled at this point. Comments remaining included compliments regarding the proficiency of his secretary and the fact that his own wife is also a secretary.)

## APPENDIX B

## Notes for Interview Two

Conducted by Leslie R. Wilson

April 25, 1984

Chicago, Illinois

I(Interviewer)-You need to be in your principal mode. We've got to go back and reconstruct what it was like when you were a principal.

R(Respondent)-Sure

I-When was that? Not dates, but for how long and where?

R-Well, I was principal for nine years at XXXXX High School, 1974-1983.

I-Were you promoted from within or did you come in from outside?

R-Came in from outside. I was an assistant principal at XXXXX Township High School for two years prior to that. I applied for the principal's job at XXXXX and got it.

I-How many people, teachers, were under you:

R-Ah, one hundred and seven, teachers, that includes counselors, nurses, all certified staff.

I-Were there any other principals at XXXXX?

R-There was an assistant principal, two deans, director of student activities.

I-Did you choose the assistant principal?

R-yes

I-Okay. so it was not in place when you arrived?

R-In fact, I reorganized the administrative structure when I came in. I inherited the deans and I kept them and I selected an assistant principal from within.

I-In your role as principal and if I ask you to think about the percentage of time in a given dyad, any day, that you spent communicating in some form, what per cent would you give me?

R-Communicating?

I-Oral and written.

R-A high percentage of the time. Probably, at least three quarters of my time or more.

I-Of that time what percentage would you say was written vs. oral?

R-I would say it would be 60/40, probably sixty per cent oral and forty per cent written. But I did much of my writing out of school. I try to do it after school when school was in session but during the

day probably the majority of my time was spent in oral communication.

I-Going back now(I'm going to refer to groups for awhile). When you talked to your teachers, what kinds of things did you talk about?

R-Talked about curriculum, what they were doing, what was going on in their classes, might talk about a student, might talk about what's on their minds, might talk about school-wide issues, colleagues(not in a gossipy way), I try very hard to stay away from that. I try to focus on more positive stuff. I try very much to be in the class, on the scene, spend a lot of my time trying to find positive issues or topics that I talk to teachers about.

I-Do you socialize with the teachers?

R-Not much. I eat lunch with the teachers, if I were invited to a party they were having, I would go. But, as far as my personal life outside of school, I didn't associate with teachers.

I-what about with the assistant principal? Is that the title?

R-Right. Very close with him, used him almost as a partner in many cases and if I had a problem that I wanted to discuss or would want to bounce something off someone, I would bounce it off of him. He and I would talk. I had a great deal of confidence in him. He was very solid individual, good thinker and a very straight forward person who would give you a good answer. So he and I spent a lot of time together and also socially we were quite friendly.

I-Spouses too?

R-Right. Not excessively, but on certain occasions, we would go out together. I wouldn't say more than once a month, possibly something like that, or less.

I-Was it in the administrative structure, principal, superintendent? or was there someone in between?

R-There was principal, superintendent.

I-No assistant superintendent or anything in between?

R-No

I-In that relationship, your relationship to the superintendent at that point, speaking of role not person did you share personal and professional information? neither? lots? little?

R-I did not share a great deal with the superintendent because he was removed from the scene. He was not in the building and it was difficult. Communication didn't work well and I would take part of the blame for that because it takes effort to contact, he was in a separate office outside of the building and it just took time to get to him. He was busy and I may want to call him up and talk to him about a situation and if he was busy I didn't get a chance to talk

with him and I needed to make a decision and would often make that decision without his influence.

I-It is a one school district?

R-A one school district. But he had his own office. He chose in his role not to get involved in the daily operation and so for the most part, I handled daily operations, handled budget, lined it out and put it together, handled purchases, handled capital outlay. I did all the recruiting and employment, evaluation, recommendation for staffing, I prepared the agenda items. For the large part I did it.

(At this point in the interview someone the interviewer and respondent both knew stopped at the table.)

I-Can we go back to where we were? I'm going back to teachers for a minute. We left out secretaries and I need to get to their role. With the teachers in mind, if one of them came to you with what you considered to be highly personal information of some kind, what would you do with it?

R-I'd discuss it with them, I would ask them what they wanted me to do with it, I ask them how they wanted me to handle it. If it were something that I felt was professionally damaging and as we got into it, I might say, "look, I might have to tell someone about this. If you want to stop now, let's stop or if we go on with this, I'm going to have to tell someone or I'm going to have to act on this" and we go from there, I take the lead from the teacher. I was involved in ...you know over the years you get involved with situations like that and generally I would listen and then go from there, take the lead from the teacher.

I-Let's assume you got some information a teacher asked you to keep it to yourself but you knew it was highly potent personal information, would you at that point feel in any way obligated to tell them anything about yourself? Or have you?

R-I don't understand the question.

I-If somebody told you something highly personal, a teacher, would you feel that you needed to reciprocate, to tell them something personal about yourself?

R-No. I have shared personal facts with a few of my personal friends but I don't generally make a practice of that. I don't think they're looking for that. I think that the old statement that I know how you feel or I've been there, the same thing has happened to me. I don't know if that's what they're looking for at that particular time. I shy away from that. I may talk with them on, there are levels of personal interaction. I may move from my role as an administrator, a principal or a superintendent to one possibly as a friend to some



people, but I still don't like to get down to my base most personal internal feelings.

I-With the assistant principal did you feel the same way?

R-No, he and I were pretty straight. He and I would share very personal kinds of feelings or experiences and I felt he was the one person that I would do that with. He felt the same way. He would share much the same kinds of feelings with me. We had a very close relationship and still do.

I-Had he been in the district?

R-He was in the district and he was the head of the counseling department. He was a young man at that time, in his early thirties and I just felt that he had a lot of talent and he does and so he and I work together very closely for ten years. He's a very strong individual and so am I and yet we have avoided having any serious conflicts. We generally talk issues out and we see things pretty much the same way, feel the same way about school, kids, about what's appropriate behavior. We have a great deal of similarity in our views so we don't have a lot of strife. We differ. He and I differ on an issue, but it never gets down to the ugly stage.

I-Do you in any way feel threatened knowing that he has personal information about you that someone else may not have?

R-No.

I-Do you feel that he would be in line for your job if you weren't there?

R-I selected him as principal when I left that position and I think reality would tell him that he probably, he's very strong, would be the superintendent if I were to leave, could be.

I-That doesn't bother you.

R-No.

I-And with the superintendent you already stated that he was physically removed but was there information you would not have shared with him of any kind?

R-Oh, much. Yes.

I-Was it only personal?

R-Not only personal, professional. I found that his role, our relationship was such that I was better off if he were kept in the dark and could fairly manage the school district as I wanted to as long as he didn't meddle. He was a meddler, and that reality he was that kind of guy. He still is. He's the superintendent of an elementary district now and he's driving the principals down there nuts.

I-You referred to friends that you might talk to about personal things as opposed to people who weren't friends. Are those friends in or outside the district? I don't mean living.

R-Outside. They are not part of the school operation.

I-Are you more likely to talk to them about personal things than to anyone in the school?

R-Yes.

I-What about your secretary? How does that person fit in to the total role?

R-My secretary has been my secretary for ten years and I would consider her to be a friend. She and I will discuss matters that are not quite as personal as I might with the assistant principal, but I would discuss personal matters with her.

I-Do you think that has to do with gender as opposed to age or position or....

R-Definitely. Absolutely.

I-So you would feel more comfortable talking to a man than a woman about certain things than a woman?

R-No. I misunderstood your question. No, I feel there are some issues I would talk to my secretary about because she is a woman. Such as something that might deal with my wife, my family or my children. But there are issues that I don't discuss with her.

Actually, she's involved in almost everything I do, because she types my correspondence and if I have to remediate a teacher, or I am involved in a very heavy issue with a teacher, she knows about it. So from that point of view, she's involved also in many of the things I do in school, but as far as discussing with her feelings or attitudes that I might have, I don't discuss them with her.

I-You have some notion, I think, of what's appropriate and inappropriate for a principal to talk about when you think about specific target audience.

R-Sure.

I-When you think about the differences of appropriateness, what you would tell teachers versus what you would tell an assistant versus what you might tell if there had been another principal versus what you might tell a superintendent, what kinds of things are the differences?

R-I would probably not discuss anything about my family, my relationship with my wife or money with teachers. I certainly wouldn't talk about any sexual matters with any teachers. I might discuss that with the assistant principal. I might discuss that with a very close friend and I would say, I am like most people, I have a

large number of acquaintances and a smaller number of friends and I have a very small number of close friends. I would not discuss personal matters with the people I would call friends, I might discuss them with close friends. Also with superintendents, fellow principals, it kind of like a fraternity sometimes. And when you're in the fraternity sometimes principals who are lonely, there are a lot of lonely principals out there because there aren't people they can talk to and so as a result when we get together at conventions or get together at conferences, they are very willing to want to talk and it surprises me what they'll say to me on a very personal level and I feel that's probably because they don't have many people to talk to . I mean there are very few people they can share their feelings with, so a lot of the conversation at the conferences I've attended will deal with personal issues, which surprised me when this first began to happen.

I-Just one last question. If you were to look at your total role as principal and the communicating you did in that role, would you have said if I asked you are you an open or closed person, medium, whatever, what?

R-I'm open.

I-You think you're relatively open to people in general?

R-Yes.

I-The only thing I don't think we really talked about too much other than with teachers, maybe... What about confidential professional information, maybe finance of the district or you had an assistant principal--if you knew what his salary would be before he did, that kind of thing, would that get passed around or not?

R-No. If I have confidential information such as that, one of the rules that I have with myself, one way in which I deal with people is that I may discuss that with him. It might be appropriate for me to discuss it with him or prior to anyone else knowing it. I would never go out and tell someone. I 'm generally privy to most information that's in the building. I know about it but I don't like to have someone find out something through the grapevine that I've said before I had a chance to talk to them..I never do that, you just don't talk about something of that type until talk to the person that it effects. And then I generally don't say anything about it unless they want to . In other words, I'll say to them , hey look this is confidential as far as I'm concerned. Your salary is between you and me and if you want to discuss it with somebody, go ahead. I just as soon not.

I-What you are talking about, this wasn't on my list at all, but you made me think about it. With salary for example, of a principal now in your role, did the board tell you what its going to be and then you tell the principal or does the board deal with the principal?

R-They deal with me. What I do is sit down with the principal ahead of time, sit down with each administrator ahead of time and talk about their salary. I make a salary survey of most of the large suburban schools. I get a feel for what salaries are. I equate salary with performance. I deal with the person on terms of their performance. I'll discuss with them ahead of time what I'm going in and ask the board for. I am very open with the board, I show them my figures, my rationale and I've done it twice now, and both times the board has given me what I asked for and the administrators were very satisfied. They knew going in what I was going to ask them. And, that's tough.

I-When you were principal did you go to the board?

R-Yes.

I-Was there any board to you communication or did the communication go through the superintendent first?

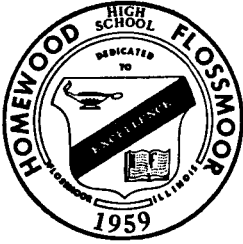
R-Well, as it became apparent(I-I know he was fired) there was going to be a split. I tried to guard against that because it causes an embarrassment, first of all for the superintendent, and secondly, it just shoudn't happen. Board members often go through the superintendent first then through the chain of command, but that's something that happens. I would say that to them. I would say have you talked to the superintendent about it? I try to get them trained to do that because it puts me in a awkward position and him in an awkward position. And I feel the same way not that I'm a superintendent. If I want to talk to the fellows that's a "no-no"; go through me first so I know what you want to do. I'll try to get the information and if I can't well then we'll work it out to where you can talk with the principal or you can talk with someone else but I would prefer you go through me. They do that. I think that's a hard concept for particularly a teacher to understand.

I-Yep

R-And there are a number of board members, at least in our district, who would prefer to actually cater, almost court, teachers so they can have a direct pipeline in to various areas and I don't find, saying "please go through me if you're not satisfied" to them is different from saying "don't bother." The difficulty is that first of all you're dealing with board members who are laymen a number have not been teachers, do not understand the work. You can get biased information

from teachers, can get biased information or get incorrect information. For example, if someone were to call up...a board member were to call the English Dept. Chairman and say, "How's your budget, do you get enough money?" Well, she may say "yes" or "no" and not have the picture of the total budget. They have a feeling for what's going on and so you tend to get that pressure group developing where someone will come in and insist that department needs more money for the athletic group, or anyone else and they need to get a feeling for the the total picture. Now I have absolutely no feeling, bias, about them coming to athletic contests. I encourage them to come to games, to plays, encourage them to be professional, to deal with our staff professionally, and to be supportive. I spent the first three or four board meetings we went to---we've reviewed what it takes to be a good board member--what their role was and how they can be effective and that's one of the topics we discussed at length--was their relationship with the school and what their role is. Their role is not to run the school, their role is not to be an investigative operative. Their role is to set policy, their role is to approve bills, their role is to work on the very broad issues and work through the superintendent who is the agent, their agent. They see that and they have been very supportive. That's tough. Oh, yes. It's tough for people to grasp that but that's the topic you need to talk about. See people don't always talk and that's where, I think, the administrators fall down. That's a topic that needs to be discussed and people don't discuss it.

I-Thank you.

**HOMewood-FLOSSMOOR COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL  
DISTRICT 233**

999 Kedzie Avenue

Telephone: (312) 799-3000

Flossmoor, IL 60422-2299

November 3, 1986

Dear Principal,

Most of your time as a secondary school principal is spent in oral communication. In fact, a recent book on the principalship, Principals in Action by Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz, suggests that you spend 83 percent of your principaling time talking and listening. Your reflections on specifically how you use that time would be most valuable to me.

As a student of communication with a Master of Arts and extensive teaching experience in speech communication, a doctoral candidate at Loyola University of Chicago in educational administration, and a full-time administrator at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School I have long been intellectually curious about the content and direction of the communication of secondary school principals. In an attempt to research these dimensions of principals' communicative behavior, I am hereby asking you to serve as a respondent to the enclosed pilot instrument. As a participant in this stage of the research, you will not be asked to respond to the statewide survey later this year. Your responses will be kept totally confidential.

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire on the answer sheet provided and return it to me in the prepaid postage envelope. If you would like a copy of the results of the study, please fill out the enclosed address form. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Leslie R. Wilson  
Dir. of Instruction  
English & I.M.C.

13.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

14.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

H. A principal's feelings about the direction of ongoing contract negotiations

15.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

16.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

I. A principal's application for an individual award

17.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

18.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

19.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

20.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

K. A principal's undergraduate g.p.a.

21.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

22.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

L. A principal's feelings about a superintendent he does not like

23.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

24.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status



25. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

26. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

N. A principal's knowledge of the alcoholism of a staff member

27. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

28. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

O. A principal's hobbies

29. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

30. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

P. A principal's desire to become superintendent

31. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

32. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

Q. A principal's feelings about another principal in the district

33. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

34. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

R. A principal's dislike of a school board member

35. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

36. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

S. A principal's own health problems

136

37.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

38.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

T. A principal's financial affairs

39.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

40.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

U. A principal's knowledge of the pregnancy of an unwed mother who is a teacher

41.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

42.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

43.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

44.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

W. The principal's submission of an article for publication

45.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

46.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

X. The principal's positive feelings about other principals in the district

47.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

48.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

Y. The principal's negative feelings about other principals in the district

49. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

50. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

Z. A principal's feelings about his own strengths

51. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

52. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

AA. A principal's religious beliefs

53. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

54. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## BB. A principal's history of psychiatric help

55.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

56.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## CC. An extra-marital affair of a principal's spouse

57.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

58.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## DD. The accomplishments of the family members of a principal

59.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

60.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

61.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

62.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

FF. Specific details from administrative meetings

63.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

64.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

GG. Specific details from job interviews of prospective staff members

65.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

66.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## HH.A principal's appraisal of the performance of staff members

67.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

68.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## II. A principal's knowledge of the mayor's family problems

69.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

70.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## JJ.A principal's personal ambitions

71.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

72.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status



KK. A principal's plans for improving the school

73.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

74.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

LL. The drug addiction of a principal's child

75.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

76.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

MM. The financial affairs of a staff member

77.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

78.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

79.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

80.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

00. The names of students who complained to the principal about a teacher

81.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

82.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

PP. The identity of students who were arrested for drug possession

83.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

84.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## QQ. The identity of an unwed pregnant student

85. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

86. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## RR. The identity of NMSQT finalists

87. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

88. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## SS. The political maneuverings within a church in the district

89. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

90. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

91. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

92. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

UU. The fact that a principal's child is in therapy

93. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

94. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

VV. The principal's feelings about his salary

95. Task-relatedness scale: Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

96. Riskiness scale: Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## WW.The principal's age

97.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

98.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

## XX.The principal's commission of a felony

99.Task-relatedness scale:Knowledge of this information would have

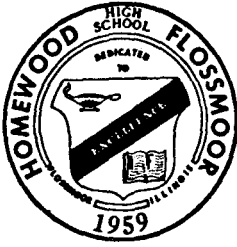
- a. no bearing on a principal's work
- b. little bearing on a principal's work
- c. some bearing on a principal's work
- d. extreme bearing on a principal's work

100.Riskiness scale:Disclosure of this information would have

- a. no impact on a principal's job status
- b. little impact on a principal's job status
- c. some impact on a principal's job status
- d. extreme impact on a principal's job status

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

## APPENDIX D



## HOMewood-FLOSSMOOR COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 233

999 Kedzie Avenue

Telephone: (312) 799-3000

Flossmoor, IL 60422-2299

March 23, 1988

Dear Principal:

Most of your time as a secondary school principal is spent in oral communication. In fact, a recent book on the principalship, Principals in Action by Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz, suggests that you spend 83 percent of your principaling time talking and listening. Your reflections on specifically how you use that time would be most valuable to me.

As a student of communication with a Master of Arts degree and extensive teaching experience in speech communication, a doctoral candidate at Loyola University of Chicago in educational administration, and a full-time administrator at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School, I have long been curious about the content and direction of the communication of secondary school principals. In an attempt to research these dimensions of principals' communicative behavior as part of doctoral research, I am hereby asking you to serve as a respondent to the enclosed instrument. Your responses will be kept totally anonymous and confidential.

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire on the answer sheet provided and return it to me in the prepaid postage envelope. If you would like a copy of the results of the study, please fill out the enclosed address form. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Leslie R. Wilson  
Director of Instruction  
English and I.M.C

LRW/jt

Enclosures

## COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: Please mark your responses appropriately on the enclosed Scan-Tron sheet.

Demographic Items

1. What is the student enrollment of the school in which you are a principal?
 

a. 1 - 500	c. 1,001 - 1,500
b. 501 - 1,000	d. 1,501 - 2,000
e. 2,001+	
  
2. What is the nature of your school?
 

a. public four year	c. private four year
b. public three year	d. private three year
e. other	
  
3. In what kind of area is your school located?
  - a. urban
  - b. suburban
  - c. rural
  
4. In what type of district is your school located?
  - a. unit
  - b. dual
  - c. does not apply
  
5. How long have you been a secondary school principal?
 

a. 0-5 years	c. 11-15 years
b. 6-10 years	d. 16-20 years
e. 21+ years	
  
6. Have you been a principal in more than one school?
  - a. yes
  - b. no
  
7. What is your gender?
  - a. male
  - b. female
  
8. Are there any other high schools in your district?
  - a. yes
  - b. no
  - c. does not apply

Communication Items

In each of the following items assume that the information is true of a secondary school principal. You are being asked how appropriate it would be for a principal to share this information with each of the persons mentioned. You are NOT being asked how likely you would be to share the information if it applied to you. You are NOT being asked if the information is true. You are only being asked how appropriate you feel it would be for someone in the position of high school principal to share this kind of information with the people listed.

KEY TO RESPONSES:    a - Very appropriate  
                           b - Appropriate  
                           c - Inappropriate  
                           d - Very inappropriate

A. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss a principal's knowledge of the pregnancy of an unwed mother who is a teacher

9. with his or her superintendent?

a                            b                            c                            d

10. with another principal?

a                            b                            c                            d

11. with a teacher?

a                            b                            c                            d

12. with his or her secretary?

a                            b                            c                            d

B. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her application for an individual award

13. with his or her superintendent?

a                            b                            c                            d

14. with another principal?

a                            b                            c                            d

15. with a member of the faculty?

a                            b                            c                            d



16. with his or her secretary?
- a                      b                      c                      d
- C. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her knowledge of the mayor's family problems
17. with his or her superintendent?
- a                      b                      c                      d
18. with another principal?
- a                      b                      c                      d
19. with a member of the faculty?
- a                      b                      c                      d
20. with his or her secretary?
- a                      b                      c                      d
- D. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to share a superintendent's written evaluation of the principal's performance
21. with his or her superintendent?
- a                      b                      c                      d
22. with another principal?
- a                      b                      c                      d
23. with a member of the faculty?
- a                      b                      c                      d
24. with his or her secretary?
- a                      b                      c                      d

E. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her problem with an alcoholic family member

25. with his or her superintendent?

a                      b                      c                      d

26. with another principal?

a                      b                      c                      d

27. with a member of the faculty?

a                      b                      c                      d

28. with his or her secretary?

a                      b                      c                      d

F. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to share his or her feelings about a superintendent he or she does not like

29. with his or her superintendent?

a                      b                      c                      d

30. with another principal?

a                      b                      c                      d

31. with a member of the faculty?

a                      b                      c                      d

32. with his or her secretary?

a                      b                      c                      d

G. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her plans for improving the school

33. with his or her superintendent?

a                      b                      c                      d

34. with another principal?

a                      b                      c                      d

35. with a member of the faculty?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
36. With his or her secretary?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
- H. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss an extra-marital affair of the principal's spouse
37. with his or her superintendent?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
38. with another principal?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
39. with a member of the faculty?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
40. with his or her secretary?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
- I. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss the financial affairs of a staff member
41. with his or her superintendent?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
42. with another principal?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
43. with a member of the faculty?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
44. with his or her secretary?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
- J. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss the principal's negative feelings about other principals in the district
45. with his or her superintendent?  
 a                      b                      c                      d

46. with another principal?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
47. With a member of the faculty?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
48. with his or her secretary?  
 a                      b                      c                      d

K. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her history of psychiatric help

49. with his or her superintendent?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
50. with another principal?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
51. with a member of the faculty?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
52. with his or her secretary?  
 a                      b                      c                      d

L. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her dislike of a board member

53. with his or her superintendent?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
54. with another principal?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
55. with a member of the faculty?  
 a                      b                      c                      d
56. with his or her secretary?  
 a                      b                      c                      d

- M. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her own shortcomings
57. with his or her superintendent?
- a                      b                      c                      d
58. with another principal?
- a                      b                      c                      d
59. with a member of the faculty?
- a                      b                      c                      d
60. with his or her secretary?
- a                      b                      c                      d
- N. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss the political maneuverings within a church in the district
61. with his or her superintendent?
- a                      b                      c                      d
62. with another principal?
- a                      b                      c                      d
63. with a member of the faculty?
- a                      b                      c                      d
64. with his or her secretary?
- a                      b                      c                      d
- O. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her commission of a felony
65. with his or her superintendent?
- a                      b                      c                      d
66. with another principal?
- a                      b                      c                      d

67. with a member of the faculty?

a                      b                      c                      d

68. with his or her secretary?

a                      b                      c                      d

P. How appropriate would it be for a secondary school principal to discuss his or her hobbies

69. with his or her superintendent?

a                      b                      c                      d

70. with another principal?

a                      b                      c                      d

71. with a member of the faculty?

a                      b                      c                      d

72. with his or her secretary?

a                      b                      c                      d

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY. I APPRECIATE YOUR TIME.

Please return to:

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## APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Leslie R. Wilson has been read and approved by the following committee:

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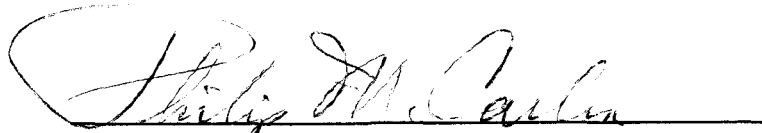
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D.

December 3, 1990

Date

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Philip M. Carlin", written over a horizontal line.

Director's Signature