Persuasive Communications: A Study of the Theory and Practice of the Role of the Elementary School Principal

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PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATIONS:
A STUDY OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF
THE ROLE OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

by
Laurence Dickie

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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of the
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Laurence Dickie

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

During World War II, the eminent Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1943) warned American educators of the likelihood of educational work being warped if schools were burdened with the task of remedying society's social, moral and political ills; within one generation, that likelihood became a reality as the role of the schools changed. Public schools became widely accepted not only as centers for instruction, but as instruments of social policy—what Campbell and Layton (1970, p. 1) referred to as "agencies to foster racial integration, job opportunity and proper civic behavior." The predicted consequences appeared, and intensified partly as a result of a lack of consensus on how the schools should operate and partly as a result of education being regarded as "everyone's favorite whipping boy" (Ruffin, 1972, p. 33).

Currently, despite widespread local community interest in schooling, there is considerable frustration at, and criticism of, the failure of schools to improve educational achievement of pupils. The tenor of public disenchantment can be judged by the negative responses to millage and bond elections; e.g., the Michigan Department of Education (1977) reported that in the first seven months of the year only 58 percent of the 727 millage issues in Michigan were approved.

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What is especially noteworthy, according to Cronin and Crocker (1969), is not so much the phenomenon of educational leaders under siege, but the varying sources of attack. Schools are also having to cope with internal conflicts as the balance of power redistributes and broadens to include labor unions and professional organizations in areas of decision-making once considered to be administrative prerogatives.

The burgeoning professional and lay criticism of schools has been highlighted by the claims of prominent critics such as Goodman (1964), Illich (1971) and Reimer (1971). Their contention is that today's schools have so outlived or outgrown their usefulness that only radical change to entirely new forms of learning arrangements could be expected to improve learner achievement.

However, the fact remains that there are schools to be run to the best advantage of millions of students. In addition, the public at large is counting on educational leaders to curtail the detrimental effects of internal and external conflicts and to improve the operation of schools within existing organizational structures.

This study presented one approach designed to alleviate the pressures of conflict and criticism on educational institutions in modern society. It suggested that the use of persuasive communications, focusing on the school principals as the persons primarily responsible at the local building level for the improvement of the school's educational climate, was a vital tool affecting organizational effectiveness.
Assumptions

Undergirding the present study were five broad concepts which, drawn together, honed the research topic, design and methodology.

First, a concern to relate the operation of the schools to the wider community was in response to Thelen's (1960) criticism that a design which enables one to see the experience of education as a whole is one aspect of school organization that is almost universally missing. One may argue that consensus regarding a viable contemporary model for education could be reached if educators and their critics worked constructively together to produce realistic assessments of the schools' shortcomings and potentials.

Second, in order to avoid the pitfalls inherent in overlooking the essential practicality of sound theory (Hagman & Schwartz, 1955), it was determined that there should be a definite commitment to the linking of research results to a specific theoretical model.

Third, communication was selected as a common factor linking persons involved within the educative process and also linking educators with the wider society in which the schools operate. The description of communication as "the essence of any organization" (Boles & Davenport, 1976, p. 199) was endorsed.

Fourth, from an observation by Brookover, Schweitzer, Beady, Flood and Wisenbaker (1976) that "the school principal can play a very instrumental role in facilitating a school climate that is
conducive to high achievement" (p. 8), it was determined that the school principals be regarded as holding the pivotal positions in the schools. Furthermore, the constructive use of communications by principals was seen as an integral part of developing a positive school climate.

Finally, the use of persuasive strategies to improve communications was accepted as an essential skill for all persons engaged in supervising human resources. Educators should be competent at using techniques which are commonly used in social and business interaction, especially when the wider community has accepted the principle that change in a free society relies primarily on persuasion (Brembeck & Howell, 1976).

Purpose of the Study

The initial purpose of the study was to develop from existing literature a theoretical model embracing the use by school principals of persuasive techniques in communications. It was anticipated that school principals could make use of such a model to help formulate school policies based on persuasion and communications, to evaluate the scope and dynamism of current persuasive practices and/or to determine the adequacy of their own influence in marshalling school and community resources for the improvement of student performance.

The second stage of the study was designed to obtain information about school principals' awareness of, preparation in and
accomplishment with persuasive techniques. Elementary school principals also reported their attitudes and perceptions of the relevance of specific techniques, audiences and communication channels to their roles.

Information regarding the actual persuasive communications of school principals was compared with the theoretical model to determine the degree of congruence between the postulated theory and the practices.

Significance of the Study

As Stogdill (1974) has pointed out, several writers have attempted to define leadership as a form of persuasion. Schenk (1928), Cleeton and Mason (1934), Copeland (1942) and Koontz and O'Donnell (1955) were typical of the early military and industrial theorists who favored the use of persuasion in opposition to authoritarian concepts of leadership. Later, the political setting and premises of democratic leadership and the tasks of the administrator in using persuasion in terms of the needs of the group were discussed by Sachs (1966). However, no empirical data were gathered to demonstrate or examine the use of persuasion in the practice of educational leadership.

By the 1950s, persuasion as a means of social influence (Brembeck & Howell, 1952) and as an integral part of communication (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953) was firmly based on a number of personality/trait theories as well as several general theories of
motivation and rhetoric. Again, there was little attempt to relate this body of knowledge to the roles of educational leaders.

The position taken in the present study, therefore, was that originality was not evident nor intended in the selection of specific communication, persuasion or leadership skills, but rather in the seminal nature of the following approaches:

1. The stance that the school principals have the critical role and prime responsibility for improving the internal and external communication systems of the schools.

2. The gathering of data relevant to the theory of persuasive communications and their practice by school principals.

3. The development of a model depicting the interrelationships among elementary school principals' audiences, media of communication and potential persuasion factors.

4. The concept of the use of persuasive communications as a model to describe the ideal interactions of all persons involved in the educative process and as a base for planning leadership renewal.

5. The delineation of persuasive leadership communications as a basic counter to public and professional criticisms of schools.

Survey Objectives

It was the intention of the present investigator to study elementary school principals' self-reported awareness of, preparation in and accomplishment with persuasive techniques likely to enhance their communication skills. In order that data relevant
to the problem might be obtained for analysis and discussion, the following research questions were posed. It was conjectured that answers to these questions would provide information relative to the proposed persuasive communications model.

1. What do the elementary school principals consider to be their roles in the communication networks of the schools?

2. What are the major audiences with which the principals communicate?

3. What are the main media by which the principals communicate with their audiences?

4. Which persuasion factors are most commonly used by principals in developing persuasive communications?

5. How effective do principals consider their practices in the use of persuasive techniques and communications?

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined in order to facilitate comprehension of the study, to promote consistent interpretation of material and to ensure the applicability of terms to their education context. Definition of specific persuasive techniques was deferred until Chapter II.

1. Communication. According to English and English (1958), communication is "transmitting or transmitting and receiving information, signals, or messages, by means of gestures, words, or other symbols, from one organism to another" (p. 99). The primary emphasis of this study was on the transmitting process.
2. **Persuasion.** Typical of most descriptions is that of English and English (1958), who define persuasion as "the process of obtaining another's adoption of a course of action, or his assent to a proposition, by an appeal to both feeling and intellect" (p. 385).

3. **Persuasive communication.** Persuasive communication is communication designed to appeal to both feeling and intellect, thereby influencing the receiver's response in a desired manner.

4. **Persuasive leadership.** In the opinion of Good (1973), persuasive leadership refers to "leadership by a person based on both power and ability, understanding and sensitivity rather than on power of position to accomplish the desired end" (p. 332); this study added the central emphasis that the leader would use persuasive communications as an integral part of the leadership process.

5. **Persuasion factors.** Persuasion factors was the term used to describe a variety of specialized factors which influence the effectiveness of a persuasive communication; e.g., the credibility of the source, the style of the message or the attitude of the message receiver.

6. **Persuasive techniques.** The term persuasive techniques referred to particular techniques used by the principals to maximize the effectiveness of their persuasive communications.

7. **School principal.** The term school principal was used to indicate the administrative head and professional leader of a school unit, i.e., the school building executive officer.

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Scope and Limitations

The population for this study was comprised of elementary public school principals employed by urban and rural school districts in Michigan. Michigan was selected for the study because the state included a reasonably diversified, yet accessible, set of schools in terms of school and community size and, consequently, complexity of operation.

However, some limitations were anticipated as a result of a paucity of established literature on the persuasive communications role of school principals. First, it was anticipated that principals, through lack of experience with the topic, may have some difficulty differentiating between the formal and informal aspects of district and school policies on the use of persuasive communications. Second, the principals' lack of experience with the vocabulary of persuasion may have adversely influenced both the quantity of instruments returned and the quality of the responses, even though pilot data collected to insure the quality of the instrument suggested that this may not be a serious problem.

Overview of the Study

As the title indicated, the thrust of the study was to develop from extant literature a theoretical model of the elementary school principals' persuasive communications. The model was compared with self-reported attitudes and perceptions of principals' preparation in and accomplishment with persuasive techniques.
The first chapter briefly introduced the study and listed five assumptions upon which the research was based. An examination of the purpose of the study and its significance was followed by the enumeration of five research objectives. Pertinent terms were defined, and the scope and limitations of the study were outlined.

Chapter II focuses attention on relevant literature and research; emphasis being placed on literature dealing with theories of communication, the role of persuasion and research findings relative to the effectiveness of specific persuasion factors. The chapter also includes a study of the concept of communication channels prior to the development of the proposed persuasive communications model.

Chapter III presents the research design from which the study proceeded. The general design of the study is discussed and the population and sample defined. The proposed instrumentation and data analyses are described.

Chapter IV consists of the analyses of collected data. The information relevant to the testing of the research hypotheses is discussed, as are the study's findings.

Chapter V includes a summary of major findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for the refinement of the postulated model and for possible future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Although principles for influencing people have been espoused for over 3,000 years (Brembeck & Howell, 1976), historical inquiry indicates that most communication studies are of fairly recent origin (Lewis, 1975). Similarly, it has been argued (Janis, 1968) that not until the twentieth century was there any concerted effort by empirically oriented scholars to research the conditions under which persuasion would succeed or fail. As a consequence, this literature review includes a number of relatively modern basic theories and models from which was derived the proposed persuasive communications model for elementary school principals.

Chapter II, overall, presents citations of selected literature and research relevant to communication theory, theories of persuasion and specific persuasive techniques which may enhance the persuasive communications performance of school principals. It includes a brief statement on communication "channels" in an attempt to reduce confusion caused when the word is used to explain several different functions. The chapter concludes with a section dealing with the formulation of a theoretical model describing the persuasive communications network within which elementary school principals are believed to operate.
Communication Theories

"Communication" comes from the Latin word "communis" meaning "common"; thus, as Schramm (1969) has said, "when we communicate we are trying to establish a 'commonness' with someone" (p. 3).

However, the many different methods of transferring information make communication a dynamic, continual, and complex process—a process underlying the existence, growth, change and behavior of all living systems from the individual to the organization (Thayer, 1968). Communication within a complex organization has been defined as the sending and receiving of information (Redding & Sanborn, 1964), exchanging information and transmitting meaning (Katz & Kahn, 1966), coordinating a number of people who are interdependently related (Goldhaber, 1974), and "the sharing of messages, ideas or attitudes resulting in a degree of understanding between a sender and receiver" (Lewis, 1975, p. 5).

With more than 25 different conceptions of communications, more than 50 different descriptions of the human communication process and more than 15 different models to choose from (Sereno & Mortensen, 1970), it is not surprising that critics have labeled the field of communication a wilderness of facts and notions, instances and generalizations, proofs and surmises (Smith, 1966). Westley and MacLean (1957) referred to a jungle of unrelated concepts and a mass of undigested, often sterile, empirical data.

Nevertheless, a brief review of the history of communication
models may help develop an understanding of the placement of communication into a managerial-organizational context.

Lasswell (1948) suggested that a convenient way to describe an act of communication was to answer the following questions:

"Who
Says what
In which channel
To whom
With what effect" (p. 37).

However, communication may be intentional or unintentional—e.g., when a principal's office conveys an unfavorable attitude to a citizen, unintentional communication is involved (Savage, 1968)—so it is more usual for models to describe the fundamental components of the communication process.

Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, or communication, consisted of a speaker sending a message to a listener, a sender transmitting a message to a receiver, a source sending a message to a destination (see Figure 1). There was neither provision for feedback nor indication that communication was a dynamic, complex process.
Models developed in the years since World War II have continued to be heavily influenced by the Aristotelian linear concept, even though scholars have incorporated the latest findings about human behavior. Despite the number of models that were developed, there appeared to be considerable agreement as to the components of communications, and traditional concepts or theories have been categorized into two types—mathematical models and human behavioral models (Lewis, 1975).

Mathematical models of communication were formulated as a result of developments in the field of cybernetics by those who considered that the human organism was not essentially different from a machine (Sereno & Mortensen, 1970), and that the conveying of information could be mathematically described and interpreted by a machine (Broadhurst & Darnell, 1965).

One of the conventional diagrams adapted to indicate superficial similarities between mechanical systems and social systems is the Shannon-Weaver (1949) information theory model as shown in Figure 2. Criticism of this model may center around the
lack of provision for feedback and the implicit assumption that noise will interfere at only one point in the model.


Figure 2. The Shannon-Weaver Information Theory Model

There are several widely used models in the human behavior, interpersonal and mass communication areas. Figure 3 demonstrates Carroll's (1955) model, which is a simple verbal model adapting the "transmitter" and "receiver" stages of the Shannon-Weaver model into behavioral terms.
Intensive Encoding Decoding Interpretive
behavior of→behavior of→Message→behavior of→behavior of
speaker speaker hearer hearer


Figure 3. The Carroll Communication Model.

The Westley-MacLean model (1957) illustrated in Figure 4 represents the sequence of interpersonal communication whereby one communicator A, coming into contact with environmental factors (X1, X2 and so on), sends a message (X') to person B who may or may not be impinged upon by the same environmental factors, but who will transmit feedback (designated fBA) to A. By expanding their model graphically to illustrate a two-step flow of information or mass communication when other persons (Cs) are added, Westley & MacLean suggested a schema general enough to expand the face-to-face communication concept to apply to many human interactions, even in international or intercultural situations.

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In Figure 5, C represents an opinion leader who selects information from A and transmits it to B. This process can be illustrative of typical organizational situations, where A is top management, B the worker and C the supervisor. The original message reaches B only after it has been filtered through other people, so message X" may not be the same as X'. Thus, although the Westley-MacLean model is difficult to describe verbally, its basic strengths, namely: (a) a perceptive representation of the two-step flow of communication and (b) the inherent nature of feedback (Wenburg & Wilmot, 1973), are a major improvement on previous models.


Figure 4. The Westley-MacLean Face to Face Communication Model.
Fearing's (1953) concept of a theory whereby "communication behavior is placed in the context of the current formulations regarding cognitive-perceptual processes conceived as dynamically related to the need-value systems of individuals" (p. 71) was paralleled by Berlo's model (1960). The Berlo source-message-channel-receiver paradigm (see Figure 6) avoided any type of linear concept of communication and demonstrated the interactional qualities of those involved in the communication process. The emphasis is that of thoroughly understanding human behavior as a prerequisite to analysis of communication as an interactive process, without beginning, end, or a fixed order of events. Despite criticism that there is no representation of how the sender and receiver interact.
or how feedback works in this system (Lewis, 1975), the Berlo model
does provide a categorization of factors likely to influence the
efficacy of a communication.

There have been a number of comparable models (Dance, 1967;
Whitehead, 1967; Johnson 1953) as well as a recent trend in human
behavioral models under the influence of transactional theories
(Schramm, 1963; Wenburg-Wilmot, 1973; Ross, 1974). It has been
suggested that the advantage of analyzing transactions between people
lies in the effect of conscious and unconscious beliefs which have a
decided effect on a person's attitudes, subsequent behavior and
communication (Sinclair, 1973). Another emphasis in transactional
models has been the focus on a person's sign-symbol behavior; in
fact, a person is seen as being capable of sending and receiving at
the same time, making him a transceiver (Zelko & Dance, 1965).

Figure 6. The Berlo Model of the Communication Process.

All the preceding models can be adapted to a managerial-organizational context even though that may not have been their primary purpose. Lewis (1975) made one such attempt based upon the following perceptions by Goldhaber (1974): First, organizational communication occurs within a complex open system which is influenced by and influences its environment. Second, organizational communication involves flow, purpose, direction and medium. Third,
organizational communication involves people's attitudes, feelings, relationships, and skills.

The Lewis model (see Figure 7), showing how an interactional/transactional process takes place within an organization between management (sender) and employee (receiver) is not claimed to be flawless; there are few, if any, geometric figures that could adequately portray in a diagram something as complex as human communication (Dance, 1967). However, Lewis (1975) lists its strengths as follows:

First, it directs attention to the forward direction of communication. Second, it implies that a word or message once sent cannot be recalled. Third, it allows for clarification of any message transmitted. Fourth, it implies the changing aspect of communication as each person sends and receives a particular message. Fifth, it shows the two kinds of feedback sent and received with each message. Sixth, it places managerial communication within organizational structure and context (p. 119).

Figure 7. The Lewis Organizational-Managerial Communication Model.
In addition to using Lewis' linking of managerial communication with organizational structure, the present study sought answers to the following related questions: First, why should one presume there is a link between the communication process and organizational performance? Second, how do the aforementioned models apply to the role of the elementary school principal?

While no comprehensive research appears to exist on the subject, a great many general references could be given to support the presumption that there is a considerable relationship between an organization's communications environment and its consequent performance. Chester Barnard (1938), who might be regarded as the father of the behavioral science school of organizational theory, stated that "in an exhaustive theory of organization, communication would occupy a central place, because the structure, extensiveness and scope of the organization are almost entirely determined by communication techniques" (p. 91).

More recently, Conrath (1973) has suggested the system shown in Figure 8 as being one which may be used to discover the nature of the communications environment and how it interacts with the characteristics of both people and tasks. "People" refers to the members of the organization and the term "tasks" refers to the interpersonal aspects of the tasks or jobs to be accomplished by the organization. In effect, Conrath's study used an approach similar to that taken in the present study; the intention was to derive organizational theory from an understanding of people, task and the

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communication environment gained from data in the field.

Figure 8. The Conrath Organizational-Communications Framework.

In turning to the question of the way in which the traditional communications process models apply to elementary school principals, it may prove beneficial to commence with the Saxe (1975) concept of the principal as the man in the middle of a communications network. In interpreting Figure 9, one can visualize the principal having direct contact with four major groups which are interconnected in a fashion which stimulates teamwork and avoids the pitfalls suggested in Drucker’s (1967) contention that communications are practically impossible if they are based on downward relationships.
Deats' (1974) criticism that there is a general tendency in educational literature to treat organizations as individuals rather than as organizations of individuals sets particular demands when consideration is made concerning the use of a specific communications process model. One suggestion is that the Lewis organization-managerial communication model (Figure 7) could be overlaid on the model of the principal as the man in the middle of a communications network model (Figure 9). The resultant model, shown in a simplified form in Figure 10, has been depicted in three dimensions to facilitate explanation. The principal has a two-way communication with each of the four major groups suggested by Saxe. Figure 10 also highlights the six possible combinations of communications among the four major groups. By suggesting that each group can be expanded as a set of individuals, Figure 10 could be adapted to demonstrate that
educational organizations are organizations of individuals. Furthermore, it could demonstrate an important feature of public school communications, viz., that feedback information for any particular communication sent by the principal is likely to come via the feedback loop linking all the persons involved within the system. More specifically, any communication sent by the principal has the potential for influencing any or every part of the total organizational network.

Consequently, one of the important aspects of the present study was to identify, as accurately as possible, the major audiences with which elementary school principals communicate and to examine, as did Berlo (1960), the interactional qualities and methods of those involved in the process. The latter operation involved identification of specific communication channels used by principals and the use made of a number of persuasive techniques the effectiveness of which had been attested by published research.
Figure 10. Selected Interactions in Educational Organizations.
Persuasion

People may communicate for a number of reasons—to give information, to seek help, to express ideas, to provide amusement—but whenever communication takes place, things happen. Both those who send messages and those who receive them are changed in the communication process (Heintz, 1970). Furthermore, much of the communicating done by people is intended to persuade other persons to change their attitudes or behaviors. Because persuasion is both a common and an important reason for communicating, it has received considerable attention from academicians interested in social interaction.

McGuire (1973) has advocated the study of persuasion as interesting on both scientific and practical grounds. On the scientific side, it improves understanding of why people behave the way they do, and why their behavior sometimes changes. On the practical side, improved knowledge of persuasive techniques might have immediate value to advertisers, diplomats, politicians, salesmen, educators—to anyone whose job it is to change what people think and do (Abelson, 1969).

Some research on persuasion during recent years has been directed toward testing old insights accumulated over many centuries of theorizing about the persuasion process. It is worth recalling that the Aristotelian goal of communication was persuasion; an effective communicator could interpret, control, modify, or adapt to his environment. Later, classical writers developed a persuasive
discourse around five skills:

- **invention**—the source of substance of ideas of speech;
- **disposition**—the structure and sequence of the discourse;
- **style**—the specific language used in communicating;
- **memory**—the recall and retention resources of the speaker;
- **delivery**—the vocal and physical attributes of speaking.

There even developed a rhetorical tradition in terms of the cultural ideal the discourse was based upon. Halloran (1976) claimed that "the ideal was perhaps most succinctly stated in Quintilian's description of the perfect orator as 'a good man skilled in speaking'" (p. 235), i.e., the persuader is a person who has internalized the best features of the culture, and can apply such wisdom to the influencing of fellow citizens to think and act in accord with their common heritage.

It has also been argued that all language utterances have a persuasive dimension (Berlo, 1960), that whenever people interact persuasion is one of the catalysts (Campbell & Hepler, 1970) and that friendly persuasion can fight friction between people as effectively as oil can dispel friction between metals (Battista, 1959). It is not surprising, therefore, that the practitioner of persuasion should express a desire for a set of rules for successful communication. The expectation is that such a set of rules should enable the communicator to organize his message in a particular way, use certain styles of language, stress specific motivations, put the message into a dynamic format, send it to a selected audience and be confident
that everyone receiving the message would respond in the manner intended by the sender. However, "the methodology and philosophical underpinnings of behavioral research imply that although researchers can gain considerable insight into the process of persuasion, it is not possible to produce a fully formulated theory of persuasion or a set of rules to guide the communicator in every situation he may encounter" (Bettinghaus, 1968, p. 2). The best that seems to have been done by researchers is the definition of a limited class of communication events and an explanation of the phenomena concerned; i.e., the search is for usefulness rather than completeness.

There is considerable agreement among some writers as to the definition of "persuasion." It has been described as the identifying and manipulating of those relevant variables likely to exercise an effect on audience response (Miller, 1966), as the awakening of a voluntary inclination to act (Nilsen, 1966), and as communication intended to influence choice (Brembeck & Howell, 1976).

Despite the general consensus on definitions of persuasion, there is a dearth of schemata which demonstrate factors involved in persuasion and persuasibility. Perhaps the best known model is that of Hovland and Janis (1959) which describes observable communication stimuli, predispositional factors, internal mediating processes and observable communication effects. While the categories are not exhaustive, they do highlight the main types of stimulus variables that occur in persuasive communications (see Figure 11).
Communication situation

Content Characteristics:
- Topic-content of the conclusions
- Appeals
- Arguments
- Stylistic features

Communicator characteristics:
- Role
- Affiliations
- Intentions

Media characteristics:
- Direct vs indirect interaction
- Sense modality

Situational surroundings:
- Social setting
- Extraneous noxious stimuli
- Extraneous pleasant stimuli

Communication-free (General persuasibility)

Attention

Comprehension

Acceptance

Acceptance

Opinion change

Perception change

Affect change

Action change


Figure 11. Major Factors in Attitude Change Produced by Means of Social Communication
For present purposes, the following persuasion factors are those which have been culled from a number of sources and which are believed to constitute a common array of factors in the development of persuasive communications. The factors can be categorized according to their relation to source, message, channel, receiver, destination and resistance.

Source factors are those attributed to the source of the message, the persuader himself. There is evidence to suggest that persuaders are more likely to succeed in changing the opinions of others if they have a high credibility rating (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) and have acceptable motives (Hovland & Mandell, 1952). Thus, credibility appears to be a function of the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the sender.

Another factor relating to source is that of attractiveness; i.e., the extent to which the source relates to the audience. Aronson and Golden (1962) found that persuasion techniques were more effective if the persuader shared some of the audience's beliefs; Weiss (1957) suggested the persuader express some views that were held by his audience.

McGuire (1974) indicated that the audience could also be influenced by the power of the source, especially where "the receiver may believe that the source actually can control his rewards and punishments" (p. 124).
There are several well researched aspects of persuasive behaviors which are generally considered to affect the successful promulgation of the message. First, there are indications that the order in which points in a message are presented can change its persuasiveness. The concept of order may be expanded to indicate a desirable arrangement for the whole message. Ross (1974) has highlighted extant alternative designs on sets of components which have been claimed by authors to enhance the persuasiveness of a message (see Table 1).

A second message factor is found in the type of appeals made. Ethical, emotional and logical appeals can all be persuasive under given circumstances (Knower, 1935; Hartmann, 1936). The use of fear appeals has indicated the greatest audience conformity to the position advocated in "minimal" threat communications (Janis & Feshbach, 1953).

A third message factor is the style of the persuader. McGuire (1974) has shown that dynamic delivery of a persuasive communication tends to reduce the degree to which the receiver yields to the persuader's argument, even though the use of humor in the message can enhance yielding, apparently because it puts the recipient in a more pleasant, agreeable state.

Content is a fourth message factor; a number of studies have been made to determine whether persuasive impact is most enhanced by ignoring counter arguments or by mentioning and refuting them. Ross' (1974) conclusion about one- and two-sided arguments was that "both-
Table 1
Persuasion Message Arrangement Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hollingsworth</th>
<th>Monroe</th>
<th>Miller &amp; Dollard</th>
<th>Ross</th>
<th>Aristotle</th>
<th>Instructing</th>
<th>Hovland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>Drive</td>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>Proem</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Need</td>
<td>Need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Impression</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Stimulus</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conviction</td>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Objections</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sides persuasion was significantly better than one-sided persuasion when the audience was opposed to the point of view being presented. The one-sided arguments were more effective when the audience was already convinced of the point being presented" (p. 200). Another aspect of message content is that there probably will be more opinion change in the direction desired by the persuader when conclusions are explicitly stated than when the receiver is encouraged to draw his own conclusions (Thistlewaite, deHaan & Kamenetsky, 1955).

The fifth factor likely to enhance the persuasiveness of a message is the setting in which the communication takes place. Janis, Kaye & Kirshner (1965) have commented on the fact that salesmen, business promoters and lobbyists often try to "soften up" their clients by inviting them to talk things over at a restaurant or cafe. Another use of a persuasive setting is that a personal communication in the privacy of an office may be expected to be more effective than one on a busy street corner, if only because of less noise interference.

Considerable effort has been extended to discover what kinds of people are most readily persuadable; these factors may be referred to as receiver factors. In the literature relating to attempts to establish a correlation between intelligence and persuasibility there has been support "of the null, the positive and the negative relationship" (Rosnow & Robinson, 1967, p. 198).

The relationship between biological sex and persuasibility has been more definite than that between intelligence and persuasibility.
Studies have suggested that females tend to be more susceptible to persuasive communication than males (Janis & Field, 1959).

Numerous other factors have been reported as being correlated with persuasibility: e.g., cognitive need (Baron, 1965), ego-defensiveness (Katz, McClintock & Sarnoff, 1957), self-esteem and authoritarianism (Abelson, 1969).

Destination factors refer to the specific, observable activity at which the persuasive communication is directed, e.g., overt behavior in purchasing a particular model of car. A typical destination factor is that of impact. The general consensus of research is that in time the effects of a persuasive communication tend to wear off (Cromwell, 1955). The rate of decay varies according to conditions such as approval of the argument and the degree of belief (Garber, 1955), and it has been estimated that half of the originally produced attitude change may decay in from one week to six months after exposure to the communication (McGuire, 1974). In another study, Cromwell and Krunkel (1952) reported finding that repeating a communication tended to prolong its influence.

The question of immediate or delayed impact is another destination factor. Hovland, Lumsdalne and Sheffield (1949) described the "sleeper effect" whereby more of the desired opinion change may be measurable some time after exposure to the communication than right after exposure.

The apparent contradiction between rate-of-decay findings and those of the sleeper effect is indicative of the problems with
destination effects; knowledge regarding the relation between forgetting and such factors as the strength of source, message and resistance is important to the communicator who intends to be persuasive.

Resistance factors have been delineated by McGuire (1964). He elaborated on five contemporary approaches to making people more resistant to persuasion: the behavioral commitment approach, the anchoring of belief to other cognitions, inducing resistant cognitive states, use of proper training in resistance, and inoculation by being exposed to weakened arguments. Empirical work (Burgoon & King, 1974; Chase & Kelly, 1976) has shown these approaches to be successful.

Communication Channels

Berlo (1960) presented the viewpoint that the word "channel" was the most used and abused word in communication theory. Because it refers to the general link between sender and receiver, "channel" has been used to mean several things; Ross (1974) used "channel" to mean media method, Boles and Davenport (1975) used it to refer to the human sensory apparatus, and Robinson (1966) expressed concern that advertisers, journalists and public relations people often avoided defining the word by simply equating the act of communication in the mass media to the desired effect of actually imparting information or influencing the public.

A useful analogy which clarifies the use of "channel" by

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specifying three categories of meaning has been suggested by Berlo (1960). He recommends the analogy of one person delivering a package from one side of a wide lake with steep banks to a person on the other side;

First, I need a boat to carry the package. Second, I need some way to put my package in the boat. I need a boat dock to connect me with the boat. At the other side, you need some way to get the package out of the boat. You too need a boat dock to connect you. Finally, I need some water. I need something which will serve as a carrier for the boat--some medium through which the boat can travel. If we both have boat-docks that are in good working order, if we have a boat in good working order that we can use as a vehicle to carry the package, and if we have some water that will support the boat, I can get my package from where I am to where you are. If we do not have all three of these things, we cannot get in touch with each other. (p. 63)

In communication theory, the analogues of all three of these things (boat-docks, boats and water) are called "channels." To facilitate further discussion, the preferred terminology will be that illustrated in Table 2. Boat-docks have been interpreted as the sensory mechanisms the functions of which include the encoding and decoding of messages and they will be referred to as "channels." Boats have been equated with message vehicles; the function of message delivery will be described as the "medium." Water, the vehicle carrier, has been viewed as the support system in which the medium operates and will be termed the "environment."
Table 2.

Interpretation of Berlo's Communication Channel Analogy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analogue</th>
<th>Boat-docks</th>
<th>Boat</th>
<th>Water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Sensory Apparatus</td>
<td>Message Vehicle</td>
<td>Vehicle Carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Encoding Decoding</td>
<td>Message Delivery</td>
<td>Medium Support System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggested Descriptor</td>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use of the term "medium" also has a strong theoretical and practical base in the field of tele- and recording-media; e.g., Bretz (1971) demonstrated a conceptual model similar to the Aristotelian model of the communication process (see Figure 1) and applied it to transmission and recording systems. The term medium was explicitly used to indicate message delivery (see Figure 12). During the entire process of communication, knowledge existed as information. When information was transmitted, or recorded, it became a message. The information involved could be viewed as a subset of the knowledge in the minds of the sender and receiver.

Figure 12. Bretz's Conceptual Model of the Communication Process.

For present purposes, five categories of communication interaction were delineated; the nonverbal, verbal, written, printed and electronic media. In the following discussion, each of these will be discussed as a separate entity even though, for maximum effectiveness, it is possible that the communicator may select a combination of media depending upon factors such as the type of problem faced, the aims of the message, available resources, the type of response sought, and so on.
Brembeck and Howell (1976) discussed different forms of nonverbal communication which could be identified by their "shape," independent of function or purpose. The major components of the nonverbal code were kinesics, proxemics, haptics, paralanguage, and nervantics. Use of nonverbal communication may have advantages such as time saving, adding precision, gaining and holding attention and contributing redundancy to the verbal message. The study of readily quantifiable elements of nonverbal communication such as Ekman and Friesen's (1969) five kinds of display rules—amplifying, de-intensifying, neutralizing, blending and masking—promises to yield insights valuable to person-to-person persuaders.

Verbal communication is interactive and immediate, requiring instant message intelligibility (Vardaman & Vardaman, 1973); consequently, there has been emphasis on person-to-person communication (Bassett, 1968), person-to-group presentations (Ross, 1965) and small group communication patterns (Scott, 1967). Because speech communication comprises a major segment of daily life, it is also one of the primary tools that man employs to manipulate, to control and to understand his environment; skill in utilizing the spoken word provides an important opportunity of maximizing one's persuasive influence.

To delineate the purview of "written" communications it may help to limit the discussion to hand-written messages and those that are produced on a typewriter for a small, limited audience. Another approach is to view a written communication as a non-routine,
one-of-a-kind message in a written format. Table 3, adapted from Vardaman and Vardaman (1973), summarizes potential qualities of written communications for managerial and organizational purposes.

Included in Table 3 are some conditions which should exist if one is to use automated written communications, herein termed "printed" materials. The term "printed" includes the use of data processing equipment, duplicating and printing machines and reprography. An essential difference between "written" and "printed" materials is that although "printed" communications may take a written format they must involve mass processing and distribution.

Electronic communication refers to messages which involve the mass-media and multi-media techniques. These types of media, as opposed to small scale personal communications, offer certain advantages and disadvantages to the communicator, at least in theory. The message and the method of delivery are uniform to a large sector of the population and the cost per communication can be quite small. On the other hand, there may be less opportunity for feedback and for the persuader to address material to the needs of specific interest groups. In practice, the impact of mass communications is pervasive, but not always controllable by the persuader.

The Principals' Persuasion Model

From the foregoing review of communication and persuasion, it appears that, if school principals are to be successful in developing persuasive communications, attention should be focussed on three
### Table 3.

**Potential Qualities of Verbal and Written Communication**

**Verbal Communications**

1. For sensitive/confidential matters
2. For candid discussions
3. For strengthening positive feelings
4. For quick information transfer
5. For assurance of full understanding
6. For exercising personal influence
7. For meeting group needs
8. For acquisition of immediate feedback

**Hand-or Type-Written Communications**

1. For extension in time/space
2. For storage and retrieval
3. For objectivity and authentication
4. For idea verification
5. For nonpersonal emphasis
6. For situations where more acceptable
7. For supplementing verbal or electronic types

**Combined Verbal and Written Combinations**

1. For "carry home" needs
2. For exploratory needs
3. For involvement
4. For communicating abstract/"unimportant" ideas
5. For optimal understanding
6. For both understanding and reaction
7. For follow-up

**Printed or Electronic Feasibility**

1. Exact controllable routines?
2. Possible controllable standardization?
3. Mass processing and distribution?
4. Economic optimization?
5. Data availability and reliability?
6. Resource availability?
7. User competence and receptivity?

major components: (1) the sender's persuasive techniques, (2) the medium by which the message is transmitted, (3) the distinctive needs, interests etc., of the audience/s. These persuasive communication factors are illustrated in a three-dimensional framework in Figure 13.

Audiences

Although one may agree with Marsh (1967) that "for maximum effectiveness, persuasion is best conducted with a single auditor" (p. 95), one role of the principals is to seek the improvement of human relations in contacts with all the schools' various publics--students, staff, parents, taxpayers and so on--and the innumerable cross relationships among these groups.

One estimate of the size and range of a principal's audience was made by Olds (1974, p. 18) who suggested that for a 2,000 student school from a medium-density population, a secondary school principal has a potential audience of 35,000 to 40,000 persons: e.g.,

160 Staff
3,000 Parents
25,000 Citizens in the attendance area
250 Community agencies, groups, churches
100 University and other post-high school institutions
2,000 Students
5,000 Alumni
4,000 Students in feeder schools.

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Figure 13. The Principals' Persuasive Communications Model.
Pupils, teachers and system administrators are an integral part of the principals' daily communication network. Parents, community groups and other learning agencies in the district provide a second set of interactions for principals. The third major audience group is comprised of a wide variety of government agencies, local residents, businessmen, and so on; this group has only intermittent or indirect contact with the school but must be considered by principals if they are to be aware of power in the community and be competent to succeed in power structure analysis and influence.

**Media**

The type of medium through which any communication is transmitted may depend in large part on whether principals are intent on formal presentation of systematic, on-going communications with the schools' audiences through a specific public relations program and/or on relatively informal messages which occur as a result of personal contact. Both aspects of communication are important if audiences are to have an accurate perception of the work of schools.

Gelms (1974) reiterated the old saw that "we all have public relations, the only question is: Are those relations good or bad?" (p. 9). Furthermore, he suggested seven major steps for an adequate communications program.

1. Identify the school's public.
2. Study the school and community.
3. Establish leadership.
4. Balance the messages (priorities and programs, progress and problems, people and policies, performance and plans).

5. Vary the methods of communication.

6. Obtain feedback.

7. Evaluate and re-direct the program (Gelms, 1974, p. 10).

Given that "the days of writing a column for the neighborhood newspaper once or twice a year are over" (Ruffin, 1972, p. 36), at least three of Gelms' suggested steps may be achieved by using the suggested audience/media matrix to determine whether the needs and potentialities of the eight suggested audiences are being addressed in a medium or media conducive to success.

The nonverbal and verbal media are preferred means of communicating warmth, interest and concern; personal contact is essential if principals are to transmit feelings of commitment to the education of individuals. Similarly, personal contact is a critical task for principals because they must find time to make contacts, must rank order the needs of different audiences, and risk becoming subject to unfamiliar, non-school situational factors which may impair the value of their usual persuasive techniques.

The type and style of written contacts may differ sharply, according to whether they are for internal (within the school) or external (non-school) audiences. Internal written communications between the principals and their pupils or teachers are best viewed as temporary measures, precursors to personal contact. External written communications often tend to be a more formal and permanent record of interaction and to require greater attention to detail.
Printed and electronic media need considerable attention by principals because they involve a plurality of audiences having a range of divergent interests. One may concur with Spodek (1974) that there is an obligation for the principals to be open and frank in providing information to the mass media; they must have the courage of their convictions, be willing to admit mistakes and be open to change.

**Persuasion factors**

In the selection of persuasion factors for the proposed principals' persuasive communications model there are five factors which can be derived from the previous discussion on persuasion theory: source, message, receiver, destination and resistance factors. However, in practice, principals would be better served by examining particular aspects of those factors. Table 4, listing five major persuasion factors, seventeen persuasion dimensions and a basic research reference for each dimension, is indicative of material that well may increase principals' persuasive leadership capacities.
Table 4

A Development Chart for Persuasion Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasion Factor</th>
<th>Practical Dimension</th>
<th>Research Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Hovland &amp; Weiss, 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>Aronson &amp; Golden, 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>McGuire, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Ross, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appeals</td>
<td>Janis &amp; Feshbach, 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>McGuire, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Ross, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Janis, Kaye &amp; Kirshner, 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Janis &amp; Field, 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>Baron, 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Cromwell, 1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Garber, 1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>McGuire, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>McGuire, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anchoring</td>
<td>McGuire, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inoculation</td>
<td>McGuire, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>McGuire, 1964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

Although there are a number of studies reported in the literature which have focused upon the theories of communication or the study of social influences arising from the use of persuasive techniques, none of those located has attempted to synthesize the
concepts of persuasion and communication or apply them to a leader's role in education. Neither has research been found which explored school principals' awareness of, preparation in and accomplishment with persuasive communications.

The aims of this study were to: (a) examine extant theories and concepts about communication and persuasion and (b) develop a principals' communications model with an emphasis on persuasion techniques. Information regarding the actual persuasive communications of school principals was sought so as to enable comparison between the postulated model and the practice of persuasive leadership.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the design of the study and gives a description of the methodology used to conduct it. Specifically, the discussion is concerned with a review of the problem, development of an appropriate survey instrument, the population and sample, and the procedures adopted for data collection and analysis.

Review of the Problem

The intention in the present study was to develop a theoretical model which linked the use of persuasive techniques to school principals' communications. The resultant model (see Figure 13) was a three-dimensional matrix using the principals' audiences, communication media and persuasion factors as the major variables.

The second stage of the study was to investigate elementary school principals' self-reported awareness of, preparation in, and accomplishment with persuasive techniques believed by this investigator likely to improve persuasive communications skills. Furthermore, the development of a data base on the other two major variables of the persuasive communications model, viz., the principals' audiences and communications media, would enable the model to be compared to the conditions existing in practice.

Also, it was conjectured that if the model were to be of any value to school principals, it should be considered in the light of...
principals' current attitudes to their roles as communicators.

In order that data relevant to the problem could be obtained for analysis and discussion, a set of questions was posed around five topics; principals' attitudes to their communications role, principals' audiences, principals' training in persuasion.

The main questions and sub-questions (cited specifically for data collection and analysis purposes) are listed below.

**Research Question 1.** What do elementary school principals consider to be their role in the communication network of the school?

a. How do principals rate the importance of their communication function compared to a selection of other functions in their job descriptions?

b. Are principals the persons responsible for the development/maintenance/effectiveness of the schools' communication procedures?

c. How important to the success of the schools are the abilities of principals to communicate effectively?

d. Do principals formalize the schools' communications by having written procedures for communications?

e. What are the major purposes for principals' communications?

**Research Question 2.** What are the major audiences with which elementary school principals communicate?

a. Given a number of different potential audiences, how do principals rate the importance of each?
**Research Question 3.** What are the major media by means of which principals communicate?

- a. Given a selection of media, how do principals rate the importance of each?
- b. What criteria do principals use in selecting a particular medium for their communications?
- c. How often do principals select a medium for communication because of its effectiveness with a particular audience?

**Research Question 4.** Which persuasion factors are most commonly used by principals in developing persuasive communications?

- a. Given five major persuasion factors, viz., factors related to source, message, receiver, destination and resistance, what percentage of principals are aware of extant research findings about those factors?
- b. Given the same five persuasion factors used in research question 4a, how relevant to principals' communications do principals consider each factor?
- c. Do principals, in planning communications, make use of their knowledge of those extant research findings?
- d. How often do principals seek feedback regarding the effectiveness of their communications?
- e. To what extent do principals alter their persuasive techniques according to the audience they are addressing?

**Research Question 5.** How effective do principals consider their training in, and use of, persuasive communications techniques?
a. How do principals rate the effectiveness of their use of persuasive techniques with various audiences?

b. What formal training have principals had in communication and persuasion?

c. How do principals rate their efforts to make communications persuasive?

d. Would principals welcome more information on how to enhance the effectiveness of their communications?

Instrumentation

The second stage of the present study involved the development of a survey instrument (see Appendix A) which could appropriately correspond to the research questions identified above and by means of which relevant data could be obtained. Because no existing instrument covered the questions to be answered, it was necessary to develop one without the support of precedent and to conduct a pilot study with a selected group of elementary school principals. The conceptual underpinning for the data gathering instrument was based on the three major variables of the suggested principals' persuasive communications model (see Figure 13) and its theoretical constructs, as described in Chapter II.

Although the advantages and disadvantages of using mailed questionnaires were compared with those of the personal interview technique of data collection, the decision was made to use the mailed questionnaire technique, for two basic reasons. First, the
paucity of previous research on the topic of persuasive communications of school principals suggested that the present study should take a general approach to the problem: The preliminary approach should be concerned with a larger sample than would be possible with a small group, in-depth gathering of data by means of the personal interview technique. Second, the decision to use a relatively large sample size, viz., 12½ percent of the elementary school principals in Michigan, precluded use of personal interviews which might have proved prohibitively time consuming and expensive. Thus, a mailed questionnaire was used to collect data from a wide variety of public school principals across the state of Michigan (see "Population and Sample" section, below).

The "school principal survey" questionnaire was kept short (viz., seventeen questions on a two-sided, legal-size sheet of paper), comprehensible and uncomplicated, with emphasis given to attractiveness of format and ease of response. It was considered that attention to format and ease of response would increase the willingness of principals to respond. Moully (1970) noted an important reason for encouraging "willingness to respond":

The validity of questionnaire data . . . depends in a crucial way on the ability and willingness of the respondent to provide the information requested (p. 243).

Erdos (1970) reported that research on the nature of non-respondents has resulted in the identification of two major factors, education and interest, influencing the return rate of questionnaires. In the present study, while the principals'
interest in persuasive communications was not known, it was anticipated that the recipients of the questionnaires were well educated. Shinkfield (1977) reported that of 278 Michigan principals surveyed (158 elementary, 74 junior high and 46 senior high school), 192 held Bachelor's or Master's degrees and 86 held higher degrees.

One of the most common criticisms directed at mailed questionnaires has resulted from the poor rate of return experienced by a number of investigators. As Kerlinger (1973) has noted, the problem is that non-respondents may be significantly different from the rest of the population. However, Moser and Kalton (1972) contend that this problem can be partially remedied if an estimate can be made of the effects of non-response. While it would be extremely difficult to weigh all the effects of non-response for this study, two forms of check appeared feasible. First, the Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide for 1977-78 provides demographic data which could be used to test for respondent and non-respondent differences. For the principals sampled, the following information was available:

sex
address
title and name
student population size and location of the school district
name and address of the school building
type of school: elementary, middle, or both
grades housed in each school building

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number of students in each school building
number of teachers in each school building

Second, in the event of an inadequate return rate, there existed the opportunity to undertake a personal interview of selected non-respondents.

The determination of what should constitute a lower than acceptable or better than adequate response rate was linked to a level 10 percent above the guidelines suggested by Babbie (1973):

- A response rate of at least 50 per cent is **adequate** for analysis and reporting. A response rate of at least 60 per cent is **good**. And a response rate of 70 per cent or more is **very good** (p. 165).

The questionnaire was designed as an instrument of data collection regarding five aspects of the elementary school principals' perceptions about persuasive communications. To reiterate, three research questions were based on the three major variables of the persuasive communications matrix shown in Figure 13, viz., audiences, media and persuasion factors. The other two research questions concerned the principals' attitudes about their communication responsibilities and their training in the use of persuasive techniques.

An organizational chart (see Appendix B) was prepared to help ensure that the printed questionnaire was brief, yet accurate to the needs of the study, and that questions were formulated so that data would be in the appropriate scale of measurement for the various data-analysis techniques. As questions were written and arranged...
to form the questionnaire, guidance on wording, alternative checking arrangements and coding procedures was sought from literature sources (Best, 1977; Mouly, 1970; Parten, 1966; Sellitz, et al., 1959).

The pilot study testing of the reliability of the survey instrument was accomplished by administering the questionnaire to five principals on two occasions, separated by a two week interval, without any intermediate feedback. Between the two administrations for each of the principals, the correlation of rating scale responses was .97, .88, .86, .88, and .77.

Because the design of the instrument was intended to focus on data relevant to five major areas of principals' perceptions of persuasive communications, internal consistency measures were taken on each of these areas. The alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1970) resulting from examination of the returned questionnaires were as follows: (a) the leadership role of principals, .52; (b) the principals' major audiences, .48; (c) the communication media used, .69; (d) the communication factors, .64; and (e) the training of principals, .58.

In order to address the problem that validity is neither absolute nor, therefore, ever finally established, attempts were made to ascertain the face validity of the instrument. The group requested to perform this task was comprised of eight elementary school principals, a director of elementary schools and two officers from a school system's research and development unit. Following comments from these professional judges concerning the
representativeness of items and their relevance to the research questions, three items were modified to improve clarity and relevance.

A major modification suggested by the group was that any question related to persuasion factors should be based on the five persuasion factors rather than the seventeen practical dimensions as shown in Table 4. The results of the pilot study confirmed that principals' answers tended to be grouped according to the persuasion factor categories.

Population and Sample

The population for this investigation was composed of elementary public school principals employed by school districts within Michigan. Considerations such as the lack of established research or literature on persuasive communications by principals which indicated a need for a study with substantial external validity and practical concerns such as financial outlay influenced the decision to limit the study to the state of Michigan. In addition, Michigan included a reasonably diversified, yet accessible set of schools in terms of school and community size, complexity of operation, and urban and rural components. According to the records maintained by the Division of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Services of the Michigan Department of Education, Michigan principals had a similar basic academic preparation as their counterparts in the other forty nine mainland states. Furthermore, the sizes and populations of schools were not dissimilar to those found in other states, particularly those of the Midwest.
Consequently, it was anticipated that the responses to the survey, within rationalized parameters, would have external validity.

The elementary school principal population was considered to be the 2,399 principals of the schools with elementary classes as listed in the Public Schools section of the Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide, 1977-78. A simple random sampling technique was used to select an initial complement of 300 principals; the selection of the sample was made using random numbers generated on the Western Michigan Computer (Petroelje & Stoline, 1977).

Shinkfield (1977) reported a "returned unopened" rate of 2.3 percent from a sample of 172 elementary school principals in Michigan drawn from the 1976-77 edition of the Directory. Therefore, as a natural result of the lag in the updating of the directory records, it was anticipated that a small number of questionnaires would be returned as undeliverable. The publishers of the Directory confirmed that the publication was at least 95 percent accurate.

Survey Procedures

Concern regarding the procedures by which a mailed survey is conducted largely centers on the need to avoid the negative qualities of this type of investigation. The researcher seeks to achieve a high return rate of completed questionnaires so as to reduce the possibility of differences between respondents and non-respondents. Erdos (1970) and Robin (1965) listed a number of techniques and procedures designed to maximize the return rate of questionnaires.
The major ideas selected as germane to the present study follow as side headings.

Confidentiality

For follow-up purposes only, an identifying code number was placed in the top right hand corner of the front page of each questionnaire. However, definite efforts were made to respect and protect the respondents' need for confidentiality. Consequently, as questionnaires were returned, the initial identification numbers were destroyed and respondents' names removed from the master mailing list. Questionnaires were given a second code number related to order of return. A separate list was compiled for respondents who had requested a summary of the results of the survey. Procedures used to protect the respondents' confidentiality were explained at the beginning of the questionnaire and in the accompanying cover letter. Certification of these measures adopted to protect respondents was lodged with the Department of Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University as required by the Department's Research Review Committee.

Preliminary Mailing

Prior to sending the questionnaire, an introductory letter (see Appendix C) was sent to each principal included in the sample. The letter contained an assurance of the participant's anonymity and the confidential handling of all information contained in the questionnaire; the intent was to foster a sympathetic reception of
the questionnaire by the respondent. In addition to requesting the respondent's assistance in the research, the letter provided a simplified explanation of the research, its importance and its possible applications.

**Questionnaire Mailing**

Two days after the preliminary mailing, the actual survey instrument was forwarded to 300 elementary school principals who constituted the sample. Each person was sent the following materials: a cover letter (see Appendix C), a copy of the school principal survey, and a return-addressed stamped envelope for return of the survey. The cover letter was designed to emphasize the previous communication, the confidentiality guarantee and the value of the respondent's assistance. The inclusion of a stamped return-addressed envelope was to enhance the factors of convenience and commitment.

**Follow-Up Card**

Six school days after the mailing of the questionnaire, a U.S. postal card (see Appendix D) was sent to each non-respondent. The content of the card briefly thanked the subject for responding (in the event of a crossing of letters in the mail) and reiterated the importance of the study and the responses of participants. For those who had not yet responded, there was a reminder that a stamped return envelope had been included with the questionnaire and that an early response would be appreciated.
Follow-Up Letter

A second follow-up, sent to non-respondents one week after the follow-up card, was comprised of an introductory letter (see Appendix C), another copy of the questionnaire, and another stamped self-addressed envelope. The general approach was one of providing a second questionnaire and envelope in case the original materials had been misplaced.

Optional Follow-Up

Robin (1965) suggested an optional third follow-up letter wherein the subject is invited to "get in touch with" (p. 27) the investigator or his staff for another questionnaire if the recipient has misplaced the two previously-sent questionnaires and the accompanying stamped self-addressed envelopes. While it was accepted that this technique does stimulate responses, its use was adjudged worthy of implementation only in the case where an inadequate response rate resulted from earlier mailings. A decision to use a postal card identical to the "Follow-Up Card" was not acted upon due to an adequate return rate.

Data Analysis

As each completed questionnaire was returned it was scrutinized for answers to open-ended questions, a request by the respondent for a copy of the questionnaire results, for missing data, and for any unsolicited comments by the respondent. Answers to the open-ended
questions were collated and recorded in Appendix E. An address label was prepared for each respondent who requested a copy of the results of the survey. Unsolicited comments were read to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of responses.

In considering the problem of missing data, only one questionnaire had a substantial number of questions unanswered—the respondent checked only the answers for the first page of the two-page questionnaire. The decision was made to include all the returned questionnaires in the data analysis, and to indicate in tables of results the number of respondents for each question.

All information on each questionnaire was coded and entered on mark-sense sheets for scanning and recording on a data file on Western Michigan University's PDP 11 computer. Once the information on the data file was verified as accurate, the data were stored in the "Bank Program" for further analysis.

The data analysis techniques determined when the "school principal survey" questionnaire was developed (see Appendix B) were utilized to respond to the stipulated research questions, and to test their implied hypotheses. Chapter IV records details of data analysis.

Summary

Chapter III reviewed the problem and introduced a detailed list of questions and subquestions (cited specifically for data collection and analysis purposes). An outline was given of the development of a
survey instrument designed to indicate elementary school principals' awareness of, preparation in, and accomplishment with persuasive techniques, and to establish a data base on the variables of the suggested persuasive communications model. It was reported that, subsequently, a "school principal survey" was forwarded to a random sample of 300 elementary school principals in the state of Michigan. Finally, procedures adopted for the analysis of data were discussed.

Chapter IV reports the survey response rate and an analysis of the study's findings.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The presentation of results falls into two major categories. First, the school principal survey response is reported. Second, the presentation of the research findings is organized around the five research questions and their associated subquestions as delineated at the commencement of Chapter III.

Survey Response

On January 6th, 1978, questionnaires were posted to the 300 elementary school principals in the sample; of those, 66 percent were returned by January 16th, 1978. A postal card reminder was then forwarded to the non-respondents. A further 16 percent of the original mailing questionnaires were returned. On January 23rd, 1978, a second copy of the questionnaire (with a covering letter) was forwarded to the non-respondents; a further 8 percent of the sample responded to the second questionnaire. The period of January 26th, 1978, through January 31st, 1978, was marked by blizzard conditions and a state of emergency was declared: No mail deliveries were made during those six days. Thus, the intended data collection timetable of three weeks was extended till February 9th, 1978, by which time the return rate was 90 percent. Figure 14 displays graphically the response rate by daily return of usable responses.
Table 5 provides a summary of the school principal survey returns. The total number of questionnaires returned was 270, i.e., 90 percent of the sample; for analytical purposes, all returned questionnaires were considered usable.

Table 5
Characteristics of Returned Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of the Total Number of Questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number sent</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned unopened</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned usable - Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First mailing</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second mailing</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The very high percentage of response, in relation to the standard adopted in Chapter III (viz., 80 percent is very good), may have been due to the survey methodology, but could possibly be attributed to a strong interest in, or concern about communications. Support for this latter view may be gauged from the fact that 10 percent of the respondents wrote separate requests for further information and/or results of the study.

Appendix D consists of a map of the state of Michigan which

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identifies school districts from which completed and returned survey instruments were received. The number in each district represents the number of questionnaires returned from that district; because of the random selection process, it was assumed that these numbers, to some extent, varied as a function of the population density in any given locality. Consequently, the results in this study were considered to be representative, state-wide, of elementary school principals' perceptions about persuasive communications.

The Findings

The presentation of the findings of the study uses a format whereby each research question and sub-question is formally stated. It should be noted that each sub-question implies a hypothesis. For each implied hypothesis, descriptive data were used to indicate the principals' responses.

Research Question 1. What do elementary principals consider to be their role in the communication network of the school?

   a. How do principals rate the importance of their communication function compared to a selection of other functions in their job descriptions?

   In order to determine how principals would rate the importance of the communication function in their educational leadership roles, they were asked to rank order the importance of six basic tasks, viz., research, supervision, instruction, communication, curriculum and administration. The results from this question are contained in
Table 6, which appears below.

Table 6
Ranking of Selected Leadership Tasks by Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Tasks</th>
<th>Median Response</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research function of principals clearly ranked as the least important of the stipulated tasks. Communication and administration each having a median response of 2.0, vied for the ranking as the most important task; the former was ranked number one as a result of a lower mean score.

b. Are principals the persons responsible for the development/maintenance/effectiveness of the schools' communication procedures?

This multi-dimensional question was reduced on the "School Principal Survey" instrument to better focus on the intent of the question, which was to determine whether school principals were the persons to whom the questionnaire should be addressed. Of the 270 respondents, 261 (96.67%) principals indicated that they were
responsible for school communications. Table 7 contains a summary of the responses.

Table 7
Principals' Perceptions of the Persons Responsible for Schools' Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/s Responsible</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School principal only</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>96.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person other than principal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal &amp; other person</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>270</td>
<td><strong>100.000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For respondents who indicated that a person other than the principal was responsible for the schools' communication procedures, the alternative persons were "the secondary school principal," "the Public Relations man of the school district" and "the Superintendent" (three responses). The five principals who responded in this way may have been concerned more with external communications related to the community than with internal communications among principal, staff and students.

The three responses indicating joint responsibility between the principal and another person, viz., "the Public Relations Director" (two responses) and "the Superintendent" (one response), provided a
balanced view of responsibility for internal and external communications.

c. How important to the success of the schools are the abilities of principals to communicate effectively?

As reported in Table 8, the principals' abilities to communicate effectively were mainly rated as being extremely important. There were no respondents who did not answer the question and not one principal considered the principals' abilities to communicate to be of no importance to the success of the school. Of the 270 respondents, 94.074 percent rated the principals' abilities to communicate as very important or extremely important.

Table 8
Principals' Perceptions of the Importance of Their Abilities to Communicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some importance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>28.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>65.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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d. Do principals formalize the schools' communications by having written procedures for communications?

In order to simplify this question on the survey instrument and to provide more detailed information on the communication procedures in schools the question was separated into two parts. First, it was determined whether or not schools had a policy on communications; Table 9 indicates that there was a similar number of schools with communication policies (127) to the number of schools without policies (135).

Table 9
Use of Communication Policies by Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Policy</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>47.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>50.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, principals who had responded in the affirmative were asked to indicate whether the communications policies were written, verbal or implicit policies. Table 10 lists the number of schools in each category as well as the number of schools which had no communication policy.
Table 10

Types of Communication Policies in Elementary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written policy</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>31.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal policy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit policy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No policy</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>50.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. What are the major purposes for principals' communications?

The final question concerned with the communication role of principals was an attempt to assemble a modicum of information on the reasons for principals' communications. Recipients of the "School Principal Survey" were requested to rank order (1 = most important) six purposes, viz., socializing, directing/leading, motivating, administering, informing and persuading. The results from this question are contained in Table 11. Informing (median = 2) was clearly ranked as the number one purpose for principals' communications and socializing (median = 6) the least important.
Table 11

Ranking of Communication Purposes by Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Communication</th>
<th>Median Response</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing/Leading</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administering</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuading</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2. What are the major audiences with which elementary school principals communicate?

a. Given a number of different potential audiences, how do principals rate the importance of each?

Principals were given nine potential audiences: three were considered as internal to the operation of the school, viz., students, teachers and administrators; three were grouped together as audiences having regular, direct communication with the school, viz., parents, community groups and other learning agencies; the last three were listed together because it was believed that their contacts with the school would be intermittent, viz., Government agencies, local residents and business people. Despite the convenience of this classification of audiences by their contact with the school, principals indicated an alternative grouping based upon the communications between principal and audience group.
Based on a seven-point scale ranging from "0 = no importance" through "6 = extremely important," principals' major audiences (in order of importance) were determined as teachers, parents and students. The next most important group contained administrators, local residents and community groups. The final group consisted of other learning agencies, business people and Government agencies. The mean of responses for each category of audience is shown in Table 12.

Table 12
Means of Responses of Principals as to the Importance of their Audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Residents</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Groups</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Learning Agencies</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business People</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agencies</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3. What are the major media by means of which principals communicate?

a. Given a selection of media, how do principals rate the importance of each?
The five types of communication media principals were asked to rate on the seven-point scale of "0 = no importance" through "6 = extremely important" were nonverbal, verbal, written, printed and electronic media. The results are abridged in Table 13.

Table 13
Principals' Perceptions of the Importance of Various Communication Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that 16 out of the 270 respondents (5.9%) did not respond to the "nonverbal" category may be an indication of some uncertainty on the part of principals as to the definition of nonverbal communication. Had the stem read "Nonverbal (actions)" greater clarity of understanding may have resulted.

b. What criteria do principals use in selecting a particular medium for their communications?

In the "School Principal Survey" this question was adapted to ask principals to select the one most common criterion used to select
a particular medium for their communications. Five possible criteria were suggested, viz., habit, cost, production constraints, audience expectation and administration procedures: An "other" category was provided for those who preferred an open-ended response. Table 14 shows the results of the question and Appendix E lists alternative criteria written in response to the "other" category.

Table 14

Principals' Most Common Criterion for Selecting a Communication Medium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habit</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production constraints</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience expectation</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>32.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration procedures</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>22.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Audience expectation and administration procedures accounted for over 44 percent of principals' selections, with habit, cost and production constraints gaining 27 percent of the responses.

c. How often do principals select a medium for communication because of its effectiveness with a particular audience?
On a seven-point scale ranging from "never" through "always", principals recorded a measure of their media-selection behaviors. As recorded in Table 15, almost 45 percent of principals claimed that they "usually" related medium selection to the audience of the communication.

Table 15

Principals' Relating of Medium Selection to the Audience of the Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17.407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>21.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>44.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4. Which persuasion factors are most commonly used by principals in developing persuasive communications?

a. Given five major persuasion factors, viz., factors related to source, message, receiver, destination and resistance, what percentage of principals are aware of extant research findings about those factors?
In anticipation of a less than 50 percent affirmative response from principals, each of the five major persuasion factors was augmented on the "School Principal Survey" instrument with one specific example which may have helped principals better identify the concept. For example, "Source" was explained by reference to "the credibility of the message sender" and "Message" carried an example referring to "the style of presentation". Nevertheless, for each persuasion factor category less than 50 percent of principals reported that they were cognizant of persuasion research. Table 16 lists the relevant responses and cites the extent of non-response to each category.

b. Given the same five persuasion factors used in research question 4(a), how relevant to principals' communications do principals consider each factor?

In order to ascertain how relevant to principals' communications each persuasion factor was considered, principals were asked to rate source, message, receiver, destination and resistance on a five-point scale from "0 = no relevance" through "4 = extremely relevant". The mean responses to the factors were: source 3.28, message 2.86, receiver 3.14, destination 2.28, and resistance 2.44. This question, requiring a technical knowledge about persuasion research and its application to the elementary school principals' communications, was noteworthy inasmuch as it had fewer responses than any other question on the survey instrument. The detailed analysis appears in Table 17.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasion Factor</th>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>33.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>59.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>43.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>49.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>33.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>58.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>78.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>70.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16
Principal's Knowledge of Extant Research on Persuasion
Table 17
The Relevance of Persuasion Factors to Communications by Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasion Factor</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Non-Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Do principals, in planning communications, make use of their knowledge of extant research findings?

When asked how often they used research findings on the persuasion factors referred to in research question 4b, the largest categories of response by principals were "Never" (25.18%) and "Occasionally" (21.481%). However, there were a number of principals who had responded that they had no knowledge of research in persuasion and consequently "never" used research findings to plan communications; these responses were eliminated from further analysis.

In order to test whether the responses differed according to the "knowledge of research" characteristic, the remaining results of research questions 4a and 4c were each collapsed into three categories which were placed in a contingency table and subjected to the $\chi^2$ test for two independent samples. The contingency table and test results are shown in Table 18.
Table 18

Contingency Table Relating Principals' Knowledge of Extant Research and Use of Research in Planning Their Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Research Factors Known</th>
<th>Use of Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square 46.3
Probability 0.001
Degrees of Freedom 4

**d. How often do principals seek feedback regarding the effectiveness of their communications?**

Principals were asked to indicate how regularly they sought feedback on their communications' effectiveness; the rating scale ranged from "0 = Never" to "6 = Always." The mean response (3.63) was located between the "Occasionally" and "Often" responses. Table 19 gives a detailed breakdown of responses for each category.
### Table 19

**Regularity of Principals' Requests for Feedback on Communications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>32.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>30.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>270</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. To what extent do principals alter their persuasive techniques according to the audience they are addressing?

The rating of principals' frequency of matching persuasive techniques to suit particular audiences is indicated in Table 20. On the scale of "0 = Never" to "6 = Always" the mean response (3.44) was identified between the "Occasionally" and "Often" categories.
Table 20
Frequency of Principals' Matching Persuasive Techniques to Particular Audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>34.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>25.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>270</td>
<td><strong>100.000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 5. How effective do principals consider to be their training in, and use of, persuasive communication techniques?

a. How do principals rate the effectiveness of their use of persuasive techniques with various audiences?

A seven-point scale with categories ranging from "Extremely inadequate" to "Extremely adequate" was used by principals to indicate their opinion as to the effectiveness of their use of persuasive techniques with various audiences. The mean response (4.23) was that of "Adequate". Table 21 lists the number of principals who nominated for each category.
Table 21

Principals' Perceptions of Their Ability to Effectively Persuade Various Audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely inadequate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very inadequate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>44.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very adequate</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>35.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely adequate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. What formal training have principals had in communication and persuasion?

This question was rewritten on the survey instrument to emphasize that formal training was considered to be courses taken for academic program credit. Principals were asked to circle the numbers zero to five according to the number of courses studied in each area. The mean number of courses studied was 1.48 for communication and 0.42 for persuasion. Table 22 shows the distribution of responses by principals as to the number of credit courses taken in communication and in persuasion.
c. How do principals rate their efforts to make communications persuasive?

On a seven-point scale ranging from "Extremely inadequate" to "Extremely adequate" principals indicated their perceptions about the adequacy of their efforts to make communications persuasive. The mean response was "Adequate" (4.09), as were the median and mode responses. Table 23 shows the distribution of responses.
Table 23

Principals' Ratings of Their Efforts to Make Communications Persuasive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely inadequate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very inadequate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>49.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very adequate</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>26.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely adequate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. Would principals welcome more information on how to enhance the effectiveness of their communications?

An overwhelming proportion of principals (90.741%) indicated they would welcome more information on how to enhance the effectiveness of their communications. Table 24 provides the analysis of all the answers.
Table 24
Principals' Requests for Additional Information on the Improvement of Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>90.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The results of this study indicated that principals perceive themselves to be the persons responsible in elementary schools for the schools' communications. Furthermore, they rate the communication task as their major role in providing leadership, and consider their ability to communicate effectively as extremely important to the success of the schools.

Despite the emphasis on the importance of communications, less than half (47.03%) of the principals surveyed had communication policies for their schools. For the schools that did have a policy, only two-thirds (69.67%) had written policies; the remaining policies were of a verbal or implicit nature.

Principals indicated that their main purpose for communicating was to "inform" audiences. Directing/leading, motivating and
administering were the next most important purposes for communicating. The least important purposes among those listed on the survey instrument were to "persuade" and to "socialize."

When one examines the principals' ratings as to the importance of various audiences, it appears that three distinct audience groups are delineated: first, the teachers, parents and students; second, administrators, local residents and community groups; third, other learning agencies, business people and government agencies.

The verbal medium is the most common means whereby principals maintain communications with their audiences. The written medium is the second choice by principals. Printed and electronic media are the least common media used by principals.

More than half (54.44%) of the principals who responded to the survey claimed to select a communication medium on the basis of audience expectation or administrative procedures. Another quarter (27.037%) of the respondents used the criteria of cost, production constraints or habit.

Emphasis on the use of a particular medium because of its effectiveness with a particular audience was also evident when three quarters (76.29%) of the principals stated that they "often," "usually" or "always" made this a criterion of media selection.

Generally, principals' knowledge of extant research on persuasion was limited. Research on "message" factors was the best known, but less than half (43.704%) of the principals claimed to have knowledge in this area. "Source" and "receiver" factors were
known by only one third of the respondents. "Resistance" factors were known by 20.370 percent of respondents, and the least well known category was that of "destination" factors.

Furthermore, by using a visual inspection technique on Table 18, it can be generally established that the fewer the number of research factors known by principals, the less likely it is that principals will make use of research findings in planning their communications.

The pattern established by principals in describing their knowledge of research on persuasion factors was replicated when they indicated their view of the relevance of those factors to school principals' communications. "Source" and "receiver" factors were considered very relevant, "message" factors were rated as relevant, and "resistance" and "destination" factors were rated as the least relevant.

Although principals reported limited experience with persuasion research, they claimed to make good use of two communication techniques having the potential to persuade. The technique of using feedback was well supported, with only 12.963 percent of principals using feedback less than "occasionally." Principals also reported that they favored matching persuasive techniques to particular audiences; approximately 16 percent of principals matched persuasive techniques to particular audiences less than "occasionally."

By and large, principals reported having had little formal training in communication (1.48 courses) or persuasion (0.42 courses) and indicated with a 90 percent vote that they would welcome more
information on how to enhance the effectiveness of their communications.

The need for opportunities to learn more about making communications effective may be supported by the fact that 15.925 percent of principals believe their ability to effectively persuade various audiences is less than adequate. Similarly, 20.000 percent of the principals rated their efforts to make communications persuasive as less than adequate.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V presents a general discussion of the study and its potential usefulness to those concerned with the practice of communications in educational leadership. In addition, recommendations are made for the refinement of the postulated persuasive communications model and for possible future research.

Summary

The primary objective of this study was to examine extant literature in the fields of communication and persuasion, and to develop a theoretical model purporting to describe the use of persuasive techniques in communications by school principals. It was anticipated that principals could make use of such a model to help formulate a school policy incorporating persuasion in communications. Also, the model could be used as a diagnostic tool to help principals evaluate the scope and dynamism of current persuasive practices and/or determine the adequacy of their own influence in integrating school and community resources for the improvement of student performance.

A secondary objective of the study was to collect data to provide information about elementary school principals' awareness of, preparation in and accomplishment with persuasive techniques.

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Information regarding the actual persuasive communications of principals was available, then, for comparison with the theoretical model.

A search of the literature revealed a plethora of information about communication and persuasion, but a dearth of publications relating either discipline to educational leadership in schools. The materials that did exist were largely opinion-based homilies on general school-community relations, with research supported by empirical data virtually non-existent.

Therefore, in addition to collecting data on the three major variables of the persuasive communications model, viz., the principals' audiences, media of communications and persuasion factors, it was determined to seek empirical data on the communications roles of principals and their experiences with persuasive techniques.

The population for this study was composed of elementary school principals employed by Michigan public school districts. A random sampling technique was used to select 300 principals from the Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide, 1977-78. During the period January 10 through February 9, 1978, 270 usable responses (i.e., 90 percent of the 300 questionnaires posted) were received. A demographic dispersion map (see Appendix D) indicated that respondents widely represented Michigan school districts.

Coded data from the "School Principal Survey" were transferred to computer discs. The data analysis techniques determined when the
questionnaire was developed (see Appendix B) were applied to principals' responses to test the implied hypotheses of the research questions. Means, percentages and rank-ordering were the basic forms used to provide statistical description of principals' responses.

Discussion of the Findings

Discussion of the findings will be organized according to the five major research concerns on which the questionnaire was based and will be presented in two parts. First, the communication roles of the principals will be discussed, as well as their training in and use of persuasive techniques. Second, the information collected about principals' audiences, media of communication and persuasive techniques will be examined to determine if changes should be made in the theoretical persuasive communications model in the light of principals' purported practices.

With "communication" clearly ranked as the number one task undertaken by principals, and with 96 percent of principals being solely responsible for their schools' communications, it appears that a strong case could be made for the inclusion of a substantial "communication" component in pre-service and in-service training programs for school administrators. Furthermore, pre-service programs may well need to include a sequence of communication courses at the Master's degree level and beyond, and/or to make compulsory a minimum number of such courses. For in-service programs, the need is seen more as one of providing practitioners with regular updating
as to the state of the art of communication.

Both pre-service and in-service programs should ensure that courses in communication have a strong practical element. When 94 percent of principals believe that their ability to communicate effectively is very important or extremely important to the success of the school, it seems that a practicum in communication is the most likely type of course in which principals can practice and demonstrate their developing abilities.

However, practical experience should not be promoted at the expense of theory. Currently, less than one third (31.48%) of elementary principals report having a written school policy on communications. A balance of theory and practice in persuasive communication courses may provide principals with a better understanding of the current state of the art, from which they can develop viable policies.

One reason for the low percentage of principals having written policies may be the lack of training in the theory or practice of persuasion and communication. In the present study, 28.15 percent of principals reported having had no formal course work in either persuasion or communication. When the subjects were taken separately, 28.89 percent of principals had no formal training in communication (a further 3.34% did not answer the question) and 68.52 percent had not studied persuasion (a further 11.48% were non-respondents).

Lack of training and experience with the theory of persuasion
may have been the reason for principals' low ranking of "persuading" as a purpose for communication. There is support for the viewpoint that persuasion is an important factor in all of the other suggested purposes for communication, viz., informing, directing/leading, motivating, administering and socializing. For example, Berlo (1960) has argued that "there is reason to believe that all use of language has a persuasive dimension, that one cannot communicate at all without some attempt to persuade, in one way or another" (p. 9).

Concern about the intent of the communicator also raises the problem of the ethics of persuasion and may well suggest that pre-service training in communication could, productively, be followed by a study of persuasion and its ethics prior to a practicum experience.

Despite the lack of training in communication and persuasion, approximately four out of five principals considered their ability to communicate and persuade was adequate or better than adequate—82.59 percent of principals perceived as adequate their ability to effectively persuade various audiences and 78.89 percent considered adequate their efforts in making communications persuasive. These figures, however, do not present the whole picture, because 90.74 percent of principals expressed a desire for more information on how to enhance the effectiveness of their communications. The contention of the present investigator is that the persuasive communications model demonstrates a logical basis upon which principals can build a positive theoretical and practical persuasive communications approach to their leadership role.
In examining the "audiences" variable in the model and comparing it to the responses of principals as to their actual experiences with those audiences, it appears that only minor changes are required. If the order of the individual audiences is to reflect the importance of those audiences to the principals' roles, the rankings must start with teachers and be followed by parents, administrators, local residents, community groups, other learning agencies, business people and government agencies.

The "media" variable on the persuasive communications model had five divisions listed in increasing levels of formality and cost. The "printed" and "electronic" categories were not only the most sophisticated and costly media, they were also the least important to principals. Nevertheless, the mean responses for both media were between "some importance" and "quite important," which would indicate that they should be included with nonverbal, verbal and written media in courses in communication.

The third variable of the persuasive communications model involved a set of five factors under which research on persuasive techniques and influences could be categorized. Inasmuch as principals reported having a very limited knowledge of research on persuasion, little formal course work in the subject and a limited experience with research in general (see Table 6), there appears scant evidence to suggest that any change in the model's persuasion dimension is warranted.

The implication for persons involved in the organization of
pre-service and in-service training for school administrators is not only to provide opportunities for increasing the level of understanding of the role of persuasion in making communications more effective, but to highlight the different persuasion factors and the relationships between them.

Recommendations for Further Study

The methodology used to select the sample for this study, the even state-wide distribution of respondents and the high response rate support the contention that results of this study may be generalized to the state of Michigan. These same factors suggest a degree of confidence that the results may apply to other states of this country where demographic features are similar to those of Michigan, particularly in the Midwest. If, however, this study were to be replicated within a state where demographic features were markedly different, comparisons could determine the extent to which the persuasive communications model could be applied confidently, country-wide. The replicated study might also yield data revealing differences, among the states, of principals' training and experiences with communication and persuasion skills.

An alternative to a simple replication of the existing study could be another examination of the data obtained for this study. There is considerable information still to be obtained from the data currently stored on the magnetic disc in Western Michigan University's Computer Center. For example, a researcher may run analysis of variance tests to determine the main effects and interaction of...
independent variables (e.g., principals' course work and knowledge of persuasion research) on a dependent variable (principals' rating of the relevance of persuasion factors). Such analysis should provide useful information, adding further dimensions to the present findings. Similarly, the existing data could be subjected to cluster-link analysis which may indicate whether or not further analysis would be justified.

Inasmuch as the current data indicate that the persuasive communications model has some relevance to the communication behaviors of elementary school principals, another study could test its relevance to secondary school principals and central office administrators. With three sets of data, information about each of the three types of educational leaders could be analyzed. A comparison of the three types could be made, and the information used to adapt the persuasive communications model to specific leadership roles. Subsequently, the adapted models could be used for in-service education programs especially designed to suit the needs of different types of administrators.

The present study relied on self-reported data from principals. A whole new aspect for investigation could involve a small sample of principals whose communication behaviors may be examined in detail by an external investigator. Such an investigation could provide insight into the congruence between principals' "actual" and "perceived" behaviors. For example, it may indicate whether or not principals' reports are accurate when they say that their ability to
effectively persuade various audiences is adequate.

Another possibility for further research is to replicate, within the education system, many of the extant research studies on persuasion and communication. Findings from such studies would have "immediate transfer" potential for school administrators and thereby provide a motivation for seeking improvement in the use of persuasive communications.

Conclusion

This study suggested an approach whereby educational leaders could attempt to alleviate some of the pressures of conflict and criticism on educational institutions in modern society. It suggested that the use of persuasive communications, focusing on school principals as the persons primarily responsible at the local buildings level for the improvement of the schools' educational climate, was a vital tool affecting organizational effectiveness.

Although principals reported that they considered their communications adequate, a substantial majority indicated an interest in learning how to make their communications more effective. The persuasive communications model was suggested as a suitable learning and diagnostic tool for such principals.

If principals are to learn how to improve the effectiveness of their communications, it seems that some provision for learning persuasion should be made by pre-service and in-service training programs. The suggestions from this study were that directors of
pre-service programs should examine their use of communications courses, the degree to which the course content emphasizes use of persuasive techniques, and the relationships between the theory and practice of persuasive communications. For in-service program directors, there appears an urgent need to acquaint principals with a practical interpretation of extant research findings about persuasive communications.
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APPENDIX A

School Principal Survey
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL SURVEY

All responses are confidential! The code number is for follow-up purposes only. Upon return of the completed form, identifying codes and records will be destroyed.

1. Are you, the principal, responsible for the effectiveness of communications procedures in your school?
   ( ) Yes   ( ) No     If No, who is responsible? __________________________

2. How important to the success of the school is your ability to communicate effectively?
   ( ) No Importance   ( ) Important   ( ) Extremely Important
   ( ) Some Importance ( ) Very Important

3. Rank order the importance of the following selection of performance roles of principals. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)
   ( ) Research   ( ) Instruction   ( ) Curriculum
   ( ) Supervision ( ) Communication ( ) Administration

4. Does your school have a policy on communications? ( ) Yes   ( ) No
   If Yes, what type of policy? ( ) Written ( ) Verbal ( ) Implicit

5. Rank order the following purposes for a principal's communication (1 = most important)
   ( ) Socializing   ( ) Motivating   ( ) Informing
   ( ) Directing/Leading ( ) Administering ( ) Persuading

112
6. Rate the importance of each audience to your role as principal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Little Importance</th>
<th>Some Importance</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Quite Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Groups</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Learning Agencies</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agencies</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Residents</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business-people</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Rate the importance to your job of the following communication media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
<th>Little Importance</th>
<th>Some Importance</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Quite Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal (face to face)</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written (hand or type)</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed (books, duplicated notes)</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic (TV, radio)</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. How often do you select a medium because it seems especially effective with a particular audience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Which one of the following is the most common criterion you use to select a particular medium for your communications?

- ( ) Habit
- ( ) Production constraints
- ( ) Administration procedures
- ( ) Cost
- ( ) Audience expectation
- ( ) Other, please specify _______________
10. In recent years researchers have studied the use of persuasive techniques as a means of improving communication effectiveness. This question requires two checks to indicate your response to two aspects of recent research.

(a) Do you know of any research findings about the following persuasion concepts?

(b) How relevant is each persuasion concept to the communications by principals?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>RESEARCH CONCEPT</th>
<th>RELEVANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>No Relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. the credibility of the message sender.</td>
<td>Little Relevance Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. the style of presentation.</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. relating content to receiver needs.</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. delayed-action impact.</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. the effect of commitment in resisting persuasive techniques.</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. When planning communications, how often do you make use of research findings on the concepts outlined above?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ever</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. How regularly do you seek feedback on the effectiveness of your communications?

Never Rarely Seldom Occasionally Often Usually Always
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

13. How often do you deliberately select specific persuasive techniques to better reach particular audiences?

Never Rarely Seldom Occasionally Often Usually Always
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

14. How would you rate your ability to effectively persuade various audiences?

Extremely Very Inadequate Inadequate Inadequate Undecided Adequate Adequate Adequate Extremely
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

15. Please circle the number of formal courses (for credit) you have studied in

Communication 0 1 2 3 4 5 Persuasion 0 1 2 3 4 5

16. How would you rate your efforts to make communications persuasive?

Extremely Very Inadequate Inadequate Inadequate Undecided Adequate Adequate Adequate Extremely
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

17. Would you welcome more ideas and information on how to improve communication effectiveness?

( ) Yes ( ) Undecided ( ) No
APPENDIX B

Organizational Chart for Research Questions
Organizational Chart for Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Analysis and Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do elementary principals consider to be their role in the communication network of the school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) How do principals rate the importance of their communication function compared to a selection of other functions in their job descriptions?</td>
<td>Rank order six leadership tasks. Ordinal data. Report rankings and median scores to establish principals' priorities among tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Are principals the persons responsible for the effectiveness of communications procedures of the schools?</td>
<td>Dichotomous data—Yes, No. Report relative frequencies (percentages). A high percentage of &quot;Yes&quot; responses would indicate that the persuasive communications model should be addressed to the principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) How important to the success of the schools are the abilities of principals to communicate effectively?</td>
<td>Ordinal data. Report relative frequencies (percentages) to show the attitude of principals toward the importance of their communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Do principals formalize the schools' communications by having written procedures for communications?</td>
<td>Dichotomous data to indicate whether or not schools have communication policies. Nominal data responses to types of policies—written, verbal or implicit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) What are the main purposes for principals' communications?</td>
<td>Rank order six purposes for communication. Ordinal data. Report rankings and median scores to establish principals' priorities among purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. What are the major audiences with which elementary school principals communicate?

(a) Given a number of different potential audiences, how do principals rate the importance of each? Nine potential audiences.

Rate the importance of each on a seven-point scale.

Report mean response for each category to determine relative importance of each audience.

3. What are the major media by means of which principals communicate?

(a) Given a selection of media, how do principals rate the importance of each? Five media categories.

Each category rated on a seven-point scale.

Report mean response for each medium to indicate central tendency.

(b) What criteria do principals use in selecting a particular medium for their communications? Five suggested criteria and an open-ended alternative category.

Nominal data.

Report relative frequencies (percentages) for the suggested criteria and list "other" responses. Demonstrates principals' tendencies to use particular criteria.

(c) How often do principals select a medium for communication because of its effectiveness with a particular audience? Responses from "never" through "always" were recorded on a seven-point scale.

Responses treated as nominal data and reported as relative frequencies (percentages).
4. Which persuasion factors are most commonly used by principals in developing persuasive communications?

(a) Given five major persuasion factors, what percentage of principals are aware of extant research findings about those factors? Five categories of persuasion factors. Possible responses of "yes," "no," "no answer." Nominal data. Report percentage of response in each category to indicate principals' familiarity with extant research findings about each persuasion factor.

(b) How relevant to principals' communications do principals consider each factor? Each persuasion factor rated on a five-point scale of zero through four. Treat responses as interval data. Report mean response for each factor. Report the number of non-respondents to indicate principals' difficulties with the research factors.

(c) Do principals, in planning their communications, make use of their knowledge of extant research findings? Responses on a seven-point scale from "never" through "always." If principals answered question 4(a) to indicate they had no knowledge of persuasion research and they responded "never" to 4(c) their answers were eliminated. Remaining responses were collapsed into a three by three contingency table which was subjected to a chi-square test to see whether responses to 4(c) were affected by responses to 4(a).
(d) How often do principals seek feedback regarding the effectiveness of their communications?

Responses were on a seven-point scale from zero through six.
Consider data as "interval" scale.
Report relative frequencies (percentages) of categories and mean response.

(e) To what extent do principals alter their persuasive techniques according to the audience they are addressing?

Responses on a seven-point scale from zero through six.
Report relative frequencies to show distribution of responses.

5. How effective do principals consider to be their training in, and use of, persuasive communication techniques?

(a) How do principals rate the effectiveness of their use of persuasive techniques with various audiences?

Responses on a seven-point scale from zero through six.
Consider data as "interval" scale.
Report relative frequencies (percentages) of categories and mean response.

(b) What formal training have principals had in communication and persuasion?

Emphasis on courses taken for academic credit.
Responses for communication and persuasion scored separately on a scale from zero through five.
Report raw score number of responses for each category and the mean number of courses taken in each subject.
(c) How do principals rate their efforts to make communications persuasive
Responses on a seven-point scale from zero through six.
Consider data as "interval" scale.
Report relative frequencies (percentages) for each category as well as the mean response.

(d) Would principals welcome more information on how to enhance the effectiveness of their communications?
Responses of "yes," "undecided" or "no."
Nominal data.
Report relative frequencies (percentages) for each response.
APPENDIX C

Questionnaire Covering Letters

Dear Principal,

I am writing to ask your help.

In a few days you will receive a questionnaire designed to provide information about the communication practices of school principals. The purpose of this research is to examine how principals make their communications as persuasive as possible, thereby effectively improving their relations with school personnel and the local community. With the failure of millage elections, and the power conflicts among the community, the educational bureaucracy and the teacher organizations, it appears that principals must be the basic catalysts and leaders in improving education.

There is, apparently, no research on the role of the principal in developing persuasive communications. Therefore, your answers are extremely important to the completion and accuracy of this research, whether or not you have had formal training in persuasion or communications. The plan is to gather information from a random selection of Michigan principals; the results will be used as a basis for decisions about the possibility of making principal communications as persuasive as possible.

It will take only a short time to answer the questions and to return the questionnaire in the stamped reply envelope.

Of course all answers will be confidential. The opening statement on the questionnaire outlines the procedures which will ensure confidentiality.

I would request that you complete the instrument rather than someone else, because I am interested in and concerned about your perspective as the chief administrative officer of your school. If you wish to receive a summary of the results, please enclose a note to that effect.

Your cooperation in this venture is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Laurence Dickie,  
Graduate Associate,  
Center for Educational Research.  

Harold W. Boles,  
Professor,  
Department of Educational Leadership.

Dear

A few days ago you received a letter in which I asked for your help in a research study of the use of persuasive communications by school principals in Michigan. I requested your cooperation in filling out a brief questionnaire; enclosed is a copy of that brief questionnaire. I would appreciate your help in filling out the questionnaire and returning it via the enclosed, stamped, self-addressed envelope.

With no research existing on the role of the principal in developing persuasive communications, your answers are extremely important to the completion and accuracy of this study. With a random sample of principals, it is crucial that each person selected does participate, whether or not s/he has experiences or attitudes which tend to be positive or negative about the subject.

I emphasize that confidentiality is assured and that the code for follow-up identification will be destroyed upon receipt of the completed questionnaire. If you wish to receive a summary of the results, please enclose a separate note to that effect.

As the chief administrative officer of your school, you have a unique perspective of the educational process and its role in society. Through this study I expect to obtain information which will facilitate decisions about the possibility of making principal communications reflect that unique perspective in a persuasive fashion.

Thank you for your prompt cooperation.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Laurence Dickie,  
Graduate Associate,  
Center for Educational Research.

Harold W. Boles,  
Professor,  
Department of Educational Leadership.
Dear

Recently you received a questionnaire asking for your confidential participation in an important survey on communications of school principals. If you have already returned the questionnaire, please consider this card a "Thank you" for your valuable help.

If you have not had a chance to do so, may I ask you to return the completed form now?

Your participation is vital to the success of the study!

Sincerely yours,

Laurence Dickie,
Center for Educational Research, W.M.U.
January 23, 1978

Dear

I recently mailed the enclosed form to you as a member of a scientifically selected number of principals in Michigan. The majority of principals have been kind enough to help with the study of persuasive communications by sending in their responses. If you were one of them, this is my way of saying, "thank you."

Because of the limited number of carefully selected participants, I am trying to get as near to a "perfect survey" as possible. Therefore, if you have been unable to complete the questionnaire before, I would appreciate your cooperation at this time.

Your answers will be treated confidentially and the enclosed, stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided to facilitate your earliest reply.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Laurence Dickie,  
Graduate Associate,  
Center for Educational Research.

Harold W. Boles,  
Professor,  
Department of Educational Leadership.
APPENDIX D

Surveys Returned by County Areas
Surveys Returned by County Areas

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APPENDIX E

Alternative Media Selection Criteria
### Alternative Media Selection Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Criterion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>More than one criterion cited from &quot;Habit, Cost, Production constraints, Audience expectation, Administration procedures.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ease of distribution</td>
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<td>What we consider to be best in a particular situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Availability</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Depends on the nature of the communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>That which is necessary at the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Knowledge of content and knowledge of group</td>
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<td>Past experience and research findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Importance of the communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Judgment, vibrations, feelings, empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Cause people to think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Range of communication</td>
</tr>
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<td>Easiest at moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Appropriateness for purpose intended</td>
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