Effects of Social Support as a Moderator of Role Stress Among School Principals

Richard Glen Siler
Western Michigan University

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EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR OF ROLE STRESS AMONG SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

Richard Glen Siler

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, Michigan April 1983

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EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR OF ROLE STRESS AMONG SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Richard Glen Siler, Ed.D.
Western Michigan University, 1983

In this study, an interdisciplinary approach was used to examine the problem of role stress and social support as a stress moderator. The purposes of this study were: (a) to determine the level of occupational stress for school principals and identify significant occupational stressors, (b) to measure the effects of social support in reducing role stress, (c) to note the characteristics of the effective providers of social support, and (d) to identify factors in the educational setting that can strengthen coping skills by providing for social support.

A total sample of 355 subjects was randomly selected from the larger population of elementary and secondary school principals employed by public or private Catholic or Christian schools in Michigan. A survey questionnaire was developed by the researcher to gather data about principals' perceptions of role stress as well as the types and effects of supportive behaviors provided to principals by others. A total of 292 useable questionnaires (83.4 percent) were included in the study. Various statistical measures were used to test seventeen research hypotheses including; the Pearson r, repeated measures ANOVA, one-way ANOVA, and the t-test for independent samples.

The data supported the following conclusions: (1) Principals perceived a difference in the degree of stress attributable to specific events or concerns in the work environment; however, overall levels of
reported role stress were not as high as the literature review might lead one to expect. (2) The categories of time management and responsibility for people were considered by principals to be primary stressors, while the highest sources of human-induced stress were perceived as resulting from adult pressure groups in the school environment. (3) More experienced principals perceived less role stress than did their less experienced colleagues. (4) Most principals perceived a satisfactory person/job role match and acknowledged having skills that made them successful in coping with potential work role stressors. A positive relationship was found between social support and successful job related coping skills. (5) Social support—particularly emotional/psychological support from colleagues, family, and friends—was perceived as highly beneficial, although other direct and interactive sources of support were also reported as providers of supportive behaviors. (6) Administrative meetings were perceived by principals as a viable way to increase informational support in the educational setting. (7) Non-public school principals reported higher levels of support from teachers than did public school principals, although high levels of support from teachers was generally reported in both cases.
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CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Psychological stress has been an increasingly popular subject over the past several years. McGrath (1970) pointed out that the stress concept pulls together various branches of the social and biomedical sciences to illustrate the relationship between individual psychological states and specific events or environmental conditions. The result is a growing volume of literature from occupational health professions, psychology, communications, management, and a number of individuals whose qualifications to discuss the topic are probably suspect. Marshall and Cooper (1979) note that:

Stress is becoming an increasingly "trendy" topic in the popular press in this country. The basic material is usually drawn either from academic research or case history but is often poorly reported, if not completely distorted, by the typical eclectic journalist's needs for impact and readership. (p. 22)

A good deal of current writing on the subject emphasizes the stressful events and consequences for men and women in leadership positions, primarily in business and industry (Anderson, 1976; Burke, 1976; Kiev, 1974; McLean, 1976; Sales, 1969). These writers emphasized the demanding work schedules of executives and managers in the private business sector.

Bradley (1980) concludes that there is little research on the unique stressors of school administrators, although Gmelch and Svent (1981) state that school principals are exposed to too many responsibilities, which can evolve into over-demanding work roles. These
same authors offer evidence of stress producing role ambiguity when a principal is concurrently asked to be controller, motivator, persuader, disciplinarian, counselor, preserver of the culture, curriculum specialist, evaluator, change agent, and parent surrogate. These multiple and sometimes conflicting tasks certainly have the potential to reduce job satisfaction and increase hypertension. Finally, building principals are the organizational equivalents of middle managers in business and as such may manifest more symptoms of stress than do top level administrators because they have fewer opportunities to delegate responsibility (Perham, 1972).

Perhaps most important, though, individuals in leadership positions succeed by the quality of their decisions, and "the quality of the decisions reached by any decision-making process is dependent on the resources the leader is able to utilize" (Vroom and Yetton, 1973, p. 23). Persons who are preoccupied with role conflict, tension, and frustration would seem to reduce their potential for making effective and timely decisions. As Applebaum (1981, p. 185) notes, "When the unconscious psychological contract between individuals and their work organizations is threatened, a stressful reaction is the common result."

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing body of research on the work stress concept, few inquiries have been made into the nature of role stress for school administrators and no empirical data were found to substantiate the impact of social support on principals who experience uncomfortable
levels of stress and strain on the job. In this study, an interdisci-
plinary approach was used to examine the problem of role stress and
social support as a stress moderator. If events at work are perceived
as stressful, and an individual seeks to reduce the tension or frustra-
tion associated with the stressor, one alternative is to seek to moderate
uncomfortable feelings by talking problems over with colleagues, super-
ordinates, friends, and spouses. Social support can be viewed as an
intervening variable which individuals sometimes employ as a coping
mechanism in the process of trying to deal with stress.

Although many characteristics of a particular job may be stressful,
the writer attempted to deal with what French and Caplan (1970) called
the qualitative and quantitative aspects of role overload. Simply put,
if a principal perceives that he has too much to do and/or the tasks
are too difficult, does he perceive these circumstances as stressful,
and if so, does social support play a role in moderating or reducing the
stressors to manageable levels? Another goal was to clarify the term
"social support" as it applies to principals and discover if the structure
of an organization can enhance or inhibit the potential for such support.
Finally, the investigator believed it was desirable to learn if particular
audiences—such as colleagues, supervisors, and spouses—offer more support
in one type of educational role setting than in another.

Information was selected from the fields of psychology, communica-
tions, management, and educational leadership to provide background data
and assess the relationships between the two variables under study. Edu-
cational leaders should be among those who are asking intelligent ques-
tions about how their organizations affect employee health.
Rationale for the Study

The concept of stress has emerged as one of the critical health issues of the decade. Bradley (1980) relates that the number of articles written on the subject has grown to over six thousand annually. Indeed, it seems that popular and academic literature abounds with diagnostic and prescriptive information. Why is this happening? An easily supported possibility is that "stress is a topic of direct relevance to a large proportion of the inhabitants of today's Western world" (Marshall and Cooper, 1979, p. 1). A corollary to this explanation is that human suffering and economic loss are attributable to short term or prolonged exposure to stressful conditions. Campbell, Bridges, Corbally, Nystrand, and Ramseyer (1971) summarized early medical findings by noting generally consistent research that "increases in occupational stress are accompanied by a higher incidence of physical ailments and undesirable changes in bodily functions" (p. 387).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were pertinent to this study:

1. Rapid change is an intrinsic element of Western culture; change tends to induce stress.

2. Levels of exposure to health hazards, including stress, should be reduced wherever feasible.
3. A principal's health and well being are basic to the well being of the entire organization.

4. Stress does not automatically change behavior patterns, which depend on the social, physical, or environmental context and the individual's vulnerability.

5. Stressors are additive—they build on one another until the individual reaches his personal level of stress tolerance.

Limitations of the Study

The study had at least the following limitations. First, the data obtained did not relate to medical or biological implications. Consequently, the findings do not apply to long term health effects on the respondents. Second, the investigator sought to discover general relationships between principal role stress and social support and in doing so did not consider extra-organizational sources of stress. Third, only self-reported data were collected from the subjects, thus it was impossible to verify the accuracy of the information. Finally, the study was based on some concepts of social support found in the literature, much of which related to managers and others employed in business and industry; little of it related to school principals. Thus, it may not be possible to generalize about school principals from results of this study.
Significance of the Study

The concept of stress has implications for the school as well as for the individual. Humphrey (1978) noted that individuals who experience a good deal of role stress usually adversely affect subordinates, peers, and overall organizational effectiveness. A number of other researchers "now generally accept a fairly high correlation between anxiety, perceptions of job stressfulness, and low morale" (McLean, 1979, p. 44). Thus, the effects of occupational role stress are likely to have an impact on the overall functioning of the institution as well as having short term and/or long term effects on persons in leadership positions. Hirst (1980) notes that "education has been classified among the highest stress producing occupations" (p. 118).

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined to provide continuity and to facilitate comprehension of the study:

Appraisal support is a form of support which provides information relevant to self-evaluation (House, 1981, p. 25).

Coping mechanisms are the proactive and reactive responses to perceived stress which can be classified as either emotional-defensive or problem solving (Anderson, 1976, p. 447).

Emotional support involves providing empathy, caring, love, and trust and is a basic component of all forms of supportive behaviors (House, 1981, p. 24).
Eustress is the individual interpretation of an experience or event as pleasant or beneficial rather than harmful or unpleasant (Selye interviewed by L. Cherry, 1978).

Frequency is the rate of occurrence; e.g., frequently, sometimes, seldom.

Importance is the significance of specified behavior.

Information support is a form of support which provides a person with facts that can be used to cope with personal or environmental problems (House, 1981, p. 25).

An interdependent role setting is a work environment characterized by frequent interpersonal communication exchange and a feeling of mutual obligation among persons responsible for the ongoing functioning of the institution.

Interpersonal communication is the transfer of meaning between two people; this can be accomplished by words, gestures, or other symbols (Shuter, 1979, p. 1):

An isolated role setting is a work environment characterized by an individualized work structure and minimal interaction among persons responsible for the ongoing functioning of the institution.

A leader is a person who is recognized by one or more others as exerting influence, authority, or power in a given situation (paraphrased from Boles, 1980).

Leadership is a process in which one or more persons exert influence, authority, or power over one or more others in moving a social system toward primary system goals (paraphrased from Boles, 1980).
Perception is the interpretation given to reality by an individual (Boles and Davenport, 1975, p. 426).

Role is the total of expectations held by members of a social system for an individual within that social system (Boles and Davenport, 1975, p. 426).

Role ambiguity is a condition that exists when an individual has inadequate information about his work role; that is, where there is lack of clarity about the work objectives associated with the role, about work colleagues' expectation of the work role, and about the scope and responsibilities of the job (Marshall and Cooper, 1979, p. 30).

Role conflict is a condition that exists when an individual in a particular work role is torn by conflicting job demands or being expected to do things he/she really does not want to do or does not think are part of the job specification (Marshall and Cooper, 1979, p. 31).

Role stress is anything about an organizational role that produces adverse consequences for the role player (Beehr, Walsh, and Taber, 1976, p. 41).

The school principal is the administrative head and professional leader of a school unit.

Social support is a coping mechanism utilizing the quality and quantity of interpersonal relationships with spouses, friends, co-workers, supervisors, groups, and the larger community. The information received leads the subject to believe that he or she is cared for,
esteemed, and valued (House, 1981, p. 16). Direct social support is provided by colleagues and others at work, while interactive sources of support are those persons away from the work setting, such as family members and friends.

**Stress** is the anticipation of inability to respond adequately (or at a reasonable cost) to perceived demand, accompanied by anticipation of negative consequences for inadequate response (McGrath, 1970, p. 23).

**Organization of the Study**

The problem statement and related background information have been presented in this chapter. Chapter II will contain a review of relevant literature, focusing on the history of the stress concept, the nature of role stress, the particular stressors of school principals, coping skills, and social support as a moderator of occupational role stress. In Chapter III, the research design, description of the population and sample, and specific hypotheses will be presented. Chapter IV will consist of a presentation of the research data, including major findings from the study, while in Chapter V the investigator will summarize the results of the study and make recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, investigation of the history of the stress concept; the nature of occupational stress, particularly principal role stress and coping strategies; and finally, the potential moderating effects of social support on behaviors in stressful situations will be reported.

Historical Background of the Stress Concept

The concept of stress has evolved from the term distress, which has its origins in the Latin word "districtus" (Webster, 1981). Marshall and Cooper (1979) pointed out that in the eighteenth century the word stress was used in conversation to mean hardship or adversity. The connotation of some kind of external pressure being resisted was eventually borrowed by the physical sciences in the early nineteenth century. Marshall and Cooper stated:

Although the concept was apparently employed by Boyle (investigating the properties of gases) and Hooke (elasticity of springs) in the seventeenth century, Hinkle (1973) credits its earliest precise definition to Baron Cauchy (Love, 1944) in the early nineteenth century. In physics then "stress" refers to the internal force generated within a solid body by the action of any external force which tends to distort the body; "strain" is the resulting distortion and the external force producing the distortion is called "load." (p. 4)
An analogy can be made between the stress-strain diagrams used to analyze the strengths of various materials (Spotts, 1971) and the vulnerability of individuals exposed to prolonged periods of stress (Janis, 1971). In the initial stages the material is elastic and maintains its original structure much as an individual can remain flexible and adapt to moderate amounts of frustration and change. As the relative amounts of stress and strain increase, the material eventually becomes plastic (deformed) and loses its original shape, a result perceived as similar to the long term negative physical effects of intensive prolonged stress on some individuals. Finally, as the material reaches its tensile strength, it breaks; people die if their systems cannot accommodate unusually stressful circumstances. The three stages (alarm reaction, stage of resistance, and stage of exhaustion) were the basis for Selye's (1974) classic work with the General Adaptation Syndrome.

During the twentieth century the term stress was re-introduced; however, early students of the subject failed to recognize the difference "between distress, which is always unpleasant, and the general concept of stress which, in addition, also includes the pleasant experiences of joy, fulfillment, and self-expression" (Selye, 1974, p. 22). Selye developed the theory that stressors are non-specific by definition while the individual effects of stress are variable. Thus, identical stimuli can produce different physiological responses or effects in different individuals. According to Selye, specific effects are dependent upon internal factors (age, sex, genetic background) and
external conditioning factors (diet, exercise) that either enhance or inhibit pathogenic response. Selye summarized this aspect of his research into a description of the stress syndrome as follows:

We have learned that there is a stereotyped physical pattern of the body's response to stress of any cause. The outcome of our interactions with the environment depends just as much upon our reactions to the stressor as upon the nature of the stressor itself. (p. 66)

While ignoring most of the psychological aspects of stress, Selye did make an analogy between the results of his biological research and implications for the individual and society. Drawing on the earlier writings of Claude Bernard and Walter Cannon, Selye noted that adaption to maintain "internal balance" or "homeostasis" is the basis of formulating a natural code of behavior. While work is viewed as a basic need of man, it must be in line with an individually appropriate environment so that frustration, insecurity, aimlessness, and the constant need for readaptation are minimized and the potential for self expression and maintaining an optimal stress level is maximized.

Selye's work suggested that a certain level of stress is desirable and even necessary for human existence, and it is clear that harmful stress cannot be exclusively defined by situations. While Selye speculated that the failure to adapt to chronic stress was the result of physiological exhaustion, Burchfield (1979) reviewed a number of more recent studies which provide evidence that the majority of maladaptive responses are due to psychological causes. According to Burchfield, "maladaptation is manifested as an increased or
maintained arousal response occasionally continuing to occur despite absence of the stressor" (p. 669). Positive adaptation to intermittent stress, on the other hand, is characterized by anticipation of the stressor and decreased levels of bodily response.

Lazarus (1966) noted that the concept of stress began to appear in the Psychological Abstracts in 1944. Following World War II, psychologists related the word stress to the study of battle fatigue and the failure of soldiers to adapt to military conditions. Since then, research has spread across several disciplines as dozens of investigators study the stimuli that produce stressful reactions, the reactions themselves, and various intervening variables. Lazarus (1966) pointed out that different levels of analysis of the term can be undertaken by separate fields of study. For example, sociological stress research might focus on the impact of disasters on the social system while the study of physiological stress records the results of physical assault on tissue structure. The focus of this literature review was on the psychological nature of stress in the work environment and on one intervening coping mechanism, specifically social support.

The Nature of Occupational Stress

Several investigators, including Applebaum (1981), Appley and Trumbull (1967), Lazarus (1966), McLean (1979), and Weigel and Pinsky (1982) supported the idea that perceived stress is the result of objective circumstance and human experience. They concluded that harmful
stress may be the outcome of a particular individual being in a particular environment over a specific period of time. Thus, a conceptual model of stress can be viewed as one of "person-environment (P-E) fit" (Marshall and Cooper, 1979, p. 5). The environmental and personal factors of the P-E fit model are illustrated in Figure 1.

McGrath (1970) and later Brousseau and Prince (1981) pointed out that the relationship between the person and the job is not static but changes as the dynamic nature of job demands and personal abilities and motivation interact over a period of time. The latter investigators provided a longitudinal study of engineers, scientists, and managers which indicated that personality characteristics may be influenced by job design. Another report by Myers (1964) focused on a six year longitudinal study of assemblers, supervisors, managers, scientists and technicians at Texas Instruments Incorporated. A portion of this investigation dealt with sources of job dissatisfaction. Myers pointed out that factors that dissatisfy employees are generally quite different than those factors which are recognized as satisfiers. A major finding of this study indicated that "a job situation sparse in motivational opportunities encourages preoccupation with [job] maintenance factors" (p. 85). Maintenance factors were seldom viewed as satisfiers, but more frequently recognized as sources of personal frustration and dissatisfaction. Examples were: company policy and administration, behavior of supervisors, working conditions, security and other factors peripheral to the primary task of the employee.
Environment-Related Person-Related

Relationships
with superior
with subordinates
with colleagues
"inability" to delegate
lack of social support
office politics

Factors intrinsic to job
quantitative overload
qualitative overload
time pressures and deadlines
working conditions
changes at work
keeping up with rapid
 technological change

Organizational structure
and climate
lack of participation
no sense of belonging
poor communications
restrictions on behavior

Role in the organization
role ambiguity
role conflict
responsibility for things
too little responsibility
too little management support
holding a middle management position

Extra-organizational
sources
family problems
life crises
financial difficulties
conflicts of personal beliefs
and company policy
conflict of work and family
demands
lack of social support

neurotic tendencies
emotional instability
conformity
inner-directedness
rigidity
flexibility
achievement orientation
A type behavior

Career development
status incongruity
under promotion
over promotion

Source: Marshall and Cooper, 1979, p. 50

Figure 1

The P-E Fit Model Applied to Managerial Job Stress
Further work in this area was reported by Rohmert and Luczak (in Hamilton and Warburton, 1979). While they developed mathematical models to describe the impact of stress and strain on people who engage in mainly physical labor, graphic methods to measure the dynamic features of non-physical work are not yet available. The list of possible sources of stress at work is extensive, and almost all the potential stressors are potential sources of job satisfaction at one time or another. Indeed, often a specific factor and its direct opposite are both potentially stressful (French and Caplan; in Marrow, 1973). This point would seem to be substantiated by the extensive review of national mortality studies by Marshall and Cooper. Their findings indicate conflicting evidence on how specific occupations negatively affect health:

The majority of studies support the proposition that the risk of cardiovascular heart disease (CHD) rises with occupational level. . . . A further group of researchers found no relationship between CHD and occupation. The trend now is to look in more detail at significant job components in order to explain differential CHD rates. (p. 22)

It is appropriate to add that significant sub-groups need to be studied. The population of "managers" is hardly a homogeneous group.

If it is axiomatic that every job has built-in stressors, the next step is to identify potential sources of stress and how individuals in different occupations react to them. French and Caplan (1972) reported evidence that work overload and role ambiguity are associated with lower job satisfaction and higher job related tension, including several physiological and psychological signs of strain. Their study involved NASA engineers, scientists, and
administrators. The same authors elected to describe "overload" in terms of having too much work to do (quantitative) or having work that is too difficult (qualitative). Froberg, Karlsson, Levi, Lidberg, and Seeman (1970) provided further evidence of the negative psychophysiological effects of work overload in separate studies of small groups of office employees, while Weiman (1977) obtained similar results in his study of over one thousand four hundred senior and junior officers of a large financial institution. Most often cited as stressors for middle managers in the latter study were quantitative overload, role conflict, and responsibility for people. Finally, Beehr, Walsh, and Taber (1976) studied one hundred forty-three male and female engineering and manufacturing employees. Their findings also indicated that role overload correlates positively with job dissatisfaction, fatigue, and tension.

Schwab and Iwanicki (1982) examined the relationship of perceived role conflict and role ambiguity to aspects of "teacher burnout." The term burnout can best be understood in terms of excessive personal stress caused by social and situational job factors and culminating in temporary or permanent separation from the work setting. One contribution of this research was the characterization of various aspects of burnout. Increased stress has been associated with increased feelings of emotional exhaustion and fatigue, negative attitudes and cynicism, and decreased feeling of personal accomplishment. While these factors do not necessarily follow any progression from one to another, they have been recognized frequently in human service occupations.
French and Caplan (1970) investigated work relationships as a source of occupational stress. They concluded that disinterest, coupled with low trust and supportiveness, leads to inadequate communication, lowered feelings of job satisfaction, and increased feelings of job-related threat. Other research, by Holdorf (1975), involved one hundred first-line managers in a large industrial organization. The correlational data obtained suggested that conditions of role conflict most often lead individuals to experience deterioration of the quality of their interpersonal relationships.

Further data about stressful work relationships have been provided by Fiedler, Potter, Zais, and Knowlton (1979) who studied organizational stress from the perspective of leaders and subordinates. Their research with military personnel indicated the introduction of a stressful relationship when someone at a higher organizational level inhibits the use of one or more subordinates, increasing the likelihood that such individuals will rely on past experience to deal with organizational problems. While a stressful relationship with "the boss" is not necessarily a poor one, a stressful one does have implications for the subordinate and for the functioning of the organization.

To summarize the general findings on occupational stressors, Marshall and Cooper (1979) noted that "two clusters of stressful job characteristics appear to be emerging" (p. 21). The first cluster deals with "low utilization of abilities, low participation, low work complexity, and poor P-E fit"; the second is characterized by "high
quantitative workload, a need for sustained concentration, and high responsibility for people." Those in the second category seem most relevant for school principals.

Principal Role Stress

The results of a 1977 survey by Gmelch and Swent (1981) addressed the particular circumstances of school principals. After analyzing the routine tasks of principals, their findings indicated that role stressors can be categorized into five areas:

Administrative constraints deal with stressors related to time, meetings, work load, and compliance with federal, state, and organizational policies. Administrative responsibility relates to tasks characteristic of nearly all administrative positions and includes supervision, evaluation, negotiations, and gaining public support for school programs. Interpersonal relations include resolving differences between parents and school and between staff members, and handling student discipline. Intrapersonal conflict centers around conflicts between performance and one's internal beliefs and expectations. Role expectations deal with stress caused by a difference in the expectations of self and the various publics with which administrators must deal. These publics include students, parents, colleagues, board of education, supervisors, and members of the community. (p. 17)

The matter of interpersonal influence is present in three of the top ten stressors listed by Gmelch and Swent (see Table 1), while five of the items express the principals' concern with time and quantitative work load.

Another summary on the specific problem of principal role conflict has been provided by Lipham and Hoeh (1974). Major conflicts
Table 1
Secondary School Principals' Top Ten Stressors

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meetings taking up too much time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gaining public approval and/or financial support for school programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Evaluating staff members/performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Resolving parent/school conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Completing reports and paperwork on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Participating in school activities outside the normal working hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Making decisions affecting the lives of individual people I know (colleagues, staff members, students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Too heavy a workload; one that cannot possibly be finished during the normal work day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gmelch and Swent (1981, p. 17)
arising at the principal level are:

(1) interrole conflict, or disparity between and among two or more roles the principal is simultaneously fulfilling; (2) inter-reference-group conflict, or disagreement between and among the principal and his reference groups regarding the expectations held for his role as principal; (3) intra-reference-group conflict, or disagreement within a reference group regarding the expectations held for the role of the principal; and (4) role-personality conflict, or divergence between the role expectations and the personality needs of the principal. (p. 147)

Electing to view the problem from another perspective, Koff, Laffey, Olson, and Cichon (1981) studied a national sample of school principals and concluded that job related stressors could be described based on four major factors. The first factor concerns how much control the principal believes he has over particular circumstances. Some problems, such as involuntary teacher transfers, present a sense of helplessness which often results in insecurity. Other problems may be less frustrating because they can be controlled at the building level. The second underlying theme involves routine tasks. These are the daily problem solving and administrative activities that occupy the greatest amount of time, such as implementing curriculum policies, working with underachieving students, and talking with parents. The third and fourth factors are teacher conflicts and student conflicts respectively. There seems to be considerable agreement that dealing with unsatisfactory staff performance and confronting rebellious students are examples of particularly stressful elements of the job. A rank ordering of the forty-eight most stressful administrative events reported in this study is found in Table 2.
It would appear that no matter what approach is used to describe role stress, there are some built in features of the job which preclude satisfactory daily functioning for many individuals currently employed as school principals.

Table 2

Rank Ordering for Stress Ratings on Administrative Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Forcing the resignation or dismissal of a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dealing with unsatisfactory performance of professional staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Involuntary transfer to another principalship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preparing for a teachers' strike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Refusal of teacher to follow policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Criticism in the press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Last week of school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Forced staff reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Legal action against your school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Assault upon a staff member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Reorganization of educational program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Disagreement with superior(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Verbal abuse from students or parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Serious vandalism to the building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The first week of the school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Preparing and holding teacher performance evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Parental complaint about poor teaching performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Conflict among staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dealing with teacher grievances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Student expulsion hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Meeting with rebellious students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Denial of personal promotion or advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Threatened with personal injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Maintaining self control when angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Maintaining school records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Board of Education decision to close a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Overcrowded schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Working with problems of underachieving students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Lack of books and supplies for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Implementing of policies for the handicapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Making a presentation to the Board of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 2 (concluded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Working with community racial issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Meeting with teachers about student discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Fight among students on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Resolving social problems among students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Facilities for teachers are not clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Performance evaluation conference with superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Dealing with pupil enrollment decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Implementing Board of Education curriculum policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Managing school budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Selecting new staff member(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Lunchroom supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Voluntary transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Talking to parents about their child's problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Working with school district central administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Dealing with custodial/nonteaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Administering programs for students whose primary language is not English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Inservice meetings for administrators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Koff et al. (1981, pp. 4-5)

Manera and Wright (1981a) surveyed four groups of educational personnel involved in stress workshops. Each person was asked to rank order fourteen stressors using the Q-sort method. While each group expressed a different collective view of the number one ranked item, data from the total sample are found in Table 3. The researchers were satisfied that educators could identify "those stressors which have relatively greater or lesser impact on their lives" (p. 56).
### Table 3

**Ranking of Work-Related Stressors for Educational Personnel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Description of Stressor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Judging People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Individualized Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pacing Your Energy Expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Professional Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Discipline and Classroom Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Activating (Helping People to Understand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Maintaining Good Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teacher Apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Building a Professional Reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Accepting and Using Other People's Expertise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Manera and Wright (1981a, p. 55)

In a separate study, Manera and Wright (1981b) focused on the particular stressors of school principals, using the same Q-sort technique. Fifty-seven principals and assistant principals collectively listed two factors related to "judging people" at the top of the rank order listing. Table 4 presents a summary of the ranked stressors in that study. It should be noted that the highest ranked stressors are consistent with the findings of Koff et al. mentioned earlier in this chapter.
Table 4
Ranking of Job-Related Stressors for School Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Description of Stressor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Making decisions about people you know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Evaluating Staff members/performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Imposing high expectations on myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Gaining public approval or financial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/6.</td>
<td>Completing reports on time; Handling student discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Resolving parent/school conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Complying with state/federal rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Spending too much time at meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11.</td>
<td>Finding workload too heavy; Speaking in front of groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Being interrupted by telephone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Manera and Wright (1981b, p. 15)

Stoker (1980) conducted open-end telephone interviews with twelve active elementary school principals to determine how they perceived their most stressful circumstances at work. While Stoker's investigation was very informal, and probably unreliable, he was able to organize the responses into five major categories, namely: (1) problems dealing with school faculty, (2) confrontations with parents, (3) undue amounts of paperwork, (4) severe student discipline problems and (5) conflict with superordinates. Schuetz (1980) also attempted to identify the sources of perceived job-related stress for school principals. The most stressful situations reported in his study involved the responsibility for making decisions affecting others' lives, although subjects reported a wide range of stressful situations. When demographic data were considered, principals of schools with enrollments...
of three hundred to six hundred students reported the highest levels of stress, although school size was not judged to be a significant factor in similar studies by Roesh (1979) and Robe (1980). There also appears to be conflicting evidence with regard to relationships between levels of perceived stress and numbers of years of experience as a principal. In a study by Roesh (1979) more experienced administrators exhibited less anxiety than their less experienced counterparts although the differences were not deemed statistically significant. Robe (1980) also did not establish a relationship between these variables, while Harris (1978) reported that the highest stress levels were experienced by veteran principals. One limitation of these studies was the failure to survey principals in non-public institutions or discover if there were differences between persons working at the elementary and secondary levels.

Washington (1982) studied both elementary and secondary principals who worked in urban settings in Canada. While 77% of the principals who responded to his questionnaire reported that their jobs imposed a level of stress beyond that which most people experienced, it is difficult to understand how principals could accurately measure stress perceived by others. When principals were asked to rank the conditions or problems that were most stressful, two categories were consistently rated at the top of the list. Final tabulation indicated "central administration demands" and "supervision of teachers" were major job stressors followed by "relationships with parents", "government regulations", "student problems" and "instructional problems" (p. 390).
It can be emphasized that school administration is characterized by "sudden and disruptive intellectual, educational, and social environmental changes" (Lemley, 1981, p. 20). This situation is further complicated by the fact that in many school districts the "administrative structure mitigates [sic; i.e., "militates"] against the establishment of intensive relationships with superiors" (Ortiz, 1982, p. 12). Leader inaccessibility may be more frustrating for subordinates than being at odds with a superior; at least some minimal level of interaction is required to exchange diverse points of view.

It is evident that role conflict can lead to an environment associated with lower job satisfaction, performance, and increased likelihood of voluntarily leaving an organization (Johnson and Stinson, 1975). Further evidence was provided by Domian (1980) who studied the impact of job stress on job satisfaction of high school principals. Organizational factors such as inequity of pay, quantitative workload, role ambiguity, and role conflict all bore significant negative relationships to job satisfaction.

Kahn (1964) noted that it is also true that individuals react in different ways to the stressors they face at work. Typical reactions included "intensified internal conflicts, increased tension associated with various aspects of the job, reduced satisfaction with the job and its various components, and decreased confidence in superiors and in the organization as a whole" (p. 71). In spite of a number of studies detailing the negative aspects of role stress, Ganster, Mayes, Sime and Tharp (1982) report that few organizational
stress management programs exist, even though subjects have been taught
to recognize and alter interpretation of stressful events at work.
The next section of this paper will discuss the literature that was
reviewed which had an emphasis on coping mechanisms.

Coping With Occupational Stress

Carl Anderson (1977) studied small business owners to determine
how they coped with the stressful job of restoring their businesses
after a flood. Anderson was able to distinguish two general types of
reactions. The first type of coping mechanism could be described as
"emotional-defensive" and was associated with low levels of perfor­
mance. Those individuals were spending so much time reducing their
anxiety about the circumstances at hand that they were not engaging
in a second type of coping reaction, which is "problem-solving"
behavior. Problem solvers maintained a wide perspective and even­
tually thought of ideas that would help them get back into business.
Lazarus (1965/1967) attempted to explain the reason for "emotional-
defensive" reactions:

The point is that the stress reaction is the effect of
these cognitive appraisal processes and the conditions
that determine them. The irrationality or maladaptive­
ness does not come primarily from the intervention of
emotions in thought processes, but rather from the fact
that threat places the psychological system in jeopardy
and that the alternatives for coping with threat are
tied to motives, beliefs, and expectations concerning
the situation, which differ from person to person. (p. 168)
A third type of reaction, the failure to cope, may indicate that neither denial mechanisms nor action-oriented approaches are working.

Boles and Davenport (1975, p. 122) emphasized the importance of "approach strategies" for educational leaders which include appraisal of different alternatives, enlisting the help of others, or being flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. All of these actions are ways of taking charge of one's circumstances and changing the environment/person relationship. McLean (1979) notes that taking charge does not necessarily mean being in total control of a situation, but it does imply some movement toward resolution of basic problems. In a longitudinal study of the flood victims mentioned earlier, Anderson (1977) confirmed earlier findings that individuals who believed that outcomes were contingent upon their own behaviors and abilities perceived less stress and employed more problem-solving coping techniques than did persons who believed their destiny was not under their personal control, but rather was simply a matter of luck or fate.

In many cases, coping behaviors described include the use of moderators, such as group cohesiveness (Seashore, 1954), autonomy (Beehr, 1976), or social support. These factors can mediate the impact of stressful conditions and help the individual maintain normal functioning. When the specific population of school principals is considered, researchers have noted a wide range of coping responses. Washington (1982) reported three primary coping strategies including setting particularly stressful problems aside for a period of time,
talking the problem over with a colleague or, in direct contrast, attacking the problem immediately. Recreational and family activity, along with close relationships with co-workers, were the primary coping techniques cited by Harris (1978), while Peterson (1977) found a broad range of coping mechanisms including hobbies, sports, family activities, religion, social communication, formal stress reduction training programs, music, civic involvement, and communication with fellow professionals. Roesch (1979) categorized potential stress coping responses into seven factors by using a coping preference scale and then calculated the mean rating for each. The highest mean scores were obtained for the factor entitled "consultative techniques" which included a number of support behaviors (p. 59). The following paragraphs describe the potential impact of social support as a moderator of occupational stress.

Social Support As A Moderator Of Stress

House (1981) identified four types of supportive behaviors. The first type, emotional support, "involves providing empathy, caring, love, trust" (p. 24). House pointed out that people generally think about this type of supportive behavior when confronted with the concept of social support and it is a fundamental aspect of all supportive behaviors.

The other types of social support were described by House as "instrumental support, informational support and appraisal support." Instrumental support involves behaviors that directly aid the person in

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need, such as giving people money or taking care of them. Informational support helps people help themselves, such as by providing ideas that would help the individual cope with stressful situations, while appraisal support involves the provision of information that individuals use in evaluating themselves.

For the purposes of this study, social support was considered as problem centered and was usually provided by co-workers, supervisors, spouses or partners, and other relatives or neighbors. Those people are part of the principal's stable social relationships rather than others who may be only casual acquaintances.

There is clinical evidence that individuals seek affiliation and support in stressful circumstances (Schacter in Coon, 1980). However, Mechanic (cited in House, 1981) discovered, in a field study of graduate students studying for exams, that informational and appraisal support actually increased anxiety because it made students more aware of what they did not know. The point is that social support is not a panacea for reducing stress, but rather an aid, depending on the sources of support and the nature of the problem.

LaRocco and Jones (1978) attempted to discover what kind of effect social support has on stressful work situations. They studied over three thousand U.S. Navy enlisted personnel to distinguish between "direct" and "interactive" effects of social support. The direct or main effects of social support can be described as those which directly influence job satisfaction and self-esteem. The interactive effect is a buffering effect that presumably protects the individual from
the negative outcomes of high stress. Results of their research supported the main effects of social support, but there was no evidence that leader and co-worker support ameliorated undesirable outcomes normally associated with stress. The authors concluded by noting:

Thus, attempts to alleviate such negative effects may be more meaningful if they address stress directly by reducing sources of conflict or increasing role clarity rather than attempting to address the issue indirectly via support. (p. 633)

The question of who provides the most effective social support in work environments was addressed by Pinneau (1975). He found the greatest measurable amount of support came from supervisors and colleagues, rather than from spouses or other sources of home support. Pinneau sampled a large cross section of employees in blue collar and white collar occupations.

When the school environment is considered, an excellent strategy for organizing and leading support groups has been provided by Moracco and McFadden (1982). The authors have suggested that school counselors are probably uniquely suited to provide a "social-professional support system" to members of the teaching staff (p. 549). This aspect of staff development would provide opportunities for teachers to analyze work related problems, identify their feelings about them and use group feedback to clarify issues, offer suggestions and/or reinforce personal self-esteem. While the authors confined their discussion to the possibility of worthwhile benefits for teachers, it would appear that school principals could profit from similar experiences, perhaps utilizing different group leaders and focusing on leadership and administrative problems.
While researchers are just beginning to understand the complex interactions involved in the social support process, House (1981) identified three variables which combine to determine the possibility of effective social support. These are:

- characteristics of individuals, which facilitate or impede their ability to give or receive social support;
- properties of relationships, which may facilitate or inhibit the giving or receiving of social support;
- social or cultural conditions, which foster or discourage the giving or receiving of social support (These effects will sometimes operate via the effects of such conditions on characteristics of persons or the nature of interpersonal relationships).

(p. 93)

Research Questions Explored

One purpose of this chapter has been to point out the varied conceptions of occupational stress and the many dimensions of studying the topic. Mechanic (1965/1967) made some suggestions for further research on the subject.

The traditional approach has been to look at behavior and then go back and try to explain the behavior in terms of the developmental history of individuals. We all know that this has not been overly successful. It seems to me that a more productive way of approaching the study of behavior and of stress is to take a cross-sectional view, looking at the techniques individuals use and then correlating these techniques with effective performance.

(p. 202)

Following Mechanic's lead, it would seem that there are four central themes to be considered; (1) significant occupational stressors
for school principals, (2) the effects of social support in reducing role stress, (3) characteristics of the more effective providers of social support, and (4) factors in the educational setting that can strengthen coping skills by providing for social support.

A review of role stress factors for principals earlier in this chapter revealed several ways of categorizing potential job stressors (Gmelch and Swent, 1981; Koff et al., 1981; Lipham and Hoeh, 1974; Manera and Wright, 1981b; Robe, 1981; Roesch, 1979; Schuetz, 1980). While each of these writers viewed role stress factors from a different perspective, there were five major factors that appeared repeatedly; (1) time management (having too many tasks to perform in the time available), (2) career development (having some degree of uncertainty about job security or the possibility of advancement in an educational setting), (3) personality/role conflict (being expected to perform tasks that an individual does not want to do or does not think are part of the job specification), (4) administrative activities and constraints (the performance of routine tasks and acceptance of bureaucratic decisions made at a higher level in the organization), and (5) the principal's responsibility for people (responding to the needs, desires, and demands of students, teachers, supervisors, and various publics). The last factor, responsibility for people, appears at or near the top of several lists indicating potential sources of work stress. Thus, the first research question dealt with an attempt to verify earlier findings that "responsibility for people" would be the most frequently cited source of role stress.
The second question related to sources of role stress asked whether elementary or secondary principals perceived a difference in human sources of stress at work. Earlier studies by Harris (1978), Robe (1980), and Roesch (1979) each focused exclusively on either elementary or secondary principal populations. Recognizing that the environmental setting of a typical elementary school may be quite different from that of a secondary school with respect to problems, activities, schedules, and parental involvement, it seemed possible that an elementary principal may view students, supervisors, parent groups, teachers, and outsiders differently than would a secondary principal when asked how much each group or individual contributes to his/her level of personal stress.

Research questions three, four, and five were also related to perceived role stress. It was noted earlier in this chapter that there is conflicting evidence that age and years of experience as a principal have an effect on related stress factors (Harris, 1978; Roesch, 1979). However, it does seem plausible that experience and maturity would contribute to more accurate recognition of potential stressors and ways of successfully coping with them. This would seem to be especially true of individuals who consider themselves career principals. It was anticipated that the career school principal would acknowledge a better ability to use successful coping skills and thus perceive a satisfactory or good match between the person and the job.

The next three research questions (numbers six, seven, and eight) related to the effects of social support in reducing role stress.
Caplan (1974), House (1981), and Pinneau (1975) proposed that social support from others is a significant factor in reducing personal levels of anxiety, conflict, and frustration. Question six asked whether these effects are present in a school setting, while question seven asked the degree of relationship between increased levels of perceived stress and perceived benefits of social support. Social support might be perceived as more beneficial by a subject who reports moderate or high levels of anxiety as opposed to someone who acknowledges little or no job related stress (House, 1981, p. 65). To summarize, the beneficial effects of social support may be taken for granted unless it is recognized that support from others plays a vital part in the effective functioning of the role player.

The final question in this section (number eight) related the effects of social support with the type of support perceived by principals. Noting once again the differences between elementary and secondary programs, do these differences correlate with any specific types of supportive behaviors? For example, is one of the four types of support—appraisal, informational, instrumental, or emotional/psychological—recognized by principals as being more predominant at one level than another? Perhaps more importantly, do principals of one level perceive a significantly higher amount of all types of supportive behaviors than those at the other level?

The sources or providers of social support were the major topics of research questions nine through eleven. Is there a relationship between perceived levels of social support in all the life roles of
a principal and his successful use of coping skills in any one role? House alludes to a causal relationship between these variables as one of the main effects of social support (1981, p. 36). When the topic of non-work related or interactive sources of support was considered, two questions appeared to be relevant. Research question ten related to the community at large as a source of support and was intended to discover whether smaller, less populated residential areas are more conducive to supportive behaviors than are larger, and perhaps less personal, population centers (House, 1981, p. 110). The second factor, reflected in question eleven, dealt with active affiliation with various community groups or religious activities. Does inclusion in such activities provide significant support to the school principal? And, if so, is this principal one who utilizes successful coping strategies?

The final six research questions (twelve through seventeen) were related to factors in the educational setting that can promote or impede the possibilities for direct social support. As previously noted, there seems to be a good deal of evidence that co-operative, interdependent work roles promote social support more than do isolated work roles (House, 1981, p. 103). Finding whether these circumstances can be generalized to a school setting was the intent of question twelve. Perhaps comparing the steps taken to promote social support in an educational unit to the perceived stress level of each principal provides a measure of this relationship. Question thirteen addressed an interest in a possible difference in the levels of direct
social support perceived by principals working in public and non-public schools. Are the potential sources of direct social support--i.e., teachers, supervisors--more effective in private schools than in public institutions? This question was an attempt to discover whether fundamental differences exist among the professional relationships of persons working in private vs. public school settings. It would seem that the adversary relationship between administration and teaching staff which now exists in many public school districts would reduce the potential for supportive behaviors directed toward the principal. A corollary to the degree of support is whether the overall level of role stress perceived by a principal working in a private school is less than for a counterpart in a public school (question fourteen). Can it be that one of the intrinsic rewards of non-public school service is a more relaxed supportive work environment?

Research question fifteen addressed presumed differences between elementary and secondary school settings. Does the structure of an elementary school program contribute to greater possibilities for social support? Similarly, do smaller schools offer more opportunities for interpersonal communication and supportive behaviors (question sixteen)? While two studies (Robe, 1980 and Roesch, 1979) reported that school size was not found to be a significant factor, Schuetz (1980) did find significantly higher stress levels reported by principals in schools of about five hundred students. Frequently, depending on responsibilities, a school of this size can produce quantitative role overload for a principal even though the central
administration does not consider it large enough to require an administrative assistant.

The final research question (number seventeen) asked whether direct sources of social support are more effective in reducing the impact of work role stress than interactive sources of support. House (1981, p. 85) indicated that this question is worthy of further investigation because of the cost/benefits of facilitating supportive behaviors in the workplace. If it appears that the greatest amount of perceived social support comes from outside the work setting, it may be a waste of resources to provide more opportunities for support at work.

Chapter III will include specific research hypotheses, population and sample, descriptions of the research design, and methods of data collection and data analysis.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter is comprised of descriptions of the research design, the methodology of data collection, and the methods of analysis. In the first part of the chapter, the population and sample are described. The remaining sections present the research hypotheses and describe the development and design of the survey instrument, along with the general procedures for data collection and analysis.

Population and Sample

The population selected for this study included elementary and secondary school principals employed in public as well as Catholic Parochial and Christian schools in Michigan. While each school unit usually provided some combination of elementary and/or secondary attendance centers for its students, a minimum number of grades was required at each of two types of attendance centers for inclusion of the center's principal in the study. At the elementary level, each participating principal was required to be responsible for at least grades one through four, while a secondary principal had to be responsible for at least grades ten through twelve. No person with the title of assistant principal or dean of students was included in the population, nor was a school principal having concurrent responsibilities for duties beyond a single attendance center. For example,
a principal who also served as a classroom teacher, or had district-wide administrative responsibilities for curriculum or finances, was excluded. The purpose of these limitations was to provide an element of consistency among the job descriptions of those individuals selected for the sample.

Information obtained from the Michigan Education Directory (1982) indicated that there were 2782 qualifying principal positions in the public schools and 361 qualifying non-public principals in Michigan, thus comprising a total population of 3143 individuals. Table 5 presents a categorization of the principal population by grade level and type of school unit. The geographical area selected for study provided a cross-section of urban and rural community settings, with a diversity of school sizes and administrative structures. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 341 subjects needed to be selected from the total number of eligible participants. This sample represented 10.8 per cent of the total population. Each principal was assigned a sequence number and a simple random sample was drawn utilizing a random numbers table. Three hundred fifty subjects were selected utilizing this method, including 155 public school elementary principals, and 40 private school secondary principals. Although the samples from each subgroup were not directly proportional to the total population, the sample size from the smaller private school sector was increased in order to be able to perform the appropriate statistical analysis. An additional five subjects were selected from each principal subgroup to serve as alternates, in case some subjects from the original sample were not available or chose not to participate in the study.
Table 5
Population Included In The Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School Unit</th>
<th>Number of Elementary Principals</th>
<th>Number of Secondary Principals</th>
<th>Total Number of Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michigan Public School Districts</td>
<td>2159</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>2782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan Catholic Parochial and Christian Schools</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2449</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>3143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses

The purpose for undertaking this study was to investigate the nature of perceived role stress for school principals and to measure the impact of social support as a moderator of perceived stress on the job. The investigator used Schriesheim and Murphy's (1976) concept of stress as an objective stimulus condition operationally defined as "on the job anxiety" (p.637). To accomplish the purpose, descriptive research techniques were used to investigate the following hypotheses. The major hypotheses reflect the research questions shown at the conclusion of Chapter II.

Hypothesis One

The most common sources of role stress among principals are problems that deal with their responsibility to and for people; i.e., teachers, students, supervisors, and various publics.
Hypothesis Two

There are differences between elementary and secondary principals' perceptions of human sources of role stress.

Hypothesis Three

There is an inverse relationship between the level of role stress perceived and the age of the school principal.

Hypothesis Four

There is an inverse relationship between the level of role stress perceived and one's years of experience as a school principal.

Hypothesis Five

There is a difference between the reported stress level of career and non-career school principals.

Hypothesis Six

Social support has a reducing effect on stress by moderating the short-term effects of the stressor on the principal.

Hypothesis Seven

As the level of reported stress increases, the perceived beneficial effects of social support also increase.

Hypothesis 7.1

As the level of perceived stress increases, the perceived benefits of administrative meetings also increase.

Hypothesis 7.2

As the level of perceived stress increases, the perceived benefits of belonging to various local organizations and religious affiliations also increase.

Hypothesis 7.3

As the level of perceived stress increases, the perceived benefits of consultation with colleagues also increase.

Hypothesis 7.4

As the level of perceived stress increases, the perceived benefit of conversations with persons outside the school setting also increases.
Hypothesis Eight

There are differences in types of social support perceived by elementary and secondary school principals.

Hypothesis 8.1

Elementary and secondary principals receive different types of support from administrative meetings.

Hypothesis 8.2

Elementary and secondary principals perceive different types of support from involvement in non-school related organizations.

Hypothesis 8.3

Elementary and secondary principals perceive different types of support from colleagues.

Hypothesis 8.4

Elementary and secondary principals perceive different types of support from persons outside the work setting.

Hypothesis Nine

There is a direct relationship between the level of social support perceived in all life roles and the successful use of coping skills in any one role.

Hypothesis Ten

Interactive support is perceived by principals as more readily and immediately available in smaller communities than in larger cities.

Hypothesis Eleven

Principals who are actively affiliated with community and/or religious organizations perceive higher levels of coping skills than principals who are not active members of such organizations.

Hypothesis Twelve

Co-operative interdependent work roles promote more social support than do isolated work roles.

Hypothesis Thirteen

Principals in non-public schools perceive higher levels of direct social support than do public school principals.
Hypothesis 13.1

Non-public school principals perceive higher levels of direct social support from teachers than do public school principals.

Hypothesis 13.2

Non-public school principals perceive higher levels of direct social support from supervisors than do public school principals.

Hypothesis Fourteen

There is a difference between the reported stress levels of private vs. public school principals.

Hypothesis Fifteen

Elementary principals perceive higher levels of social support from teachers than do secondary principals.

Hypothesis Sixteen

There is an inverse relationship between the level of direct social support perceived by a principal and the size of the student population.

Hypothesis Seventeen

Work-related sources of support (supervisors and co-workers) are more effective in reducing the impact of work role stress than are interactive sources of support (family and friends).

Instrumentation

Since no commercial instrument was found to adequately measure the characteristics and responses of the subjects, the investigator developed a survey instrument (see Appendix A) to measure the subject's psychological (cognitive, emotional) and behavioral (overt) reactions to his environmental setting. These measures were used to test the research hypotheses.
The instrument was divided into three sections. The first part consisted of personal and professional characteristics relative to school setting, grade level responsibility, age, experience, area of residence, career objectives, and the size of school (Roesch, 1979; Robe, 1981). Several hypotheses posited that the nature of the principal's work setting was either positively or negatively related to perceived stress and the possibilities for direct social support.

In the next section of the instrument, the researcher explored levels and sources of role stress. Some questions followed the "P-E fit" model of Marshall and Cooper (1979) and were intended to measure the congruence between the demands of the position and the effects on the individual. Other questions addressed more specific causes of role stress, such as those suggested by Gmelch and Svent (1981), Koff et al. (1981), Lipham and Hoeh (1974), Manera and Wright (1981b), and Schuetz (1980). The five major themes presented by these writers were: The principal's responsibility for other people, routine administrative activities and constraints, career development, time management, and individual role/personality conflict. A logical question based on these seemed to be: "Who typically is responsible for increased levels of principal role stress?"

The final section of the survey asked the subject to report the levels of direct and interactive social support received (Pinneau, 1975), as well as the type of social support provided—whether emotional, instrumental, informational, or appraisal (House, 1981). Most questions focused on two of the variables noted by House (1981)
and cited earlier in Chapter II; (a) the properties of relationships or (b) social conditions that may facilitate or inhibit support. Questions regarding major sources of support were suggested by the earlier work of Roesch (1979). The survey instrument was tested in a pilot study of twelve subjects prior to its use with subjects of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each subject received a cover letter presenting an overview of the study and procedures for completing the survey instrument (see Appendix B), the survey questionnaire, and a stamped, addressed return envelope. Questionnaires for each of the four sub-groups noted in Table 5 were color coded for easier identification upon return. To insure the confidentiality of returns, a Notary Public mailed the information packets and recorded the returned questionnaires on a coded list of subjects before passing them on to the researcher. A follow-up letter (see Appendix C) was mailed two weeks after the initial mailing of November 29, 1982. A cut off date of January 15, 1983 was set as the final date for inclusion of surveys in the data analysis.

After the surveys were returned to the investigator, the answers to each question were transferred to data entry sheets and the data were entered into the central computer at Western Michigan University. A second entry was made to verify the initial input and then frequency distributions were tabulated for the various responses. The Chi-Square test, ANOVA, repeated measures ANOVA, and the Pearson product-
moment correlation coefficient were used to determine the nature and extent of relationships among the variables.

Summary

In this chapter, descriptions of the population and sample selected for the study, the interview instrument, and the procedures for data collection and analysis have been presented. In Chapter IV, the research findings will be presented.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter the investigator will present the research findings resulting from the hypotheses listed in Chapter III. In the first part of the chapter, the return of surveys is reported, followed by a report of the findings regarding each of the hypotheses tested. Each hypothesis is informally stated and then the results of the data analysis are presented. The .05 level of significance was used as the criterion for the probability of making a Type I error in determining the differences between the populations studied. Frequency data are included when such information is thought to add to the clarity of the presentation.

Return of Questionnaires

A total of 350 survey questionnaires was mailed on November 29, 1982. Almost 70 percent (208) of the total responses were returned by December 12, 1982. A follow-up letter and duplicate questionnaire were mailed December 13, 1982, to 84 subjects who had failed to reply to the original request. Over the next few weeks an additional 41 questionnaires were returned to the Notary Public, for a total of 299, as shown in Table 6. A decision was made not to include questionnaires returned to the Notary Public after January 15, 1983. Of the 299 returned questionnaires, only seven persons indicated that they performed additional administrative responsibilities which excluded...
Table 6

Return of Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Inquiry</th>
<th>Number Sent</th>
<th>Number Returned</th>
<th>Number of Usable Returns</th>
<th>Percent of Usable Returns</th>
<th>Percent of Total Usable Returns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Elementary</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Secondary</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Elementary</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Secondary</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

their responses from the study. The remaining 292 questionnaires were considered acceptable for inclusion, although a few of those omitted data concerning personal or professional characteristics. The response rate of 83 percent was considered high enough to proceed with an investigation of the hypotheses (Babbie, 1973).

The Findings

Sources of Work Stress

In the first hypothesis it was suggested that the most common sources of stress for school principals are those problems dealing with their responsibility to and for people, including the following: students, teachers, supervisors, and various publics. A survey question was posed which attempted to measure the degree of stress perceived
as associated with various responsibility conditions on a five-point scale from "not at all stressful" to "always stressful." The repeated measures ANOVA technique was selected because each subject was asked to rate each of the following potential sources of work stress:
(a) time management, (b) responsibility for people, (c) career development, (d) personality/role conflict, and (e) administrative activities and constraints. Table 7 presents the results of the repeated ANOVA on five possible sources of role stress for the 289 subjects who responded to this question. The probability of obtaining more deviant results in this table was .00. The "time management" variable resulted in the highest mean score (3.41), indicating that the subjects perceived their quantitative workloads as being at least moderately stressful. Responsibility for people was next, with a mean score of 3.24. While there may be reason to believe those two variables are related, the remaining three items were rarely perceived as even moderately stressful.

**Human Sources of Role Stress**

In Hypothesis Two, the researcher proposed that there were differences between elementary and secondary principals' perceptions of human sources of role stress. Subjects were asked to rate the level of stress they associated with various groups or individuals in the school setting. Table 8 presents the results of a series of t-tests between the mean rating scores of human stressors using the independent samples of elementary and secondary principals. Of the nine dependent variables used in this case, the only variable that came
Table 7
Potential Sources of Work Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>289</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289</td>
<td>Responsibility for People</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289</td>
<td>Administrative Activities</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289</td>
<td>Personality/Role Conflict</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .00

close (P. 08) to the rejection level was the attitude of principals toward students or young people who were not from their schools. Secondary principals noted higher average stress scores attributable to young people than did elementary principals, although none of the human sources of stress was rated even moderately stressful. It appears that the highest aggregate stress ratings were perceived as due to reactions to various pressure groups such as teacher bargaining unit representatives, teacher cliques, individual parents, and parent and civic groups, while the students were perceived as the least source of stress.

When the findings from the first two research questions are considered, it is apparent that fairly low overall stress levels were reported by principals, perhaps indicating that: (a) principals
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Stress</th>
<th>Level of Responsibility</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent and civic groups</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>2.339</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.426</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from your school</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1.923</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1.959</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students or young people not from your school</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1.911</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.098</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate supervisor</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual parents</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher bargaining unit representative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher clique</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teaching staff</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central office staff</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
do not perceive people or events related to their roles as highly stressful or (b) that the true sources of role stress were not identified in this study.

**Role Stress Related to Age and Experience Factors**

In Hypothesis Three, an inverse relationship between the level of role stress perceived and the age of the school principal was posited, while in Hypothesis Four a similar inverse relationship was stated. In analyzing data related to both, the mean score of the principals' perceived overall job-related stress rating (from "not at all stressful" to "highly stressful", measured on a five-point scale) was compared to four age categories and five experience levels, using one-way ANOVA.

The results shown in Table 9 indicated a steady, gradual decline of mean stress scores as the age groupings of the subjects increased, although the results were not judged to be significant. The highest reported stress ratings were at the "moderately stressful" level. Moderate stress ratings are reported in Table 10, with persons having under ten years of experience reporting stress scores that resulted in higher means than the means of scores for their more experienced counterparts. Using an alpha level of .05, the hypothesis that the perceived role stress of principals declines with increasing years of job experience was judged to be supported.

**Role Stress and Career Goals of Principals**

In Hypothesis Five, a difference between the reported stress level of career and non-career school principals was anticipated.
### Table 9
Perceived Role Stress Reported by Age Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category of Principals</th>
<th>Group Size</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 45</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 - 55</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .20

### Table 10
Perceived Role Stress Reported by Level of Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Level of Principals</th>
<th>Group Size</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 2 years</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5 years</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 years</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20 years</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .03
Using the perceived-stress rating scale mentioned earlier, the mean scores of job-related stress were compared for persons working at the elementary and secondary school levels using the one-way ANOVA. Results are shown in Table 11. While there was some indication that committed career school principals experienced lower levels of job stress, the probability factor only approached the rejection level. Indeed, those persons who did not plan to continue in a principalship, or those who had not made a career choice, both perceived at least moderate stress levels, as reported in Table 11.

Table 11
Perceived Role Stress Reported by Career and Non-career School Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Preference of Principals</th>
<th>Group Size</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Principal</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>2.872</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-career Principal</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.032</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.097</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .16

Regardless of career ambitions, nearly 45 percent of all subjects reported that they wanted to be serving in principalships five years into the future, and almost 55 percent expected to be working in that
capacity (see Table 12). There appeared to be little desire or expectation for career moves back into the classroom or to the central office administrative level.

Table 12

Future Job Preferences and Expectations of School Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Option, Looking Ahead Five Years</th>
<th>Expectation of Principal Frequency</th>
<th>Expectation of Principal Percent</th>
<th>Preference of Principal Frequency</th>
<th>Preference of Principal Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal (present school)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal (different school)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office Staff</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Beneficial Effects of Social Support

In the sixth hypothesis, it was hypothesized that social support has a reducing effect on stress by moderating the short-term effects of the stressor on the principal. To test this statement, an attempt was made to match the degree of "P-E fit" each person associated
with his/her work role and the perceived value of having a listener available. Presumably, people who indicated a satisfactory or very satisfactory match between themselves and their jobs noted that their jobs were easier because of having a listener available. A Chi Square 2 x 2 contingency table was constructed for comparing satisfactory or unsatisfactory job "fit" ratings to perceived importance of having a listener available, and data are shown in Table 13. While the results indicated that the majority of principals (82.4 percent) perceived at least a satisfactory job role/person match, this information appeared unrelated to the importance of having a listener. The interpretation may be that having someone to listen makes the job easier, no matter how comfortable a person may feel in the principal's role. Indeed, over 88 percent of principals surveyed indicated that they had someone to confide in when discussing problems at work.

Table 13

Social Support as a Factor in Satisfactory Job Role/Person Match

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Satisfactory job role/person match?</th>
<th>Total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does having a listener make your job easier?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .75
The Relationship Between Role Stress and Social Support

Hypothesis Seven was that as the level of stress increases, the perceived beneficial effects of social support also increase. Correlation scores of perceived role stress ratings and perceived beneficial effects of social support in four different social settings (involvement in administrative meetings, participation in religious and/or social groups, conversations with colleagues, and informal contact with family members or friends) were calculated. The Pearson r obtained for each of these correlations was extremely low. The correlation between perceived role stress and perceived supportive benefits from administrative meetings was .02, between reported stress and benefits from group affiliations, .04, between reported stress and benefits from discussions with colleagues, .04, and between reported stress and benefits from communication with family members, .11. Referring to the subhypotheses of Hypothesis Seven, none of the null hypotheses that the population means were equal to zero was rejected using the alpha level of .05. Data indicated that higher levels of benefits were perceived from administrative meetings and conversations with colleagues than from either of the two non-work related sources of support. This data is not reported in tabular form.

The same four types of social settings were used to test Hypothesis Eight. In this case, the hypothesis was that there are differences in the perceptions of the types of social support reported by elementary and secondary school principals. Each subject was asked to describe the type of social support he or she received from these various
settings—appraisal, psychological, informational, instrumental—or some combination of these factors. Comparison of responses from elementary and secondary principals was made by using a Chi Square contingency table. Since less than two percent of the total responses indicated a preference for instrumental support, this variable was not included in the data analysis. In Table 14 the differences between the responses of elementary and secondary school principals on the type of social support provided by administrative meetings are reported. This type of setting appeared to promote informational and emotional support most frequently; however, hypothesis 8.1 was not supported because the probability of .12 only approached the rejection level. Over 96 percent of those surveyed indicated that administrative meetings are needed to discuss common problems and concerns, while 80 percent responded that regular planned meetings are a part of their district's plan for internal communication.

In Table 15 the data relevant to hypothesis 8.2 are presented. In this case differences in the types of support provided by group affiliations, as perceived by elementary and secondary school principals, were being considered. An alpha level of .96 indicated that no differences were found between the preferences of the two types of principals. Emotional/psychological support was listed most often as the primary type of support provided by religious and/or social group affiliations.

In Tables 16 and 17 the results of Chi Square tests on the remaining sources of support (colleagues, family and friends) are shown. In neither analysis were the data significant, although it appeared
Table 14

Type of Support Perceived from Administrative Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support</th>
<th>Grade Level Responsibility</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Total N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of factors</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .12

Table 15

Type of Support Perceived from Group Affiliations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support</th>
<th>Grade Level Responsibility</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Total N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of factors</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .96

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Table 16
Type of Support Perceived from Colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support</th>
<th>Grade Level Responsibility</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of factors</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .30

Table 17
Type of Support Perceived from Family and Friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support</th>
<th>Grade Level Responsibility</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of factors</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .63
that colleagues were able to provide the greatest variety of supportive behaviors. On the other hand, family members and close friends were able to provide proportionately higher amounts of emotional and psychological support. The null hypothesis was not rejected for any of the subhypotheses related to Hypothesis Eight.

The Relationship Between Social Support and Successful Coping Skills

Hypothesis Nine was that there is a direct relationship between the level of social support perceived in all life roles and the successful use of coping skills in any one role. Subjects were asked to rank the degree of successful coping skills they used on a five-point scale from "very successful" to "not at all successful." This score was compared to the degree (either low, moderate, or high) of social support perceived for all life roles. The Pearson r calculated for these variables was .25, indicating a weak positive relationship. When the alpha level of .05 was considered, the obtained value of z (4.32) was great enough to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the population values using a directional test.

The Influence of Residential Area on Potential Support

The focus of Hypothesis Ten was on the relative availability of supportive behaviors outside the school setting. Each participant was asked if his/her living area provided "less opportunity for support", "about the same level", or "more opportunities for support" from others than living in another type of residential setting. Responses from persons who stated that they were not sure if supportive behaviors were related to area of residence were not included.
in the data analysis. The hypothesis was that principals who resided in towns and rural areas perceived higher opportunities for support than did their counterparts who lived in city and suburban areas. Data in Table 18 indicate that quite the opposite appeared to be true, at least for the participants in this study. Urban residents' responses resulted in mean scores higher than those of their town or rural counterparts when asked if they believed the area they lived in provided more opportunities for support than living in a rural area. The results were deemed significant at the .05 alpha level, using the ANOVA method, indicating that principals who lived in urban and suburban areas may have perceived a greater opportunity for supportive behaviors from others than did principals who lived in less populated areas.

Table 18
Residential Area and Availability of Social Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Area</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City or Suburban</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town or Rural</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p = .02

The Influence of Group Membership on Job Coping Skills

In Hypothesis Eleven it was suggested that principals who are actively affiliated with community and/or religious organizations
perceive higher levels of job coping skills than principals who are not active members of those organizations. A Chi Square table was used to compare the perceived degree of successful coping skills of those organization members to that of non-members. The degree of successful job related coping skills was measured on a five-point scale, ranging from "not at all successful" to "very successful."

Since almost 98 percent of the subjects surveyed indicated at least "moderately successful" coping skills, the ratings of the eight persons who reported only marginally successful coping abilities were included in the "moderately successful" category for the purpose of data analysis. The results of the Chi Square analysis shown in Table 19 indicated no significant difference in degree of perceived success between the two groups.

Table 19
The Influence of Organizational Membership on Job Coping Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership in Local Organizations</th>
<th>Degree of Coping Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p = .98
The Influence of Administrative Meetings on Potential Support

Another purpose of the study was to investigate whether regular, planned administrative meetings increased the opportunities for social support by providing principals with greater access to each other. Hypothesis Twelve posited that co-operative interdependent work roles promote social support more than do isolated work roles. To test this hypothesis, an attempt was made to measure the degree of perceived accessibility to other administrators in a given district. Principals were asked if they believed other administrators in their organization were "very accessible", "somewhat accessible", or "very distant."

In Table 20 the results of a t-test of the differences between the mean accessibility scores of those who worked in organizations where regular administrative meetings either did or did not exist are shown. The results of this analysis indicated that there is a significant difference between the two groups at the .05 alpha level. It appears that principals who worked in districts that provided for regular contact among administrators perceived greater accessibility to each other and thus more opportunity for reciprocity of supportive behaviors.

Type of School Unit and Availability of Support

In Hypothesis Thirteen the researcher proposed that principals in non-public schools perceive higher levels of direct social support than do public school principals. Two subhypotheses (numbers 13.1 and 13.2) were created to measure the perceived benefit of direct social
support provided to principals by teachers and supervisors. Each subject was asked to estimate the degree of support he/she received on a four-point scale ranging from "very supportive" to "somewhat supportive" to "non-supportive" to "adds to role stress."

Table 20

Influence of Administrative Meetings on Accessibility to Other Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existence of Regular Planned Administrative Meetings</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .00

The results of a t-test on the mean ratings of responses relating to support from teachers, for independent samples of private school and public school principals, are shown in Table 21. Private school principals perceived significantly higher levels of support from teachers, although both groups reported high levels of support from this source. Similar data with respect to support from supervisors, indicating that private school principals perceived somewhat higher levels of support than did public school administrators, are reported in Table 22. Although no significant conclusions can be drawn from data in this table, it is apparent that principals in both types of schools perceive
very high levels of support from both teachers and supervisors. The highest mean score possible would have been 4.0, while the lowest mean of scores regarding teacher support was 3.49 and the lowest average rating for supervisors was 3.35. The results clearly indicated that there is no difference between the way public and non-public school principals perceived the level of supportive behaviors from supervisors, although there was evidence that private school principals perceived
somewhat higher levels of support from teachers. Thus, the null hypothesis for hypothesis 13.1 was rejected at the .05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Fourteen was that there was a difference in the reported role stress levels of private and public school principals. The perceived stress levels of each group of principals were compared, using a t-test to determine any difference between means. The results of the data analysis regarding these variables appear in Table 23.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the reported stress levels were quite low, just under a point on the scale described as "moderately stressful", and in this case the mean scores were almost exactly equal. No evidence of a difference between perceived stress for the two groups was found, thus the null hypothesis for Hypothesis Fourteen was not rejected.

Hypothesis Fifteen posited that elementary principals perceive higher levels of social support from teachers than do secondary principals. A rating for both groups of principals was obtained on the degree of support provided by their professional staff. The results of a t-test on the difference between the mean scores for the two groups are found in Table 24. Both groups rated the supportive actions of teachers at almost exactly the same level, indicating that nearly all principals believed teachers are behind the educational programs of the schools. For example, a mean score of 3.5 indicated the midpoint between "somewhat supportive" and "very supportive" behaviors. The null hypothesis of no difference between the mean scores was not rejected in this case.
Table 23
Reported Stress Levels of Public and Private School Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public School Principals</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>2.955</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private School Principals</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.956</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .99

Table 24
Elementary and Secondary Principals' Perceptions of Supportive Behaviors from Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level Responsibility</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Principals</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Principals</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = 1.00

School Size and Availability of Support

The rating scale for social support from teachers was again used as a measure for Hypothesis Sixteen. In this case the hypothesis was that there would be an inverse relationship between the level of supportive behaviors provided by teachers to principals and the size of the student population of the school. The one-way ANOVA method was

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used to measure the differences between mean ratings for principals in each of four different sizes of schools. The smallest schools were those with 350 students or less. The next size category was for an enrollment of between 350 and 550 students, followed by the next level of between 551 and 900 students. The highest enrollment category was over 900 students.

An analysis of the data related to Hypothesis Sixteen is found in Table 25. No significant differences are indicated in this table, although principals from the smallest schools reported the highest level of teacher support. Once again, it can be reported that principals from each size school perceived very high supportive behaviors from the professional staff.

Direct vs. Interactive Sources of Support

The last hypothesis, number seventeen, stated that work related sources of support, supervisors and co-workers, are more effective in reducing the impact of role stress than are interactive sources of support; family and friends. To test this hypothesis, the repeated measures ANOVA method was used to determine any differences between the means of reported scores of support from these three sources. Each principal was asked to determine the level of support provided. The results of the data analysis for Hypothesis Seventeen are shown in Table 25. A significant difference between the means, at the .05 alpha level, was found; however, the highest mean was not in accord with the hypothesis. The highest ratings of supportive behaviors were for those perceived as the interactive support of family and friends.
Table 25
Student Enrollment and Perception of Teacher Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students Enrolled</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 350</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>351 - 550</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>551 - 900</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>901 plus</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .46

Table 26
Comparison of Direct and Interactive Sources of Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Sources of Support</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>286</td>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286</td>
<td>Family and Friends</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = .00
Support provided by teachers ranked second, with supportive behaviors of supervisors ranked somewhat lower than those of either teachers or family and friends.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, results of analysis of data from the 292 usable questionnaires returned by elementary and secondary school principals in Michigan were reported. Seventeen major hypotheses and ten sub-hypotheses were investigated in this study. Support was found for the following propositions:

1. There was evidence reported that principals associated different levels of role stress with specific responsibility conditions, and with various people in the work setting.

2. More-experienced principals reported slightly lower levels of perceiving role stress than did those individuals who had less than ten years of experience.

3. A positive relationship was reported between the level of social support perceived for all life roles and the successful use of coping skills in the work role.

4. There was evidence reported that principals living in urban and suburban areas perceived higher levels of potential supportive behaviors than did their counterparts living in towns or rural areas.

5. There was evidence reported that regular administrative meetings promote co-operative work roles by offering the opportunity for more contact among principals in a school district.
6. Responses related to perceived support from teachers indicated private school principals perceived higher levels of support from teachers than did public school principals.

In Chapter V, the problem will be reviewed, followed by a discussion of the findings related to the research questions. Next, recommendations and conclusions will be presented, based upon the findings from the study.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A review of the purposes of the study, discussion of some conclusions based on the research findings, and recommendations for further research are presented in this chapter.

Summary of the Study

The purposes of this study were: (a) to determine the level of occupational stress for school principals and identify significant occupational stressors, (b) to measure the effects of social support in reducing role stress, (c) to note the characteristics of the effective providers of social support, and (d) to identify factors in the educational setting that can strengthen coping skills by providing for social support.

A total sample of 355 subjects was randomly selected from the larger population of elementary and secondary school principals employed by public or private Catholic or Christian schools in Michigan. A survey questionnaire was used to gather data about principals' perceptions of role stress as well as the types and effects of supportive behaviors provided to principals by others. The survey instrument was mailed in late November of 1982 and 292 useable questionnaires (83.4 percent) were returned by January 15, 1983. Various statistical
measures were used to test the research hypotheses including; the Pearson $r$, repeated measures ANOVA, one-way ANOVA, and the $t$-test for independent samples. The following paragraphs summarize the findings of research directed toward investigating the research questions noted at the conclusion of Chapter II.

In the first research question, an attempt was made to identify circumstances that were associated with principal role stress. The data generated in the study suggested that "time management" was the most stressful problem for principals, followed closely by "responsibility for people." Those findings were consistent with the results of other research cited earlier (Gmelch and Swent, 1981; Koff et al., 1981; Manera and Wright, 1981a; Manera and Wright, 1981b; Schuetz, 1980). It seems possible that those two factors are related when consideration is given to how much time a principal devotes to dealing with people problems." The very nature of the job implies a major leadership role in coordinating the activities of people, whether teachers, students, parents, or persons in various school support roles. The results further indicated that the levels of principal role stress reported in this study do not support many earlier claims, found in the literature, of excessive role stress for principals (Mills, 1981; Roesch, 1979; Stoker, 1980; Washington, 1982). It is possible that the apparent perceived lack of excessively stressful stimuli (also noted by Domian, 1980, and Peterson, 1977) had an effect on principals' perceptions of social support, which were also called for in their responses to the survey instrument.

The second research question addressed the human sources of stress, for principals, in the school environment. It was discovered that
elementary and secondary school principals reported similar perceptions regarding which individuals and groups have potential to create tension and anxiety, but, once again, the subjects in this study did not report any of the individuals or groups with whom they came into regular contact as consistently strong sources of stress. The results of this survey indicated that while certain factions, such as parent and civic groups, the teacher bargaining unit, and teacher cliques can produce stress, the degree of stress usually is not excessive and principals believed they successfully coped with those pressures.

The next research question dealt with the relationship of age and experience of principals to levels of perceived stress and work role coping success. One significant finding of the study was that more experienced principals perceived lower levels of role stress than did their less experienced counterparts. Thus, the data supported the earlier findings of Roesch (1979). Perhaps one value of job experience is an increasing awareness and anticipation of potentially stressful events followed by appropriate coping strategies. This idea was posited earlier when it was noted that positive adaptation to intermittent stress is characterized by anticipation of the stressor and decreased levels of bodily response (Burchfield, 1979). Most principals acknowledged a successful match between the demands of the job and their own capabilities for coping.

The focus of the next research question was on the effects of social support in reducing role stress. Because most principals reported satisfactory job role/person match, it was difficult to
derive the amount of satisfaction attributable to the availability of social support. However, since so many principals also placed great value on the availability of supportive behaviors, the high degree of successful job coping strategies reported as used by principals and the fact that they generally perceived satisfactory job role/person match may all be correlated. This conclusion is not supported by the specific evidence of perceived role stress and correlations with perceived benefits from administrative meetings, group affiliations, discussions with colleagues, and communication with family members.

Another research question was related to the types of supportive behaviors perceived by principals. While there appeared to be no differences between reported perceptions of the types of social support provided by groups and/or individuals to elementary and secondary principals, various sources were perceived by both groups as providing specific kinds of help. For example, administrative meetings appeared to present opportunities for a variety of supportive behaviors, with informational support the single most frequently cited type. Emotional support was perceived most frequently as the type of help received from group affiliations, colleagues, and family and friends. These results were consistent with earlier findings reported in the literature, which suggested that emotional support is basic to all other supportive behaviors (House, 1981).

The focus of the next research question was on the relationship between area of residence and the opportunities for social support.
from outside the school setting. The data provided evidence that urban residents perceive more opportunity for support from others than do rural residents. This finding was contrary to the writings of House (1981), who posited that rural areas potentially offer more opportunities for support. Further research might indicate that more densely populated urban and suburban areas are not necessarily viewed by school principals as lonely, impersonal places in which to live. It seems logical that area of residence would be a major consideration of a principal when initially electing to become an educational leader or when deciding to change positions later in his/her career. Even if a particular residential area does offer more opportunities for support, there may be little carry over of benefits to the work environment. There was no evidence that affiliation with religious and/or community groups was related to successful use of coping skills on the job, however there was a significant positive correlation between perceptions of overall support from others and successful use of job related coping skills. This finding supported the contention of House (1981).

The impact of certain aspects of organizational climate was the focus of another research question investigated in this study. The evidence indicated that principals believed there was a need for regular administrative meetings and that the existence of such meetings was significantly related to their accessibility to other administrators in the school unit. The data provided additional evidence that co-operative, interdependent work roles promote social support more
than do isolated work roles (House, 1981). Greater accessibility presumably leads to more opportunity for reciprocity of supportive behaviors.

When the differences between public schools and private Catholic Parochial and Christian schools were considered, it was discovered that principals from the non-public schools perceived significantly higher levels of support from teachers than did public school principals, although most principals perceived rather high levels of support from both teachers and supervisors, regardless of the type of agency involved or the grade level responsibility of the administrator. In addition, no evidence was obtained that would indicate that public and non-public school principals experience any differences between perceived levels of role stress. The role of school principal appeared to present similar frustrations from similar sources, although a higher level of pay and employment benefits is usually available in the public school sector.

No relationship was established between grade level responsibility of principals and perceived level of support from teachers. In fact, elementary and secondary principals rated supportive actions of teachers such that means were at almost exactly the same level. The size of school appeared to be unrelated to perceptions of social support from teachers, although the highest support was perceived by principals who worked in schools with fewer than 350 students.

The focus of the last research question was on the relative value of direct vs. interactive sources of support. There may be a contradiction between the data obtained in answer to this question and those
resulting from other research questions. It was reported that "family and friends" provided the highest overall levels of support, and these people were considered interactive sources of support. In another section of the questionnaire, principals were asked to report the degree of "beneficial effect" provided by different sources; the highest ratings calculated were for colleagues, perceived as direct sources of social support.

Conclusions

Major findings of the study can be summarized as follow:

1. Principals perceived a difference in the degree of stress attributable to specific events or concerns in the work environment; however, overall levels of reported role stress were not as high as the literature review might lead one to expect.

2. The categories of time management and responsibility for people were considered by principals to be primary stressors.

3. Principals perceived the highest sources of human-induced stress as resulting from adult pressure groups in the school environment.

4. More experienced principals perceived less role stress than did their less experienced colleagues.

5. Most principals perceived a satisfactory person/job role match and acknowledged having skills that made them successful in coping with potential work role stressors.
6. There is a positive relationship between social support and successful job related coping skills.

7. Social support—particularly emotional/psychological support from colleagues, family, and friends—was perceived as highly beneficial, although other direct and interactive sources of support were also reported as providers of supportive behaviors.

8. Administrative meetings were perceived by principals as a viable way to increase informational support in the educational setting.

9. Non-public school principals reported higher levels of support from teachers than did public school principals.

10. No difference was found between public and non-public school principals' perceptions of role stress.

11. No differences were found between reported stress levels or perceived levels of support for elementary and secondary school principals.

Recommendations for Further Study

It is not known how much of the previous research, discovered in the review of literature, regarding principal role stress was based on an approach similar to the one used in this study. The data base for this research was a straightforward inquiry about perceptions of principals about the variables under study. Other researchers (e.g., Mills, 1981; Robe, 1981; and Roesch, 1979) utilized methods whereby symptoms of stress in the work environment were measured and then
applied to the individual to determine if he/she was experiencing a stressful reaction to the job. Since different research approaches may yield quite different results, it is suggested that the same population used in this survey be studied utilizing a more objective measure of the role stress variable. This would seem to be a worthwhile recommendation if only to verify whether role stress is a problem for school principals, as the results of this study indicated that it may not be. Other questions and suggestions for further research include:

1. What are the various personality factors which contribute to overall successful functioning in the principal's job?

2. Do principals employ coping skills other than social support for reducing role stress? Since a number of principals responding to this survey reported successful job related coping abilities, it would be informative to know other coping techniques.

3. Since supportive behaviors and consultive techniques do seem to be present in the school setting, what can be done to increase the frequency of these actions and to make school personnel aware of their importance?

4. Are there screening procedures that leadership training institutions could develop that would identify whether specific individuals would be more likely than others to develop highly stressful reactions to the role of the school principal?

Finally, since so much time from the principal's typical work day is spent attending to "people problems", exploration should be
made into finding more effective ways of handling the problems related to pressure groups. Perhaps principals could avail themselves of more workshops and/or inservice activities to deal more effectively with those potential stressors.
Appendix A

Survey Instrument
School Principal Survey

1. What grade levels are you responsible for?

Grades __________________

2. How many students are enrolled in your school? If you are principal in more than one school, please list the total enrollment.

Total Enrollment __________________

3. How many years of experience do you have as a principal? Please do not include this school year or any years of experience as an assistant principal.

0-2 Years [ ] 11-20 Years [ ]
3-5 Years [ ] Over 20 Years [ ]
6-10 Years [ ]

4. What is your age?

Under 35 [ ] 46-55 [ ]
35-45 [ ] Over 55 [ ]

5. In what area do you reside?

City or suburban area with a population over 10,000 [ ]
Town or rural area [ ]

6. As you look ahead, recognizing that factors beyond your control may intervene, what kind of job do you expect to have five years from now?

Retired [ ] Central office staff [ ]
Classroom teacher [ ] Superintendent [ ]
Principal (present school) [ ] Other [ ]
Principal (different school) [ ]

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7. What kind of job would you like to have five years from now?

- Retired [ ]
- Classroom teacher [ ]
- Principal (present school) [ ]
- Principal (different school) [ ]
- Central office staff [ ]
- Superintendent [ ]
- Other [ ]
- Retired [ ]
- Classroom teacher [ ]
- Principal (present school) [ ]
- Principal (different school) [ ]

8. Based on your answers to the two immediately preceding questions, how would you classify yourself?

- Career principal [ ]
- Non-career principal [ ]
- Undecided [ ]

9. A school principal normally comes into contact with each of the following groups on a regular basis. Using the following key, please circle the level of personal stress you associate with each group listed below:

Key:
- 5 Always stressful
- 4 Usually stressful
- 3 Moderately stressful
- 2 Usually not stressful
- 1 Not at all stressful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Stress Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent and civic groups</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from your school</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students or young people not from your school</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate supervisor</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual parents</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher bargaining unit representative</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher clique</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teaching staff</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central office staff</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The operational definition of stress used here is the degree of frustration or anxiety you associate with your work role; this definition applies to questions 11 and 12 also.
10. How successful do you believe you are at coping with the stress of this position? (Please circle the appropriate response).

Not at all Moderately Highly
Successful Successful Successful

11. As you assess your relationship to the requirements of your job, how stressful do you perceive the overall effect on you?

Not at all Moderately Highly
Stressful Stressful Stressful

12. Previous studies have indicated the items listed below as potential sources of work stress for principals. Using the following key, please circle the level of personal stress you associate with each item.

Key:
5 Always stressful
4 Usually stressful
3 Moderately stressful
2 Usually not stressful
1 Not at all stressful

Time Management (having too many tasks to perform in the time available) 5 4 3 2 1

Responsibility for People (responding to the needs, desires, and demands of students, teachers, supervisors, and various publics) 5 4 3 2 1

Career Development (uncertainty about job security or the possibility of advancement in this or some other educational setting) 5 4 3 2 1

Personality/Role Conflict (being expected to perform tasks that an individual does not want to do or does not think are part of the job specification) 5 4 3 2 1

Administrative Activities and Constraints (the performance of routine tasks and acceptance of bureaucratic decisions made at higher levels in the organization) 5 4 3 2 1
13. Overall, how would you characterize the match between you and your position?

- Very good [ ]
- Satisfactory [ ]
- Poor [ ]

Please use the following definitions to answer questions 14d, 15b, 16b, and 17b.

**Appraisal support** provides information relevant to self-evaluation.

**Emotional or psychological support** involves providing understanding, caring, empathy, and love to another person.

**Informational support** provides a person with facts that can be used to cope with personal or environmental problems.

**Instrumental support** involves intervening in the environment to remove or diminish the source of stress.

14. How accessible are administrative personnel to each other in this district?

- Very accessible [ ]
- Somewhat accessible [ ]
- Very distant [ ]

14a. Are there regular, planned meetings of principals to discuss common problems and concerns?

- Yes [ ]
- No [ ]

14b. Do you think there is a need for meetings of this type?

- Yes [ ]
- No [ ]

14c. What degree of beneficial effects do these affiliations provide for you?

- High [ ]
- Low [ ]
- Moderate [ ]
- None [ ]
14d. What form do the beneficial effects usually take?

- Instrumental support [ ]
- Emotional or psychological support [ ]
- Appraisal support [ ]
- Informational support [ ]
- No support [ ]

15. Of how many local organizations (non-school related), religious, or community groups are you a member?

- None [ ]
- One/Two [ ]
- Three or more [ ]

15a. What degree of beneficial effects do these affiliations provide for you?

- High [ ] Low [ ]
- Moderate [ ] None [ ]

15b. What form do the beneficial effects usually take?

- Instrumental support [ ]
- Emotional or psychological support [ ]
- Appraisal support [ ]
- Informational support [ ]
- No support [ ]

16. How often do you take time to communicate with a trusted colleague about your problems at work?

- Frequently (at least weekly) [ ]
- Sometimes [ ]
- Never [ ]
16a. What degree of beneficial effects do these conversations provide for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16b. What form do the beneficial effects usually take?

- Instrumental support [ ]
- Emotional or psychological support [ ]
- Appraisal support [ ]
- Informational support [ ]
- No support [ ]

17. How often do you talk over these same problems with one or more persons outside the work setting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently (at least weekly)</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17a. How would you gauge the beneficial effects of these conversations for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17b. What form does this support usually take?

- Instrumental support [ ]
- Emotional or psychological support [ ]
- Appraisal support [ ]
- Informational support [ ]
- No support [ ]
18. How supportive is your immediate supervisor of you as you face daily school problems?

- Very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Does not demonstrate support
- Adds to role stress

19. How supportive are the teachers of the educational program you are trying to promote?

- Very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Do not demonstrate support
- Add to role stress

20. How supportive are your family or friends when you want to discuss school-related problems or concerns?

- Very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Do not demonstrate support
- Add to role stress

21. Do you believe that the area in which you reside affords you more or fewer opportunities for support from others than living in a (opposite of residence area indicated in question 5) area?

- More opportunity
- Less opportunity
- About the same
- Not sure

22. Do you believe that having someone to listen to your problems and concerns makes it easier to perform your responsibilities at work?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
22a. Do you have such a person or persons in whom you can confide?

Yes [  ]

No [  ]

23. When you consider all the individuals with whom you have daily contact, including your family, what degree of support do you receive for all of the life roles you play?

Low [  ]

Moderate [  ]

High [  ]

If you desire a copy of the results of this study, please include a stamped, addressed envelope with your completed questionnaire.
Appendix B

Cover Letter
Dear Principal:

Your name has been randomly selected as one of over three hundred school principals in Michigan to be surveyed as part of a research project at Western Michigan University. The purpose of this study is to help principals better handle stress by investigating the nature of role stress and measuring the perceived effects of social support as a moderator of perceived stress. Elementary and secondary public and private school principals have been selected because of their key leadership positions in educational programs throughout the state.

Subjects in a pilot study have indicated that the questionnaire can be completed in about fifteen minutes. While I realize this is an interruption of your busy schedule, it is very important to secure a high percentage of returned questionnaires.

You can be assured that your responses are strictly confidential. Each survey is designated by a numerical code that will only be used for follow-up purposes. The completed questionnaire will be mailed to a Notary Public who will be the only person to see the code.

Your willingness to participate in this study and prompt return of the survey instrument will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Siler

Richard G. Siler

Graduate Student
Department of Educational Leadership
Western Michigan University

Dr. Harold W. Boles

Project Advisor, Department of Educational Leadership
Western Michigan University

Enclosure
Appendix C

Follow-up Letter
Dear Principal:

Approximately two weeks ago you should have received an information packet containing a survey on role stress for school principals.

I have been employed by Mr. Siler to assure that your responses will be held in strict confidence. I am contacting you because I am the only one with access to the control list of participants and, to date, I have not received your completed questionnaire. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey as soon as possible. It is very important to secure a high return of questionnaires to validate this study and your input is needed.

Thank you for your interest and cooperation.

Sincerely,

F. E. Hoag
Notary Public


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Stoker, F. *Stress and the elementary school principal.* Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association Journal, 1980, 10(21), 4-5.


