AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS
OF TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
ON OCCUPATIONAL SOURCES OF STRESS

DISSERTATION

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By

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The purpose of this study was to determine the stress factors which create the most difficulty for the superintendent; to determine which, if any, groups are most responsible for generating these stress factors; to determine if variables in the personal life of the individual superintendent are related to the amount of stress felt by him; and to suggest ways in which the amount of stress may be reduced. The population of this study was the school superintendents in Texas.

The instrument used in this study was a two-part questionnaire consisting of thirty-five items designed to elicit perceptions of superintendents toward those situations that were most bothersome on their job. As a result of the information collected by the questionnaire, the following conclusions were submitted: (1) Interpersonal relations and administrative constraints cause the greatest amount of stress to Texas school superintendents; (2) superintendents use both physiological and cognitive methods to cope with stress; (3) the superintendents in this study, as a total
group, do not perceive themselves as highly stressed; (4) the superintendents of school districts with an average daily membership of 1,000 to 2,999 **consistently** perceive themselves as experiencing the **greatest** amount of stress as compared to the other respondents; (5) the superintendents of school districts with an average daily membership of 3,000 and over **consistently** perceive themselves as experiencing the **least** amount of stress; (6) the local board of education is the special-interest group causing the **greatest** amount of stress to all superintendents; (7) the state education agency is the special-interest group causing the **least** amount of stress to all superintendents; (8) according to this study, variables of age, years in the superintendency, years in present position, amount of physical exercise, and academic degrees held do not have a great impact on the stress as perceived by the superintendents as a total group.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The effect of stress upon individuals in all walks of life is becoming an increasingly important subject of research. Stress factors inevitably affect persons in positions traditionally associated with the decision-making process. Mental, emotional, and physical symptoms typically occur in management and administrative occupations. Anxiety resulting from occupational stress has been found to have such harmful physical effects as cardiac problems, high blood pressure, and ulcers (10) and such psychological effects as fear, conflict, and withdrawal (9).

Although almost everyone has a definite notion of what personal stress is, a definition of stress is not easily agreed upon even by experts. In discussing stress, individuals tend to refer to different kinds of phenomena, since it is natural to identify stress in terms of personal experience. What is stressful for one individual may not be stressful to another. In short, stress reactions will depend on both the individual and the situation.

A situation becomes stressful when an individual feels unable to deal with certain demands that must be met. According to Gowler and Legge, stress is more than a heavy workload.
It means a combination of uncertainty, an important issue, and a sense of being held accountable for whatever happens. This combination can best be summarized as a concern about personal failure, a breakdown in one's sense of control over events (3, p. 53).

Such stress is intensified when one feels accountable to several groups, each having unique demands to be met by the administrator in charge. Special-interest groups create role conflicts within the administrator, the result being situational stress. These groups typically include the state office of education, the local board of education, the parents, the school staff, the students, and the community. In addition to these groups, the superintendent must deal with his own personal goals and values. Lack of consistency between his own priorities and what circumstances force him to do, and lack of control over events contribute to the creating of stress within the school administrator.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to examine the demands of various groups that a school superintendent must deal with and the resulting stress created for the superintendent by each.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are fourfold:

1. To ascertain the stress factors which create the most difficulty for school superintendents;
2. To determine which groups are responsible for generating these stress factors;

3. To determine if the variables of age, size of school district, years in present position, years in the superintendent, hours of physical exercise per week, current physical health, percentage of total stress in life resulting from the job, and highest degree held are related to the amount of stress felt by school superintendents;

4. To suggest effective means of dealing with the demands of various groups and how to reduce the amount of stress felt by school superintendents.

Research Questions

For purposes of this study the following research questions were analyzed.

1. There will be no important differences among the means of the selected stress factors as reported by superintendents.

2. There will be no important differences among the means of the stress factors when comparing the six special groups with which the superintendent interfaces. These special groups are the state education agency, the board of education, the parents, the community, the staff, and the students.

3. There will be no important differences among the means of the selected stress factors when comparing them by
size (number of students in average daily membership [ADM]) of school districts.

4. There will be no important differences among the means of the selected stress factors when considering the variables of age, size of school district, years in present position, years in superintendency, hours of physical exercise per week, current physical health, percentage of total stress in life resulting from job, and highest degree held.

Background and Significance of the Study

Although a number of studies have been done regarding the psychological and physiological effects of stress on management positions in general (4, 6, 9, 10, 13, 15), only a few have examined the effects of stress on school administrators. Koff, Laffey, Olson, and Cichon (5) observed that "phrases such as 'executive stress' and 'executive burnout' are often used to describe the hazards of being a high level administrator in the corporate world, but it is reasonable to suspect that these hazards characterize school administration as well." Yet they note that there has been little research on stress in the occupation of school administrators. The potential dangers of physical and mental disorders to persons in decision-making roles provide sufficient reason to examine stress in school administration.

According to Lewis and DeVries, the problem of stress among school administrators has become "epidemic." A turbulent society, rapidly changing modes of living, rising
expectations, and the climate in many schools and school districts have created this situation. They maintain that these conditions have resulted in serious physical illnesses and psychological disorders for school administrators. The problem reached such proportions that in 1980 the Los Angeles Unified School District held twenty-five one-day stress management workshops and fifteen half-day workshops to develop personal-stress management programs (7).

Spaniol and Caputo (14) describe the problem of stress as "burnout," defining it as "wearing yourself out doing what you have to do." They warn that burnout can be physically harmful, resulting in accident proneness, alcoholism, mental illness, marital conflict, and suicide. It can also be potentially harmful to others in the administrator's life: he may, as a result of stress, criticize others more or see less hope for those he is supposed to help. Spaniol and Caputo cite such factors as inadequate professional preparation and problems inherent in the work environment, such as time constraints, lack of peer support, lack of positive feedback, and non-rewards for creative risk taking as contributing to administrative burnout.

Platt provided a succinct description of the underlying cause of much school administrator stress: interpersonal tension. "Working with people all day is much more stressful than working with things all day, and the administrator is in the people business" (11).
Giammateo (2) focused on various methods administrators employ in coping with stress, such as awareness, tolerance, reduction, and management of stress. Swent (15) investigated the sources of stress for superintendents and principals in Oregon. He found that the administrators experienced the greatest stress in their efforts to comply with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies. Other high stress factors were related to attending meetings, completing reports on time, gaining public approval and financial support for school programs, and resolving parent/school conflicts. However, Swent made no attempt to classify the frequency of stress arising from one group as compared to another. His emphasis, instead, was on classification of sources of stress according to types: constraints intrinsic to administration, administrative responsibility, interpersonal relationships, intrapersonal conflict, and role expectations. In his recommendations for further research, Swent suggested further refinement of his five categorical stress factors in a way that would take fundamental groups into consideration.

The importance of studying the level of stress engendered by different groups is supported by Piatt's observation that the school administrator has teachers, students, parents, and pressure groups from the community, all demanding responses from him on a constant basis and, far too often, these demands are in direct conflict with each other (11).
As Piatt has pointed out, the world of education is no longer a safe refuge for people who had hoped to serve in a helping capacity. It is now a world filled with stressful situations. Administrators will have to learn how to combat stress in their worlds, for stress can be an extremely debilitating element, a threat to both the person and the efficiency of the entire organization for which he is responsible (11).

Accordingly, this study modified the Swent questionnaire so as to take into account the frequency with which a stress factor relates to each of the following six special-interest groups.

It would seem that a school superintendent experiences stress from an even greater number of sources than do managers of business. According to Morris (3), the business manager has four major influences to which he is subject: his seniors, colleagues, juniors, and those outside the organization. By contrast, this research project assumes that a school superintendent experiences conflicting
pressure from two groups of superiors (the state education agency and the board of education), two groups of partners (parents and community), two groups of juniors (staff and students), and his own intrapersonal goals and values. This study sought to determine which of the three levels causes the superintendent the greatest amount of stress as well as the specific stress factors indigenous to each of the six groups. Such knowledge would enable the superintendent to improve relationships with the most problematic group and thereby minimize stressful relationships with that group.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, a number of terms were of special importance. They are defined below.

Role conflict.—The internal and external conflicts impinging on a school superintendent due to the conflicting demands and responsibilities resulting from his having to satisfy a variety of special interest groups, not to mention his own priorities (goals and values).

Special interest groups.—Groups in the study that represent special interests to be served: the state education agency, the local board of education, parents, community, staff, and students.

Stress.—Stress is "a discrepancy between the demands impinging on a person—whether those demands be external or internal, whether challenges or goals—and the individual's potential responses to those demands" (9).
Stress factors.—Those factors characteristic of each special-interest group situation which have a potential for creating stress for the superintendent. These will be stated in operational terms in the sense that they consist of the items of the questionnaire reproduced in Appendix A.

Size of district.—The aggregate days of membership divided by the number of days school is in session.

Group 1 0-99. There were no more than 99 students in membership.

Group 2 100-499. There were no less than 100 nor more than 499 students in membership.

Group 3 500-999. There were no less than 500 nor more than 999 students in membership.

Group 4 1000-2,999. There were no less than 1000 nor more than 2,999 students in membership.

Group 5 3,000 and over. There were no less than 3,000 students in membership.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire for this study was adapted from the one developed by Swent (15) for the purpose of studying the perceptions of Oregon school administrators on occupational sources of stress. Permission was obtained from the author for this purpose. Each of the thirty-five items in Part A of the questionnaire identifies a stress factor indigenous to one or more of the six special-interest groups. Part B
of the questionnaire contains questions concerning various demographic and other data such as age, size of school district, years in present position, years in superintendency, hours of physical exercise per week, current physical health, percentage of total stress in life resulting from job, and modes of handling pressures.

The questionnaire was developed and field tested by Swent (15). Approximately forty school administrators kept a week-long log which identified the week's job-related stressful events. These stress-related events were written in the form of questions. The questions were placed in a pilot questionnaire and field tested with a group of twenty-five practicing administrators. After the initial testing, the questionnaire was revised and tested with a second group of twenty administrators.

Each of the first thirty-five items of the questionnaire stated an area of concern to which the respondent answered either "not applicable" or on a scale ranging from 1 to 4, as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Never Bothers Me</th>
<th>Rarely Bothers Me</th>
<th>Occasionally Bothers Me</th>
<th>Frequently Bothers Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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Both Part A and Part B of the questionnaire offered the respondent the opportunity to respond freely to the issues
involved, so that the questionnaire had the advantage of both the closed and open-ended type of question.

The Swent questionnaire was subsequently used by Gerald Marshall with fifteen administrators enrolled in administration courses at Kansas State University in 1980. In this study, which was reported in Marshall's dissertation, "A Survey Study of the Perceptions of Kansas School Administrators on Occupational Sources of Stress," an alpha coefficient reliability was calculated to determine the measure of internal consistency or extent to which items in the category measure the same thing. The reliability coefficients ranged from a high of .74 to a low of .50 (8, p. 26).

The Swent survey was also used by Gerald Cook, whose doctoral study, "Administrative Stress and Coping Behavior of Wyoming Public School Administrators," was completed at the University of Wyoming in 1980 (1).

Procedures for Collecting Data

The population sampled by the questionnaire consisted of the school superintendents listed in Who's Who in Texas Educational Administration (14). This source lists approximately 85 per cent of all school superintendents in the State of Texas. A letter of introduction, along with the questionnaire and a return envelope were mailed to sixty superintendents in each size group.
If there were less than 60 in a given classification, a questionnaire was mailed to all the population in that group. In order to meet the needs of this study a minimum return of 30 per cent of the sixty mailouts was established. A minimum of eighteen returns was needed for purposes of this study. School districts were placed in groups according to the number of students in average daily membership and then a table of random numbers was used to select the sixty from each group. The Texas Association of School Administrators supplied labels bearing the name and address of each of the sample members selected. After two weeks, a follow-up letter and questionnaire were mailed to those not responding to the first questionnaire. After three additional weeks, a second and final follow-up letter with questionnaire was mailed to those who had not yet responded.

An instrument with two major components was used for data collection. These components are (1) thirty-five occupational stressors designed to obtain a measurement indicating the level the stressor bothers the respondent; and (2) eight questions designed to collect demographic information concerning age, size of school district, years in present position, years in superintendency, hours of physical exercise per week, current physical health, and percentage of total stress in life resulting from job.
Procedure for Analyzing Data

Emphasis was placed on relative strength of the perception rather than specific measurement. A mean score for each item was computed. The higher the mean score, the greater the stress for the superintendents as a group. The research questions will be rejected if a range of 1.5 or more is obtained. In addition, answers of "not applicable" are assigned a value of zero, which will lower the mean score of any item. A total mean was computed for each of the special-interest groups—state education agency, board of education, parents, community, staff and students—to determine whether there were any important differences between the groups. Initial treatment of the data collected from the second set of questions included computing means and standard deviations of the mean for each demographic variable and individual stressor. The sample was divided into subsets based on the demographic variables of average daily membership (ADM). By using the mean scores, a rank order of means for each individual stressor was obtained.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was limited to the school superintendents of the State of Texas. The study involved all the limitations recognized in collecting data by mailed questionnaires. The number of stress factors included in the questionnaire was fairly comprehensive, but is in no way to be considered as a
complete list of all stress factors that confront a superintendent of schools.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The Nature of Stress

The phenomenon of stress has been defined in the literature in various ways. The pioneer researcher in the field, the endocrinologist Hans Selye, first defined it as "the non-specific reaction of the body to any demand made on it" (12, p. 16). By "any demand" he meant demands both pleasant and unpleasant. Increasingly, however, researchers speak of the concept of stress in its more pejorative connotations, defining what Selye actually called "distress," that is, when the demands made upon the person are "too intense, too uncertain, and too prolonged" (5, p. 475).

Dodge and Martin define stress as "the state of apprehension and tension with associated physiological changes that accompanies the individual's attempt to adapt to any stimulus condition" (2, p. 329). Rule and Nesdale maintain that "essentially, stress represents some disturbance in the organism which is characterized by physiological change" (14, p. 88). Thus the concept of stress has come to be regarded as a negative factor with which the healthy organism must somehow cope.
Yet stress is not avoidable in the life of anyone. Nor is it always harmful. Selye cautions,

The first thing to keep in mind is that we must not suppress stress in all its forms, but rather diminish stress and facilitate eustress, the satisfactory feeling that comes from the accomplishment of tasks that we consider worthwhile.

Total elimination of stress is impossible, even during short periods, because that would involve the cessation of demands made upon any part of the body, including the cardiovascular, respiratory, and nervous systems. This would be equivalent to death (21, p. 9).

Similarly, Warburton points out that it is clear that the stress phenomenon is an integral part of normal everyday life. Only when we are in "neutral," a state of relaxed wakefulness, is the stress response very low. As soon as we start to concentrate and do something, the brain prepares us for action, psychologically and physiologically. The major problem for future research is how we can organize our society so that we can have the "stress without distress" for which Selye argues (5, p. 475).

Lazarus summarizes the four main classes of reaction typically used to index stress:

1. reports of disturbed effects, such as fear, anger, depression, and guilt;
2. motor-behavioral reactions, such as tremor, increased muscle tension, and speech disturbances;
3. changes in the adequacy of cognitive functioning, affecting perception, judgement, problem solving, and social adaptation;
4. physiological changes, or reactions of both the autonomic nervous system and the adrenal glands (9, pp. 6-7).

Causes and Effects of Stress

There is much evidence that stress effects cause physical illness. For this reason, Lazarus points out that the
fields of psychology, psychiatry, internal medicine, physiology, sociology, and anthropology devote substantial resources to the study of stress.

The reason for this voluminous activity is simply that stress, as a universal human and animal phenomenon, results in intense and distressing experience and appears to be of tremendous influence in behavior. It is also of the utmost importance in the effectiveness of adaptation. It would be of great value to both the biological and social sciences if we could thoroughly understand the processes involved in stress and control them (9, p. 2).

Dodge and Martin found that "chronic emotional disturbances produce chronic functional disturbances of organs which in turn gradually lead to tissue damage and to organic disease" (2, p. 35). Illnesses that have been identified as stress related include heart ailments, cancer, ulcers, headaches, insomnia, backaches, hypertension, colds, allergies, colitis, skin ailments, and drug addiction.

McQuade and Aikman assert,

It is the thesis of a growing number of medical scientists . . . that the basic cause of much 20th century disease is a shadow that has slowly darkened our lives, like the smog that has darkened our cities. This shadow is stress (12, p. 4).

Dodge and Martin point out that until a century ago, infectious and contagious diseases were the major cause of illness and death throughout the world. Now, however, chronic diseases, such as some mentioned above, are the major killers (2, p. 5). Selye concurred with this assessment. "At the moment I would say that the most frequent causes of disease in man are psychological" (4, p. 10).
Stress not only causes physical illness, but it is a major cause of depression. Shafer reports that stress-related behavioral depression causes irritability, excessive complaining, impaired memory, inability to concentrate, difficulty making decisions, loss of sexual desire, inability to get started in the morning, slowed reaction time, crying, and excessive guilt feelings. Physical results from stress-related depression include loss of appetite, constipation, insomnia, impotence, headaches, indigestion, dizziness, and abnormal heart rate (16, p. 61). According to McLean, depression "is considered to be an unadaptive response to psychological stress rather than an illness" (11, p. 297). McLean's study found that lack of control over one's situation or an inability to respond to stressors appropriately is a source of depression.

Stressors on the human organism may originate from either outside or inside the body. Outside stimuli would include such stimuli as weather changes and traffic movements. Inner stress can include demands an individual places upon himself or resentments harbored from the past.

Rule and Nesdale found that the physical environment may have its impact as a stressor either directly or indirectly. Direct stressors are those that involve "environmental impositions, trauma, or insults which directly strain or stress the adaptive capacities of the neurophysiological system" (14, p. 89). Such direct stressors as excessive
noise and temperature appear to cause an autonomic excitability effect. For example, blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and palm-sweating increase after the initial reception of noise or heat.

Stress can vary in intensity. Microstressors, of a milder nature, include such daily stimuli as noise or repetition of monotonous job tasks. Macrostress, or major stress, occurs when there is a crisis in the individual's life, such as a death in the family or a geographical uprooting.

There is considerable literature on major life stress events and their effects. McLean cites the data of Brown, Harris, and Peto which indicate that important life events had a formative environmental effect in depression in over one-third of their sample, inasmuch as the occurrence of life events and temporal onset of depression appeared to be causally related (11, p. 301). He concludes that the distinguishing characteristic of people who are high risks for depression is the extreme difficulty these persons experience in the management of day-to-day problems, or microstress (11, p. 302).

Shafer reports that stress may be of a chronic nature that has existed over a long period of time, such as an unhappy marriage; or it may be acute, of short duration, such as the adjustment to a new employer. Stressors that are relatively unfamiliar create the need for the most
adjustment. The familiar, or some degree of routine, has been found to be beneficial in the lives of most people, since it eliminates the need to adjust to too many stressors. Although most stress is caused by overload, that is, too much information to process at one time, stress can be caused equally by too little to do, resulting in boredom and under-stimulation (16, p. 31).

Shafer classifies four separate forms of stress:

1. Physical stress response, also known as the "fight-or-flight" response. In this response, the human organism perceives itself as threatened by some kind of danger. The response begins deep in the brain in the hypothalamus, the nerve center which controls our organs and glands. The hypothalamus in turn stimulates the stomach, the spleen, the liver, and the heart. As a result, the entire body becomes momentarily stronger and faster to cope with emergency.

   The hypothalamus sends messages to the pituitary gland, which activates the adrenal and thyroid glands and increases production of hormones. These increase in turn the metabolic rate, the blood pressure, the heart rate, white and red blood cell production, the visual perception. At times of real danger, these physical changes are not generally harmful to the person. Organic illness from stress occurs when such stress is too intense or prolonged.

2. Emotional stress, which can sometimes be beneficial, as before a job interview, when it may make one more alert. Prolonged or intense emotional stress is damaging.

3. Intellectual stress, occurring especially in the process of decision-making. Overload can lead to a breakdown of the decision-making process, causing one to become irrational.

4. Behavioral stress, which is the response of the demands of daily living (16, pp. 55-60).

The literature describes the many kinds of experiences that can lead to the condition of stress. Already mentioned
is Shafer's citing of the condition of overload, in which one has simply too much to do and, conversely, the condition of understimulation, or not enough to do. According to Selye, the absence of meaning, a malaise resulting from feeling detached and alienated from work and community is another source of stress. "One reason for this is that the satisfaction of religious codes has diminished in importance for mankind. So has the idea of being loyal to your monarch or leader" (4, p. 10).

Dodge and Martin assert that role ambiguity, or the condition that has resulted from rapid change in our society, has caused mass social stress in modern times.

As the society becomes more complex, socioeconomic institutions are differentiated and individuals who take part in these institutions often have several frequently contradictory roles. The individual is then under constant pressures of mutually inconsistent role demands which become the major source of psychological stress (2, p. xxii).

The authors' thesis is that "man-made technological and urban environment is itself the fundamental basis of the morality patterns in most of the Western societies" (2, p. xxii).

Shafer also lists role conflict, which occurs when the cluster of expectations placed on a person conflicts with that person's own desires, or when the roles that person must play conflict with each other, thus becoming a source of stress. He also found that transitions, such as geographic mobility, promotions, demotions, and divorce are experiences
which precipitate stress, as do major losses, such as the death of family members, or sometimes retirement (16, p. 77). Shafer also cites the concept of unfinished business, or uncompleted developmental tasks or unexpressed emotions, as a source of stress (16, p. 80).

In his research, Shafer found the following groups to be most vulnerable to distress: the divorced, single, and widowed; the unhappily married; women; nonemployed housewives; husbands of employed housewives; migrant workers, families who experience geographic mobility; the unemployed; black men; teenagers with high achievement pressures placed on them by parents; urban dwellers; parents of young children; blue-collar workers; top-level executives; sedentary workers; and those between the ages of fifteen and thirty and of fifty-five and sixty-five (16, pp. 61-63). As can be seen, the list includes almost all segments of the population.

Some research found that the workplace is the source of most stress, if for no other reason than that individuals spend most of their time on the job. Warburton points out that major life stresses are not the major source of prolonged stress for most people, since they are isolated episodes in one's life.

A much more pervasive problem is work. . . . It is a consequence of work that most distress occurs. One of the causes of work stress is that the person cannot handle the total information output. . . . When
we understand the changes that occur with information overload, we will be able to design tasks to allow for the inevitable shift in the balance of cognitive abilities that occurs with high levels of stressors (5, p. 475).

According to Shafer's research, stress in the workplace is most often caused by low satisfaction, low work-related self-esteem, inconsistency between job demands and comfort zone, chronic boredom, chronic overload, too much change in work assignments or conditions, excessive drive or competitiveness, chronic urgency and lack of time, a sense of helplessness, lack of influence in decision-making, social isolation, absence of meaning in work, perceived underutilization of abilities, job insecurity, perceived lack of social support, and confusion as to role expectation (16, p. 84).

Stress and the School Administrator

The workplace of school administration is a particularly fertile breeding ground of stress for those employed in this profession. Both Davis (1, p. 21) and Giammatteo (3, p. v) term the occurrence of stress in school administrators as "an occupational hazard." Writing to school administrators, Saville and Kavina assert, "Almost every issue you routinely deal with is a potential breeding ground for stress" (15, p. 18). These researchers conducted a study to determine how stress affected the lives of school superintendents. Their survey identifies and rates the following areas of stress.
1. The superintendent's identification of their personal stress sources.
2. Their methods of coping with distressful situations.
3. Identification of the prevalence of certain high-distress factors among superintendents.
4. Determination of the health habits of superintendents.
5. Determining whether these habits affected the respondents' ability to cope with stress.

The results of this study revealed the following:

1. Almost 35% of the responding superintendents reported having had stress-related physical illnesses during the previous five years. The most commonly reported illnesses were ulcers, cardiovascular problems, and a combination of symptoms that might be termed burnout.

2. Almost 35% of the respondents indicated that they have routine physicals at least every two years. Nearly 72% reported that they were non-smokers. Almost 41% reported being overweight. More than 58% said they exercise little or none at all.

3. More than 80% admitted to having certain "Type A" characteristics, traits closely associated with intense personalities and with achievement. Medical research indicates that extreme Type A individuals are more prone to suffer heart attack and other coronary diseases, ulcers, and tension-induced headaches. On the Type A characteristic of a sense of time urgency, almost 68% related themselves as "high" or "excessive." Only 28% of the 276 respondents indicated that they had used all of their allotted vacation time over the previous five years.

4. The ten most distressful situations identified by superintendents were negotiations, interaction with the school board as a formal power group, community pressures, dealing with overall district financial matters, legal issues, dealing with specific financial crises, disagreements between the school board's and the superintendent's concepts of school organization, internal organizational problems and issues, confrontations with the board over an important issue, and interaction with individual board members.

5. Almost 70% indicated that they have informal, individual methods of coping with stress, rather than formal, prescribed plans. Their most frequently reported activities were exercise programs, prayer
or meditation, outdoor recreation, and specific sports activities (15, pp. 18-20).

One of the reasons administrators are particularly vulnerable to stress is the inherent decision-making process associated with their duties. Goldberg found that rational decisions depend upon the ability to predict the consequences of one's actions. Today, this requires processing extraordinary amounts of information at extreme speed. We must weigh a greater number of alternatives in much less time than our predecessors. Yet experiments have shown that the greater number of alternatives open to a person, the longer it takes to reach a decision and act upon it (4, p. 14).

Goldberg explains that there is a difference between making decisions in a context of risk and in a context of uncertainty. "In risk, you know the variables that influence a situation, but not the amount to give to each one. In the case of uncertainty, you don't even know what the variables are" (4, p. 15). Thus, the administrator is likely to feel anxious when confronted by an increasing rate of uncertainty in a world constantly undergoing transition. Goldberg adds,

Experiments have also revealed two basic principles that could explain the breakdown suffered by executives who deal with "decision-stress" day in and day out: humans have a limited capacity to receive, process, and remember information. Overloading the system can lead to serious breakdown in performance (4, p. 16).

The monograph of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1980, lists three attitudes in administrators that either cause or result in stress. They are
(1) Apathy, caused by a high level of pent-up hostility. It is a defense, a barrier against further hurt or disappointment. (2) Capitulation, which is rooted in failure to believe in your ability to make decisions. The fear is that you will get into trouble or make a wrong decision, so you capitulate. (3) Worry, which develops from lack of predictability. There doesn't have to be an actual event for you to worry about. You develop the attitude, "I must worry," and feel this is a preparation for action (3, p. 56).

In addition, this monograph discusses an attitude of cynicism that may develop in the administrator, the "won't work" attitude [which] develops when you are so afraid of being put in social danger, in a situation where your pride may be hurt. You prevent a new idea by claiming that nothing world work. You have to fear a loss of pride to be a "won't work" person. You have to be willing to dwell on flaws and the potential dangers in any new idea. The standard of the "won't work" administrator is perfection, a surefire way to maintain stress (3, p. 57).

Another result of stress discussed in this monograph is that of psychological withdrawal. "By and large, these people feel trapped by their desire to help other people and give others means to solve their problems" (3, p. 27). Their feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, and hopelessness, combined with the resolve to continue despite those feelings "exact a heavy toll on administrators' lives and the lives of those around them" (3, p. 28).

Frustration is another effect of prolonged stress that may result in anxiety, which is a form of mental distress or uneasiness. Responses to frustration include withdrawal, which results in depression; aggression, or attacking those who seem to be the cause of disappointments; and displaced
aggression, which is attacking other people or things when
one cannot attack the real cause of the disappointment.
Frustration can result in blocking behavior, which is a be-
havioral response employed by individuals attempting to deal
with what they perceive as threats.

People who block . . . devote an appreciable portion
of their verbal, physical, and emotional energy to
defending themselves. Too much focus on detail, re-
strictive regulations and policies, and norms for
total conformity are often blocking mechanisms. Even
the most intelligent administrators will commit gross
blunders when they become hostile or stressed (3,
p. 37).

Saville and Kavina found in their research that super-
intendents sometimes suffer from a condition termed "burnout."
This colloquial term is used to describe a certain reaction
to a stressful occupation. Pines and Aronson define "burn-
out" as

a state of mind that frequently affects individuals who
work with other people and who pour in much more than
they get back from their clients, supervisors, and
colleagues. It is accompanied by an array of symptoms
that include a general malaise: emotional, physical,
and psychological fatigue; feelings of helplessness,
hopelessness, and a lack of enthusiasm about work and
even about life in general (3, p. 13).

Research indicates that burnout strikes precisely those
people who have been most idealistic and enthusiastic about
their work.

We have found over and over again that, in order to
burn out, a person has to have been on fire at one
time. It follows, then, that one of the great costs
of burnout is the diminution of the effective service
of the very best people in a given profession (13,
p. 4).
School administrators are also especially vulnerable to the phenomenon of burnout because much of their work involves dealing directly with people and making decisions that affect their lives. Research indicates that burnout occurs "because of emotional pressures from dealing with people" (13, p. 16).

Similarly, Davis found that the school administrator is particularly susceptible to burnout, partially because of the nature of the job and its implied humanistic values.

In school administration, the administrator as a human being is a primary tool as one who provides support services to facilitate learning, and has high expectations for his or her own interpersonal skill and involvement. School administration is not best practiced from a distance (1, p. 20).

Contributing also to the superintendent's vulnerability to burnout is the problem of having to work in isolation from others in their profession. Often they think that they are the only administrator who is having the symptoms of burnout. Pines and Aronson write:

In our society, it is often undesirable to admit one's limitations . . . especially in one's work. A professional is supposed to be impeccable and in control. When problems do arise most people feel at fault and hide the problems from others, feeling that everyone else is coping and they alone are failing. The result is what psychologists call "the fallacy of uniqueness." . . . The individual's false assumption is that he or she is the only one responding in this way (13, p. 35).

These researchers found that the isolation of the job sometimes becomes self-perpetuating as stress mounts.
Many administrators who start a job with an open-door policy begin to close their doors when they feel imposed on; they develop a need to get away from everyone, to be alone and work. . . . Many cut to a minimum the time they spend in direct contact (13, p. 56).

These administrators may even distance themselves physically from their constituents "by standing far away, avoiding eye contact, or keeping their hand on the door knob" (13, p. 57).

Davis details this same type of isolating behavior:

No longer do you take the time to analyze the problems of the school, let alone observe classroom teaching. You find yourself barely glancing at the professional journals and the books you ordered but never got around to read. The student and staff have become more distant from you as you find yourself locking your office door to calculate once again the number of years left to serve before retirement. The students and staff seem to like you, but they can't seem to find you anymore. If you stay in the office to work, people keep handing you problems to solve; the best time to go to the office is when you are the only one in the building (1, p. 20).

Davis refers to burnout as alienation, defined as a "state by which one is diverted from normal functions" (1, p. 19). Alienated persons experience changing moods, feelings of helplessness, increasing irritability, a lower frustration tolerance, a suspiciousness bordering on paranoia, and increased risk taking. "The individual may become closed in his thinking and inflexible in his attitude. Frequently associated with alienation is a negativistic attitude with the person becoming cynical about their work or rule in the system" (1, p. 19).
Davis concludes that alienation is a naturally occurring process "to be expected in school administration where high involvement is valued... Alienation, in itself, is not a problem--the real problem may be thinking that we should never feel alienated" (1: 21).

His findings also suggest that certain situational factors appear to increase the likelihood of alienation. His study, as well as that of Koff, Laffey, Olson, and Cichon (7) found that among these are school size. The larger the school, the greater the likelihood of alienation among administrators. Other negative factors found by Davis are too many contact hours with staff and students, lack of adequate support systems from colleagues, and unrealistic standards of performance set up by an individual for himself.

In a study by Koff, Laffey, Olson, and Cichon on stress in school principals, these researchers ranked forty-eight stress-oriented events as perceived by the respondents. In addition, a factor analysis was performed, showing that the forty-eight events fell into four general areas.

The first factor was found to revolve around a theme of helplessness and security. These events include "legal action against your school," "overcrowded schools," and "criticism in the press." These are conditions over which the administrator has little power and can be viewed as hazards which must be accepted as part of the job.
The second factor events described routine management tasks with administrative problems to be solved, such as conferences with parents and implementing board curriculum policies. Most administrators anticipate these tasks as part of their jobs and receive training and resources to manage them.

Factor three involved the problems of evaluating and directing professional staff. Factor four involved dealing with conflict.

Principals rated the third factor, teacher conflict, as most stressful; and this remained true for all types of schools. Events associated with helplessness or a threat to job security were next most highly stressful. Events associated with low amounts of stress were routine, expected, and accepted duties of administrators, such as those in factor two.

The respondents in this study commonly defined stress as the "constant pressure," "the demands are never ending," thus illustrating that microstress is their greatest problem. A major concern of respondents was insufficient time to carry out their responsibilities. Quite a few referred to the problems arising from "the unexpected."

The study indicates that the type of school is a factor in the amount of stress experienced by administrators. Small schools were seen to be less stressful than large schools. Other situational factors contributing to low stress
reactions were affluent school districts, rural school districts, and vocational schools.

Many administrators in this study believed that they had overcome much of the stress inherent in their jobs. Some cited the degree of organization as an important factor in overcoming stress. Others felt that through time and experience on the job, the stresses became more manageable (7, pp. 3-4).

A special source of stress for school superintendents is the fear of being dismissed suddenly or for insufficient cause. Krajewski conducted an informal survey of superintendents in several states who had been terminated. His findings showed that superintendents may be terminated at public meetings without advance notice. They are also often asked to resign with no explanation offered. They are presented with prepared letters of resignation that need only a signature. "They witness a steady erosion of their authority to the point that a resignation is the only honorable way out" (8, p. 28). Krajewski quotes one correspondent as saying, "If you really worry about the psychic trauma of getting fired, you ought not to become a superintendent" (8, p. 30).

In his study Krajewski found that superintendents are terminated for such reasons as the board's desire to hire someone with a more prestigious degree or simply because incoming board members had campaigned on the promise of "changing the guard."
A psychologist with whom Krajewski discussed his findings commented:

Superintendents must be reality oriented. They must separate the perceptions of others from their own self-perception. If they buy into someone else's perceptions, they are buying a bad self-assessment. A fired superintendent must accept the reality of being fired, but he must not accept the perception that he is incompetent.

In education, the reality is clear cut. Would superintendents prefer to hang onto their jobs until they are useless? They should look upon the superintendency as similar to the role of baseball manager. Neither expects their appointment to last forever (8, p. 30).

The Management of Stress

McQuade and Aikman discuss the techniques in which people today are attempting to handle stress. These include physical conditioning, such as exercise and diet, psychotherapy, and the use of various drugs. In a passage particularly appropriate to the 1970's in which it was written, they add:

But the pressures of twentieth century stress are severe, and if the clergyman has not always proved adequate to handle them, neither has the family doctor, nor the gym coach, nor the druggist, nor the psychotherapist, not entirely. For additional help Americans are now turning to space age electronics, in the form of biological feedback machines; and to ancient Verdic rituals like Yoga. . . . Encounter groups and sensitivity-raising groups abound in the land, based on the idea that ordinary people can help other ordinary people break through the pressures and find serenity, meaning, and wholeness (12, p. 124).

Hans Selye emphasizes the need for a change in one's activity as an antidote to mental stress, in particular.
A person suffering extreme distress because of the continued use of his brain for a long time (e.g., in solving mathematics problems) will profit more from jogging, swimming, or fishing than doing nothing; this is probably true because the subconscious mind, if not engaged, continues to be preoccupied with the problems that caused his distress" (21, p. 10).

He maintains that "exercise, saunas, cold showers, and many psychological relaxation techniques are more efficient in helping us to master the stress of everyday life; they turn the distress of fatigue and failure into the eustress of success and fulfillment" (21, p. 10).

But Selye has also described at length a code of behavior that he believes an individual must adopt to successfully handle the inevitable distress of life: altruistic egoism. "In essence, it accepts the reality that all living creatures are, and must be, primarily selfish. . . . None of us can expect others to look after us more than after themselves" (21, p. 10). Selye's definition of altruistic egoism is "to have a definite aim in life worth pursuing for accomplishment, self-expression, and creativity in our chosen occupation" (21, p. 10). "This code of behavior," he adds, tries to satisfy the natural egoistic tendencies of hoarding a capital for security. Most animals hoard food or building materials to assure their homeostasis in future time of need. However, in the case of man, this capital need not necessarily be stocked in the form of dollars, social position, or powerful weaponry, all of which may be taken away or become obsolete. It may be in the form of love and good will, achieved by learning to be useful to others (21, p. 11).
McQuade and Aikman state this idea more succinctly, perhaps, when they assert, "If you spend your life doing something that really matters to you, and doing it well, you can withstand a great deal" (12, p. 6).

Shafer lists eleven ways that one can better manage the stressors that impact him or her:

1. Become more aware of the nature of the stressors in your daily life. Understanding and anticipating stressors can strengthen the individual in advance, help to reduce their harmful impact, and assist one in controlling them.

2. Take personal responsibility for your pace of life and for major life changes. Ultimately the individual is responsible for how fast or how slow he lives and how many changes he brings upon himself in one year's time.

3. Know your comfort zone. People vary in the range of stimulation that is comfortable, healthy, and productive of growth. Some need more; some need less.

4. Find a good fit between your comfort zone and the demands of your environment.

5. Know how rapidly and how much your comfort zone can change. Flexibility is essential.

6. Anticipate the probable stressful effects of major life changes. Are the likely stress effects too great to make a change at this time?

7. Avoid clustering too many life changes, making too many changes at stressful times.

8. Manage daily life so you have optimal lead time, afterburn time, and time for unfinished business.

9. Establish clear priorities and values so you can select opportunities and challenges wisely in a world of overchoice. Know what is important, unimportant, desirable, and undesirable for you. Clear values can provide guidelines for specific decisions.

10. Select activities and challenges which are meaningful for you and avoid meaningless ones whenever possible. Develop sensitivity to your own talents, deep interests, and personal preferences.

11. Take enough risks so you are challenged, but not so many you are overwhelmed (16, pp. 149-153).

Lazarus, a leader in the field of stress research, suggests two general types of coping: (1) direct action, in
which a person tries to master the stressful transaction with the environment, and (2) palliation, in which the person attempts to reduce the disturbances when unable to manage the environment, or when action is too costly for the individual (9, p. 10).

In their study on burnout, Pines and Aronson also found an inactive and an active dimension for coping. "Active coping strategy involves confronting or attempting to change the source of stress or oneself, while inactive coping strategy involves avoidance or denial of the stress by cognitive or physical means" (13, p. 157).

These researchers emphasize the need for rewards of various kinds as a means for preventing or relieving burnout. "If the rewards are very high, people may stay even in otherwise stressful occupations" (13, p. 33). These rewards can take the form of salary increases, prestige through promotion, or even verbal expressions of appreciation from co-workers. "Time and again we have found that, in a given organization, individuals hunger for appreciation" (13, p. 12).

Pines and Aronson point out that the individual needs two different kinds of support to cope with burnout: interpersonal and intrapersonal. The first kind of support includes social contacts. "Social contacts are almost always a key cause of job satisfaction. A trusting and caring environment is important to the functioning of organizations
and an effective support system is essential in combating burnout" (13, p. 133).

Intrapersonal coping strategies include being open to new learning experiences, or simple curiosity; finding meaning in one's work; obtaining a clear perspective on one's sense of achievement; self-actualization, or the expression of one's potential; compartmentalization, or the ability not to bring work problems home; and providing one's own reinforcement, or building one's own self-esteem through positive accomplishments (13, pp. 145-165).

Pines and Aronson sum up:

In the struggle to go beyond burnout and tedium, having faith that one can do something often provides its own verification. . . . A belief in the power to shape one's life and a merging of reality and imagination are important for a sense of happiness. One has to believe in the alliance between one's needs, one's lifestyle and wills, and one's dreams and daily living (13, p. 166).

The reliance on religious faith is another method often cited as a means of coping with stress. The psychiatrist Curt C. Batiste writes,

Those who believe in a positive God and prayer are happier and healthier people and therefore ought to live longer. . . . I suspect it is easier for those who believe in God to get through difficult times than for those who don't (21, p. 10).

McQuade and Aikman assert that religion in a devout believer has little equal as an allayer of stress. This is true of all religions, but particularly of some. The Judaic-Christian tradition, for instance, takes on all the primal stresses, and if it does not dispose of them completely, makes them surprisingly bearable. Whatever
role the believer plays in his world, however humble, it argues, it is an important role, created by God for a reason (12, pp. 8-9).

Thus, religious belief provides a sense of meaning in one's work that is essential in combating stress. It also provides a means for expressing necessary aggressive tendencies, according to these researchers:

Religion condemns sin, but in the very act of condemning makes a place for it. Unlike some systems of ethics, which seem cold and narrow by comparison, most religious creeds expect the individual to sin; they accept, however sorrowfully, his need to express rage, envy, covetousness, as well as repentance afterwards—and these are all things that people need badly to express (12, p. 9).

For the school superintendent, the methods of coping with stress are both similar in their general application and specific as they relate to the particular duties of this occupation.

Davis discusses the support system needed by the administration and suggests that

a place to "blow off steam" and relax where one won't be judged is essential. The key value of gripe sessions may be a person's attempting to assess the causes of alienation, as well as knowing that other people understand the problem and are willing to commiserate (1, p. 22).

He is one of several researchers who suggest that the major source of stress for the administrator may be his own high expectations for himself. He sees stress as an inevitable occupational hazard of administration, and "ironically, it is a penalty not for our failures but from our success" (1, p. 22).
Lemley suggests that because stress looms so large in our society, one is tempted to look for the large solution. What may be appropriate instead is a step-at-a-time approach. "Clearly, controlling stress and its impact may well begin by exercising some degree of control over the little things in the environment that, left unattended, function as significant stressors" (10, p. 21).

Lemley advocates getting "back to basics," in coping with stress, by concentrating on the administrator's own well-being and health. He recommends that the administrator follow these suggestions.

1. Keep healthy and looking good.
2. Keep your desk clean and organized.
3. Make your office pleasant and attractive.
4. Change your work routine occasionally.
5. Stop procrastinating.
6. Resist the urge to be constantly busy.
7. Learn to be passive and tranquil at times.
8. Do not "buy into" guilt.
9. Avoid cruel and stupid people.
10. Avoid worrying (10, pp. 21-22).

Arthur Stellar suggests that more careful time management will help relieve distress. He lists five ways the administrator can use planning to improve the management of his or her office.

1. Follow the calendar. Pace your work according to the peaks and plateaus of the school year.
2. Set up a tickler file, a box of index cards containing one card for each day. Notes of reoccurring or ad hoc tasks can be made on the backs of the cards as to how the task was accomplished, together with suggestions for improvement.
3. Streamline your appointments.
4. Learn from recurring events. Record how they were handled. Soon a standard plan or policy will develop for handling nettlesome problems (20, p. 37).

In their book, David Wiles, Jon Wiles, and Joseph Bondi have suggested guidelines for the development of practical politics for school administrators. Citing their admission that public education is and always has been a political enterprise, their reviewer writes:

Most of us were weaned on "the decision-making model" of one educational theorist or another, but we weren't tutored in the political implications of a decision—that an idea might be a poor idea simply because it would irritate a board member, upset a plan of the superintendent, or anger a powerful member of the community or faculty. Most of us had to learn these lessons "in the field." For some, the lesson cost us our ideals. For others, it cost our jobs. For all, it cost us the conviction that concepts are right or wrong solely on their educational merits (6, p. 40).

These authors caution that some job situations are unmanageable regardless of how capable the administrator is. These situations might include unrealistic board policies, the necessity to cut programs and staff, or a simple lack of resources. They contend that the most difficult task of the administrator is decision-making, which is "messy, confusing, and often contradictory. No important or far-reaching decision ever is all right or all wrong" (6, p. 40).

John F. Feilder has written a profile of Robert Alioto, Superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District, as an attempt to study why one superintendent succeeds where another might fail. After observing Alioto in his duties
throughout a typical day, Feilder concluded that Alioto's formula for success can be distilled from his numerous activities into the following principles.

1. The successful superintendent defers to the school board and nurtures mutually beneficial relationships with its members.
2. The successful superintendent structures and manages his administrative staff carefully.
3. The successful superintendent is politically astute.
4. The successful superintendent knows how to delegate responsibility.
5. The successful superintendent has a firm grasp on reality (19, pp. 34-35).

Other observations about the interpersonal relationships of a successful superintendent are worth noting. Feilder reports that Alioto "shows his emotions—especially anger or exasperation—but he has the capacity to recompose himself quickly. When he must criticize a colleague, he does so in private" (19, p. 35).

Alioto is careful in his relationships with board members. He spends a quarter of any week with them, calls them by their first names in private, but addresses them formally in public meetings, and aggressively seeks their advice.

His philosophy of public relations is: "Communicating with outsiders is the key to minimizing problems. We can never do enough to clear up inaccurate rumors and misinformation" (19, p. 35). He acts in ways that are politically pragmatic, setting up direct links to different factions in the community by using administrative staff members as liaisons. "When controversy arises, he immediately convenes a
strategy session to develop a plan of action; the plan often involves countering attacks with facts, keeping the school board fully informed as the strategy unfolds, and offering to meet with antagonists to resolve the dispute" (19, p. 35).

Feilder reports that Alioto cultivates no friendships. He confines himself to aloneness, opening only to a trusted few. He is completely wrapped up in his work. As a public servant for 10 to 15 hours a day, the superintendent tends to neglect family, home, and personal affairs. [Alioto] . . . sees as one of the occupational hazards of the job the fact that . . . his personal life is submerged by the public one (19, p. 35).

Pines and Aronson's research asserts that the isolation and single-mindedness practiced by such administrators is not optimal. They found that

for heads of organizations, the best resource for a support group are those people who do the same work in a different setting. . . . A support system of fellow professionals can provide a place to share triumphs and difficulties, and to give and receive feedback, solace, appreciation, and understanding (13, p. 137).

They found that executives and administrators need six types of support in the management of stress:

1. Emotional support, primarily from family and friends.
2. Technical appreciation, from colleagues who fully understand the occupation.
3. Technical challenge from these same colleagues.
4. Listening from those who are able to empathize.
5. Shared social reality, or values held in common with one's environment.
Shafer, and Hamilton and Warburton, emphasize that simple awareness of the individual's relative position in the work world can be a factor in relieving stress. The latter found that all the evidence points to the fact that stress effects are greatest among the unskilled workers at the bottom of the hierarchy, with least participation in decision making. Although their work involves low uncertainty in the sense that it is routine, their future . . . is highly uncertain because they do not have any say in it (16, pp. 470-471).

A monograph published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1980 offers suggestions for stress reduction and stress management. These include very practical ideas for stress reduction on the job, such as interacting at least once a day with someone who makes one laugh, and avoiding irritating people near the end of the day. Suggestions for activities external to the job to reduce stress include planned exercise, short vacations, and learning new skills unrelated to one's work. Recommendations are also made for using stress as a positive force in its own reduction, such as using the stress of time binds to pressure oneself into making a list of priority items on which to spend energy and time, and using the stress of feeling isolated to push oneself into risk-taking with old friends (3, pp. 40-41).

This monograph also describes a method of stress reduction through visualization and guided imagery by using the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus collects information through
the senses and uses the data to cause the body to react in a predictable and appropriate manner. Thus when one visualizes a tranquil, peaceful scene, the hypothalamus works to make the body actually feel more tranquil.

Stress awareness is a very important concept, according to this monograph:

We must be aware that stress reactions occur in response to the demands of two environments. The first is the external "must do" environment that details the demands of our job at the legal level. . . . The second environment is the internal one that developed in us long before we became administrators. We must know what myths, beliefs, and values we will not allow to be distorted (3, p. 2).

Summary

Stress is a phenomenon that has always existed and undoubtedly always will. As Shafer points out, "History shows that despite high hopes and much ingenuity, no society has ever been completely free of stress" (16, p. 143). This condition is unlikely to be altered, because of the very rapid changes the world is undergoing. For this reason, human beings need to become aware of means in which they can cope with the particular stressors which may most impact their particular lives.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

The design of this study was a survey research. Borg stated that survey research utilizes a variety of instruments and methods to study relationships, effects of treatment, longitudinal changes, and comparisons between groups (1).

"Survey research is considered to be a branch of social scientific research . . . (2, p. 410). Surveys are classified according to the method of obtaining information. Personal interview, mail questionnaire, panel, telephone interview, and controlled observation are the most common methods. "Of these," states Kerlinger, "the personal interview far overshadows the others as perhaps the most powerful and useful tool of social scientific survey research" (2, p. 412).

Because of the wide geographical scatter of the subjects in this study, it was not feasible to collect data through personal interviews. A mail questionnaire was utilized.

Selection of Subjects

The population in this study was the school superintendents in Texas. The population represented approximately 1100 school superintendents.

Sixty superintendents were randomly selected from each of the five different sizes (average daily membership [ADM])
of school districts. The total sample size was 300. The population sampled by the questionnaire consisted of the school superintendents listed in *Who's Who in Texas Educational Administration* (4). This source lists approximately 85 per cent of all school superintendents in the State of Texas.

A stratified sampling procedure was used. Borg stated that it is desirable to use stratified sampling in order to select equal-size subsamples from different levels of the population. In addition, stratified sampling assures the research worker that his or her sample will be representative of the population and also assures him or her of adequate cases for subgroup analysis (1).

The research design involved the breakdown of the sample into five subgroups. A sufficiently large sample was used to obtain significant results and yet remain within reasonable financial and time limits. A minimum of eighteen returns (30 per cent) of each sixty mailouts was needed for the purposes of this study. School districts were placed in groups according to the number of students in average daily membership and then a table of random numbers was used to select the sixty from each group.

**Instrumentation**

The materials sent to each superintendent in the study consisted of a letter of transmittal (p. 98) with a
two-part questionnaire (p. 99). The letter explained the purpose of the study and questionnaire.

Part One

The first portion of the questionnaire was a Likert-type scale of 35 items designed to elicit perceptions of superintendents toward those situations that were bothersome in the performance of their job. The questionnaire used was a modified version of one developed by Swent (3). For this study the questionnaire was used to gather information from superintendents. The questionnaire was used to gather data concerning six special-interest pressure groups. The special-interest groups are the state education agency, local board of education, parents, community, staff, and students.

Swent developed the questionnaire by having approximately forty school administrators keep a week-long log which identified the week’s job-related stressful events. They were also asked to list other sources of stress that might occur during the school year but did not occur that particular week. In addition, current school administrative literature was examined to identify other situations which have posed problems to school superintendents and other administrators. These situations were identified as job-related stressors (3, p. 22).

The stressors were written in a form of questions capable of summation on a five-point Likert-type scale. These
questions were evaluated by school administrators for their validity and clarity. The questions were placed in a pilot questionnaire and field tested with a group of twenty-five practicing administrators. After the initial testing, the questionnaire was revised and tested with a second group of twenty administrators (3, p. 23).

The key term in these items, "bothered by," is an expression representing a mild degree of annoyance or anxiety but is less value-laden than the word "stress." The term "stress" has a negative connotation to most people (3, p. 24). The term "not applicable" was included by Swent as a possible response because the questionnaire included items relating to all areas of administration of the school (3, p. 24).

Part Two

The second portion of the questionnaire included eight items designed to collect personal and situational information about the respondent. These items were identified as possible variables related to the stress that a superintendent might experience. They included the respondent's age, size of district by ADM, years in present position, years in superintendency, hours of physical exercise per week, current physical health, percentage of total stress in respondent's life resulting from his or her job, and academic degrees held.
The age subsets were under 30, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, and over 59. District size was divided by average daily membership (ADM) of 3000 and over, 1,000 to 2,999, 500 to 999, 250 to 599, and 0 to 249.

Years in present position and years in superintendency were used to establish groups as follows: 1 to 2, 3 to 5, 6 to 10, 11 to 15, 16 to 20, and over 20 years. Dividing the first five-year period was necessary because of the new situations faced by a superintendent during his or her first several years in a new position.

The subdivisions of hours of physical exercise per week were less than 1, 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 9, 10 to 12, and over 12 hours.

Current health status was based on self-reporting categories using a five-point scale on a continuum ranging from excellent to poor health.

Current percentage of total stress in respondent's life resulting from the job was divided into increments of ten.

The data concerning highest degrees held were divided into three categories: baccalaureate, master's, and doctorate.

The final item was an open-ended question that asked the administrator to identify methods he or she had found useful in handling the tensions and pressures of the job. This information was collected to assist in further
exploration of the methods commonly used by superintendents to counteract job-related pressures.

Data Collection

On February 24, 1982, the letter of introduction and the questionnaire, along with a return envelope, were mailed to 300 superintendents on the Who's Who in Texas Educational Administration mailing list. After two weeks, a follow-up letter (p. 98) and questionnaire were mailed to those not responding to the first questionnaire. After three additional weeks, a second and final follow-up letter with questionnaire was mailed to those who had not yet responded.

Of the 300 questionnaires mailed, 145 were returned for analysis. Ten questionnaires were blank on one side and were discarded; therefore, of the 145 returned, 135 were found valid and coded for analysis. The 135 questionnaires represent a rate of return of 45 per cent.

The questionnaire was coded in such a way that the respondents' identities and their replies were held in strict confidence. Each participant was offered a copy of the study in an effort to increase participation.

Analysis of Data

Emphasis was placed on relative strength of perception rather than specific measurement. A mean score for each item was computed. The higher the mean score, the greater the stress for the superintendents as a group. A
standard deviation of the means of the stressors was computed. The research questions will be rejected if a range of 1.5 or more is obtained. In addition, answers of "not applicable" are assigned a value of zero, which will lower the mean score of any item. Fifteen per cent of the responses were given a value of zero. A total mean was computed for each of the special-interest groups—state education agency, board of education, parents, community, staff, and students—to determine whether there were any important differences between the groups. Initial treatment of the data collected from the second set of questions included computing means and standard deviations of the mean for each demographic variable and individual stressor. The sample was divided into subsets based on the demographic variables of average daily membership (ADM). By using the mean scores, a rank order of means for each individual stressor was obtained.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter contains personal and demographic data of the respondents, a mean rank order of the questions on the questionnaire from the most stressful to the least stressful as perceived by the superintendents. An analysis was conducted of the perception superintendents have concerning occupational stress when compared by age, size of district, years in present position, years in superintendency, hours of physical exercise per week, current physical health, percentage of the total stress in life resulting from job, and highest degree held.

Demographic Findings

The first eight questions in part two of the questionnaire were designed to provide relevant personal and demographic data. Following is a general description of the findings obtained as a result of those questions. Interpretations of the data are included as needed.

Age

Table 1 presents data on the age of the participants. Of the superintendents surveyed, none were under the age of thirty years old. Seventy-nine per cent of the
superintendents fell between forty and sixty. Only 5.1 per cent were sixty or over.

TABLE I

RESPONDENTS' AGE DISTRIBUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Under 30</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Percentage</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District Size

The distribution of the respondents according to district size is shown in Table II. Eighteen per cent of the superintendents surveyed were in districts with ninety-nine or fewer students. Nineteen per cent were in districts with 100 to 499 students, 18.5 per cent were in districts with 500 to 999 students, 23 per cent were in districts with 1000 to 2,999 students, and 21.5 per cent were in districts with 3000 or more students. Sixty-three per cent of the superintendents surveyed were in districts of 500 students or more, while 37 per cent were in districts with fewer than 500 students.
TABLE II
RESPONDENTS' DISTRIBUTION BY DISTRICT SIZE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>0-99</th>
<th>100-499</th>
<th>500-999</th>
<th>1000-2,999</th>
<th>3000+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Percentage</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Years in Present Position

Table III presents data indicating the length of time respondents had been in their present positions. There were 22.9 per cent of the superintendents who were new (within one or two years) to their positions, and 51 per cent had taken their current positions within the last five years. Less than 24 per cent had been in their present positions for longer than ten years.

TABLE III
NUMBER OF YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Percentage</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years in Superintendency

Table IV shows the distribution of respondents by the number of years they have been in the position of superintendents. About 63 per cent of the total surveyed have been in the superintendency for six years or more. The respondents indicated that 38.6 per cent of the total number of superintendents surveyed had been in the superintendency for ten years or more.

**TABLE IV**

**NUMBER OF YEARS IN SUPERINTENDENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hours Exercised**

Table V indicates twenty-eight respondents or 20.7 per cent of the superintendents exercised less than one hour per week. For 50.3 per cent of the respondents, exercise occupies less than four hours per week of their time. For 22.2 per cent of the respondents, exercise totaled from four to six hours per week, while 12 per cent spent ten or more hours engaged in some type of physical exercise.
TABLE V
NUMBER OF HOURS EXERCISED PER WEEK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours Exercised</th>
<th>Less than 1 Hour</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-6</th>
<th>7-9</th>
<th>10-12</th>
<th>13+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Health

The respondents were asked to rate their health status on a five-point scale, ranging from excellent to poor. Table VI displays the distribution of the superintendents in the various categories of health status. Health was rated as excellent by 32 per cent of the respondents, while only 1.4 per cent felt they were in poor health. Good or excellent health was reported by 72.7 per cent of the respondents.

TABLE VI
HEALTH STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stress

Table VII displays data on the percentage of stress which respondents perceived from their work life. In order to present a general picture of the stress profile of all respondents, they were grouped in ten-point intervals. A total of 67.9 per cent of the superintendents indicated that more than 50 per cent of stress in their lives resulted from their jobs. Nearly 44 per cent of the respondents perceived that 71 per cent or more comes from their work life.

TABLE VII
SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF STRESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress level</th>
<th>1-10 Per Cent</th>
<th>11-20 Per Cent</th>
<th>21-30 Per Cent</th>
<th>31-40 Per Cent</th>
<th>41-50 Per Cent</th>
<th>51-60 Per Cent</th>
<th>61-70 Per Cent</th>
<th>71-80 Per Cent</th>
<th>81-90 Per Cent</th>
<th>91-100 Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Percentage</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highest Degrees Held

Table VIII presents data on the highest degrees held by the respondents. Of the respondents surveyed, 98.5 per
cent held a master's degree of higher. Only 1.5 per cent of the respondents did not hold a master's degree or higher.

**TABLE VIII**

**HIGHEST DEGREES HELD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degrees Held</th>
<th>Baccalaureate</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Percentage</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question Nine in Part Two**

This question provided an opportunity for the participants to state voluntarily, in their own words, the methods they personally use to cope with the stress of the superintendent. In answer to this question, 88 per cent of the participants involved in this study mentioned at least one strategy which they use regularly to combat personal stress. The coping behaviors were categorized into two different groups: (1) physiological activities and (2) cognitive activities.

Coping behavior that fell into the category of physiological activity received the greatest response from the participants. There were a total of ninety-three indications of some participation in physiological activities. These
activities are defined as those which enable the individual to become involved in (1) exercise, (2) physical labor, (3) relaxation, or (4) removing oneself totally from the work environment.

Table IX illustrates the responses made by the administrators described as physiological activities. The number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Participating in exercise and athletic events such as walking, jogging, golf, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Being involved in hobbies such as gardening, fishing, working on cars, carpentry, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Leaving town to get totally away from the employment environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Working simultaneously at other occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Taking a family trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reading a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Listening to motivational tapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Getting away from the office for brief periods during the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taking a day off now and then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Getting a proper amount of sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attending professional meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
column represents the number of respondents who indicated they practiced the particular behavior. The largest number of respondents indicated that they participate in some type of physical exercise as a coping strategy. The second most popular response was that of participation in some sort of hobby. Leaving town to get totally away from the work environment was the third most mentioned strategy. After that, one notes a significant drop to the next most popular method, that of working simultaneously at another occupation.

There were seventy-nine cognitive behavior strategies mentioned by the respondents. Cognitive activities are defined as those activities related to positive mental attitudes, feelings, and the process of relating to others to acquire a supportive philosophy of life for coping with stress.

Table X represents these responses. Leaving problems at school rather than taking them home received the greatest number of responses. About half as many mentioned religious beliefs or prayer as the next most popular strategy. The response "to do the best job I can" tied with socializing with friends outside the profession and thinking positively as the third most frequently mentioned coping measures. The fourth most popular strategies were strong family support, talking over problems with fellow professionals, and putting problems in perspective and then not worrying about them.
### TABLE X

COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES FOR COPING WITH STRESS AS INDICATED BY TEXAS SUPERINTENDENTS IN 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Leaving problems at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Deeply held religious beliefs; prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Socializing with friends outside the profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Doing the best job one can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thinking about the positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strong family involvement and/or support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Talking over problems with fellow professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Putting problems in perspective and then not worrying about them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Organizing work tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Being patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maintaining pleasant rapport with staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Remaining calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Approaching problems with confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communicating with staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Delegating work to competent people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Looking forward to retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maintaining a sense of humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maintaining a positive self-concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taking one day at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Remaining flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Having strong policies and sticking by them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Related to Individual Stressors

To facilitate reporting, the high stressors have been limited to the top 17 per cent of the thirty-five items and to the lower 8 per cent, or three items. It was discovered that 75 per cent of all the factors related to stress fall within one standard deviation of the mean of all the questions. The factors falling above one standard deviation accounted for 17 per cent of all the questions. It is this 17 per cent of six questions that are the focus of the study to show what are the greatest stress factors for all superintendents surveyed. Table XI indicates these findings.

The Texas superintendents who participated in this survey ranked as their greatest stressor "having to make decisions that affect the lives of individuals that I know." The nature of the stressor indicates the degree of responsibility for the lives and jobs of others that is held by the superintendent alone. Since this study did not survey occupational stress experienced by lower-ranking administrators such as principals and vice-principals, who do not normally possess the final responsibility for hiring, firing, and re-assignment, the highest-ranking stressor in this study differs significantly from the studies conducted by other researchers, who included lower-ranking administrators. Swent (2), for example, found "administrative constraints," such as attending meetings and complying with rules and
### TABLE XI
MEAN SCORE AND RANK OF INDIVIDUAL STRESSORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Trying to resolve parent/school conflicts</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Being interrupted frequently by telephone</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Preparing and allocating budget resources</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Imposing excessively high expectations on myself</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Writing memos, letters, and other communications</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Feeling that meetings take up too much time</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE XI—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Feeling that I have too heavy a work load, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Speaking in front of groups</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Evaluating staff members' performance</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Supervising and coordinating the tasks of many people</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Trying to resolve differences between/among students</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.)</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Handling student discipline problems</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who have authority over me</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Trying to resolve differences with my Board</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Trying to influence my Board's actions and decisions that affect me</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by the authority over me</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Number</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Trying to resolve differences between/among staff members</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feeling staff members do not understand my goals and expectations</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Administering the negotiated contract (grievances, interpretation, etc.)</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Feeling not enough is expected of me by my Board</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Not knowing what my Board thinks of me, or how they evaluate my performance</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Knowing I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Being involved in the collective bargaining process</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

regulations, to be the most stressful factor (2, p. 127). Cook's findings were identical (1, p. 101).

The reasons for the amount of stress created for superintendents by making decisions that affect the lives of others can be understood when one reflects that no other single person has as much power over employees as the superintendent. It is true that the board of education wields final power in personal decisions, but this group is
composed of several individuals who share the responsibility of their decisions by the act of voting. The superintendent, by contrast, often has to make personnel decisions alone. Often the board relies entirely on his recommendations on issues of hiring and firing or, in any case, tends to act upon his recommendations. Apparently, to the participants in this study, the decisions concerning the work lives of other human beings are of most concern.

It is of interest to note also that this stressor is one of interpersonal relations. The second highest ranked stressor found in this study was also of an interpersonal nature: "trying to resolve parent/school conflicts." By comparison, this stressor ranked fifth in Swent's study (2, p. 135) and sixth in Cook's research (1, p. 102). Again, the difference in these findings may be attributed to the fact that this study is limited to superintendents' responses. While it is true that principals and vice-principals must deal with factors creating parent/school conflicts, it is the superintendent to whom these conflicts are ultimately referred. He alone often must take the responsibility for resolving what may be among the emotional conflicts that arise, since parents are usually involved closely with issues that concern their children.

The third highest ranked stressor by the Texas superintendents seems unrelated to the first two in that it has to do with time constraints: "being interrupted frequently on
the telephone." This particular stress factor did not rank among the top five in Swent's study, although it ranked fifth in Cook's (1, p. 102). (The only other time stressor to rank in the top ten of this research was ranked seventh: "feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time.")

"Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs" was ranked fourth by these participants. This is the first item to appear on the list of top stress factors that could be classified as an administrative constraint that is external to the superintendent's personal or interpersonal problems and which involves instead the financial necessities of his job. Both Swent and Cook found "administrative constraints" to be the chief stressors in their surveys. Depending upon the future economic situation in the state of Texas, this stressor may become more prominent in any future studies done in this field.

Ranked as the fifth highest stressor in this study was "complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies." By contrast, this particular factor was ranked first in both Swent's (2, p. 127) and Cook's studies (1, p. 102). Apparently, when lower-ranking administrators are included in the research, stress having to do with meeting regulations is greater, perhaps because of the relative inexperience of these administrators. When the study is
limited to superintendents only, interpersonal factors requiring decisions concerning the lives of human beings loom larger than state, federal, and organizational bodies, perhaps because of the awesome responsibility perceived in this activity and the awareness of the superintendent that "the buck stops here."

The sixth ranked factor was "preparing and allocating budget resources." This element is similar in nature to the fourth factor, "trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs," in that it has to do with financial decisions.

Thus, in the top six rankings given by the Texas superintendents, two have to do with interpersonal relationships, two may be classified as administrative duties or constraints, and one has to do with stress placed on the superintendent's time.

The factor considered least stressful by the respondents was "being involved in the collective bargaining process." Undoubtedly the reason for this is that very few school districts in Texas utilize the collective bargaining process.

The second lowest ranking stress factor was "having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk." It was not determined whether this factor ranked low because the superintendents are not frequently interrupted in this manner or because they are not irritated by having to use time for this activity.
Also ranked low as a stress factor was "knowing I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly," indicating that the respondents feel they have sufficient resources of information to carry out their responsibilities.

Even though the top 17 per cent of the stress factors were interesting and were more stressful to the respondent than the other items on the questionnaire, there was not enough range within the mean scores to determine an important difference existing among the stressors. Therefore, Research Question One is accepted: that there will be no important differences among the means of the selected stress factors as reported by superintendents.

The group mean of all the stressors was 1.58. The highest mean score of any stressor was only 2.04. This indicates that the highest stressor mean was only "rarely bothersome" to the superintendent, when compared to a mean of 4.00, which was designated as "frequently bothersome" on the instrument.

Data Relating to Special-Interest Groups

The data from this questionnaire enables the researcher not only to measure the amount of stress from each selected stressor, but also to measure the stress that each of the six special-interest groups exert upon the respondents. These six groups are the state education agency, the local board of education, parents, community, staff, and students.
**State Education Agency**

Table XII indicates that superintendents in the largest districts (ADM 3000 and over) experience the least amount of stress from the state education agency, with a mean score of .93. The superintendents in schools with the second-largest ADM perceive the greatest amount of stress, with a mean score of 1.42. The other school district sizes range in mean scores from 1.38 to 1.18.

**TABLE XII**

MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO STATE EDUCATION AGENCY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School District by ADM</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2999</td>
<td>1542</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 and over</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Local Board of Education**

Table XIII indicates that the school district sizes whose superintendents experience the greatest amount of stress from this interest group are those with an ADM of 1000 to 2,999. The mean score is 2.15. Again, the school sizes experiencing the least amount of stress are those with an ADM of 3000 and over, with a mean score of 1.69. The
school sizes indicating the second-highest mean score are those with an ADM of zero to 99. The other two sizes of school districts were very similar in their mean scores, 1.81 and 1.86.

### TABLE XIII

MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School District by ADM</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>1694</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1655</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1631</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2999</td>
<td>2335</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 and over</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Parents

Table XIV indicates that the school district sizes whose superintendents experience the greatest amount of stress from parents are those with an ADM of 1000 to 2,999. The mean score is 1.82. As with the other interest groups, the largest schools (ADM 3000 and over) indicate the least amount of stress, with a mean score of 1.41. The other school sizes fall narrowly in between, with scores ranging from 1.71 to 1.46.
TABLE XIV
MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO PARENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School District by ADM</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>1438</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1337</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1476</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2999</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 and over</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community

Table XV indicates that superintendents in the schools with an ADM of 1000 to 2,999 again experience the greatest amount of stress (mean score: 1.86). Superintendents in the largest schools (ADM 3000 and over) experience the least amount (mean score: 1.39). Again, falling in between are the other sizes, with mean scores ranging from 1.69 in the 500-999 ADM size, to 1.45 in the 100-499 ADM size.

TABLE XV
MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School District by ADM</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1325</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1479</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2999</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 and over</td>
<td>1411</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff

Table XVI indicates that superintendents in the 1000-to-2,999 ADM school size perceive the greatest amount of stress from staff, with a mean score of 2.12. Superintendents in the largest districts experience the least amount, with a mean score of 1.70. The others range from 1.96 (ADM zero to 99) to 1.67 (ADM 100 to 499).

TABLE XVI
MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO STAFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School District by ADM</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>1652</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2999</td>
<td>2308</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 and over</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students

As indicated by Table XVII, this interest group is the only one to indicate a variance from the pattern of amount of stress perceived by superintendents in the analysis of the other interest groups. The superintendents of the smallest schools feel the greatest amount of stress from students, with a mean score of 1.60. Again, the least
amount of stress is experienced by the superintendents of
the largest schools, with a mean score of 1.08.

TABLE XVII
MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE
TO STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School District by ADM</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>1344</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1141</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1227</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2999</td>
<td>1641</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 and over</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rankings of Special-Interest Groups

As indicated by Table XVIII, the interest group perceived by all respondents as the source of the greatest amount of stress was the local board of education, with a mean score of 1.91. Ranked second as a source of stress was the staff, with a mean score of 1.88. Parents ranked third as the greatest source of stress, having a mean score of 1.62. Closely following this was the community, with a mean score of 1.61. Next were the students, having a mean score of 1.36. The interest group perceived as creating the least stress on the superintendents was the state education agency, with a mean score of 1.25.
TABLE XVIII
MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO ALL SPECIAL-INTEREST GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special-Interest Group</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Board of Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Education Agency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since none of these mean scores indicated in Table XVIII exceed the "rarely bothered me" category on the questionnaire, the second research question is accepted as stated: that there are no important differences among the means of the stress factors when comparing the six special groups with which the superintendent interfaces.

Data Relating to School Size

As indicated in Table XIX, the mean scores of each of the different size school districts reveal that there are some differences in the amount of stress perceived by the superintendent. However, the differences in the amount of stress perceived seem to reside in the individual superintendent rather than the school size per se, because the amount of stress does not increase or decrease in direct
correlation with an increase or decrease in school size, or average daily membership (ADM). For example, the superintendents of the smallest schools (ADM zero to 99) have a mean score of 1.66, very similar to the medium-sized schools (ADM 500 to 999), whose score is 1.64. The superintendents of the schools (ADM 3000 and over) have the smallest score, 1.34, indicating the least amount of stress. Yet the second-largest group (ADM 1000 to 2999) have the greatest amount of stress, as indicated by the score, 1.84. The school size indicating the second-least amount of stress is also the second-smallest group (ADM 100 to 499). No pattern of increasing or decreasing ADM affecting the amount of stress experienced by the superintendents can be established. The third research question was accepted: that there will be no important differences among the means of the selected stress factors when comparing them by school district size.

TABLE XIX

MEAN SCORES OF SELECTED STRESSORS
BY SCHOOL DISTRICT SIZE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Daily Membership</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000-2999</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 and over</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Relating to Variables

The variables of age, size of school district, years in present position, years in superintendency, hours of physical exercise per week, current physical health, total stress resulting from job, and highest degree held were tested by the questionnaire. Mean scores were computed on each subgroup within each demographic variable. By finding the mean score of each subgroup the study was able to show how each subgroup reacted to the stressors.

Age

Respondents were divided into five subgroups according to age. Table XX displays the frequency and mean scores for the group. Means ranged from a high of 1.94 for the age group sixty years and over to a low of 1.52 for those in the fifty to fifty-nine years subgroup. The mean score for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>. .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE XX

MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO AGE
other two subgroups, thirty to thirty-nine and forty to forty-nine years old, were 1.72 and 1.71. There were no respondents from the under-thirty subgroup. None of the mean scores reached the 2.00 level, "rarely bothers me."

Table XXI indicates that superintendents with twenty years or more in their present positions had the lowest mean score with a 1.19. The superintendents with sixteen to twenty years in their present positions had the highest mean score of 1.86.

TABLE XXI
MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Present Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table XXII, superintendents with more than twenty years in the superintendency had the lowest mean score of 1.40 and those with three to five years in the superintendency had the highest mean score of 1.80. As in Table XXI,
superintendents with more than twenty years of experience tend to have a lower mean score.

**TABLE XXII**

MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO YEARS IN SUPERINTENSITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Superintendency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XXIII indicates that those superintendents who exercise more than twelve hours per week had the lowest mean

**TABLE XXIII**

MEANS OF STRESS IN RELATION TO PHYSICAL EXERCISE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise per Week</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 hour</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hours</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 hours</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 hours</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 hours</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 12 hours</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
score of 1.36 and those who exercised less than one hour per week had the highest mean score, 1.81.

In Table XXIV, the superintendents who perceived their current health as excellent had the lowest mean score of 1.30. Those who perceived their health as poor had the highest mean score of 3.14. In the categories of fair to poor health, the frequency was small, with five respondents answering the questionnaire.

**TABLE XXIV**

**MEANS OF STRESS IN RELATION TO CURRENT HEALTH STATUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Health Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table XXV, those superintendents who reported 51 to 100 per cent work-related stress scored slightly higher than those who reported from 1 to 50 per cent work-related stress. The lowest mean scores were those respondents whose perceived stress levels were 1 to 20 per cent. The highest mean score was 1.84, reported by respondents in the 31 to 40 per cent stress level.
TABLE XXV

MEANS OF STRESS PERCEIVED AS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE RESPONDENT'S JOB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Level Resulting from Job Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-90</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XXVI shows that the highest mean score of 2.32 belongs to those respondents with less than a master's degree. The lowest mean score of 1.36 was for those respondents who held doctorates.

TABLE XXVI

MEANS OF STRESS BY HIGHEST DEGREE HELD BY RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Held</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question Four is accepted: that there would be no important differences among the means of the selected stress factors when considering the variables of age, size of school district, years in present position, years in the superintendency, hours exercised per week, current physical health, percentage of stress resulting from the job, and academic degrees held.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The phenomenon of stress is receiving increasing attention from physicians, psychologists, and business management because of its effect on human performance and human longevity. Superintendents of schools have been found to be among those who are particularly vulnerable to stress because of the humanistic aspects of their work, the isolation in which they often have to make decisions, the uncertainty of job termination methods, and the frequency with which they have to make important decisions.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the stress factors which create the most difficulty for the superintendent; to determine which, if any, groups are most responsible for generating these stress factors; to determine if variables in the personal life of the individual superintendent are related to the amount of stress felt by him; and to suggest ways in which the amount of stress may be reduced.

The population of this study was the school superintendents in Texas. Sixty superintendents were randomly selected from each of the five different sizes (average
daily membership [ADM]) of school districts. The total sample size was 300.

The instrument used in this study was a two-part questionnaire consisting of thirty-five items designed to elicit perceptions of superintendents toward those situations that were most bothersome in their job. The first part of the questionnaire was a modified version of one developed by Swent (1), altered to include the responses of superintendents only. The questionnaire was also modified to include six special-interest pressure groups.

The second portion of the questionnaire included eight items designed to collect situational and personal information about the respondent, identified as possible variables related to the stress that a superintendent might experience.

A letter of introduction and the questionnaire were mailed on February 24, 1982, to the population, selected from the Who's Who in Texas Educational Administration mailing list. Of these, 135 were found valid and coded for analysis.

To analyze the data a mean score for each item was computed. The higher the mean score, the greater stress for the superintendent. The intent was to find a mean score of 2.00 or more, which would correspond with the designation "rarely bothers me" on the questionnaire.
Findings

The following findings resulted from the population who participated in this study.

1. The two highest-ranking stressors of Texas superintendents are in the area of interpersonal relations; i.e., making decisions about the lives of others and resolving parent/school conflicts. The nature of this type of stressor differs from the nature of the stressor found in previous research that included the perceptions of principals, which found "administrative constraints" to be the greatest stressor.

2. Three problems which could be identified as "administrative constraints" do appear in the top 17 per cent of stressors perceived. These are (1) trying to gain public approval and/or financing for programs, (2) complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies, and (3) preparing and allocating budget resources.

3. There seemed to be no significant relationship between the lowest-ranking stressors, which include concerns with role expectation, time factors, sources of information available, and collective bargaining.

4. Superintendents most frequently use physiological activity, specifically (1) exercise and (2) hobbies, to cope with stress.

5. The third-most frequent method of coping with stress is cognitive in nature: leaving problems at school.
6. The highest mean score of any selected stressor was only 2.04, which indicates that even the highest stressor was only "rarely bothersome" to the respondent.

7. The superintendents of the school districts with an average daily membership of 1000 to 2999 consistently report the greatest amount of stress placed on them by the special-interest groups, with the exception of only one, the student group.

8. The superintendents perceiving the lowest amount of stress from the six special-interest groups were those from the largest districts, with an ADM of 3000 and over.

9. The special-interest group which causes the greatest amount of stress for superintendents of all size districts is the local board of education.

10. The special-interest group causing the least amount of stress on respondents of all size districts was the state education agency.

11. As a total group, the superintendents perceiving themselves as the most stressed are those whose school size has an ADM of 1000 to 2999.

12. As a total group, the superintendents perceiving themselves as the least stressed are those whose school districts have an ADM of 3000 and over.

13. Those superintendents age sixty and over perceive the greatest amount of occupational stress in this study.
14. Those superintendents age fifty to fifty-nine perceive the least amount of occupational stress.

15. There is no importance in the highest degree held by the superintendents in the findings of this study because 80 per cent of the respondents hold the same degree, the master's degree.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based upon the findings from the sample in this study.

1. Interpersonal relations and administrative constraints cause the greatest amount of stress to Texas school superintendents.

2. Superintendents use both physiological and cognitive methods to cope with stress.

3. The superintendents in this study, as a total group, do not perceive themselves as highly stressed.

4. The size of district does not have any relationship to the amount of stress the superintendent feels.

5. The special-interest groups closest to the superintendent's work environment, the local board and the staff, create the greatest amount of stress.

6. The variables of age, years in the superintendency, years in present position, amount of physical exercise, and degrees held do not have a great impact on the amount of stress perceived by superintendents in Texas.
Implications

The following implications are suggested from an analysis of the data in this study.

1. Superintendents in the two largest school districts perceive directly opposite amounts of occupational stress. Those in the largest districts generally perceive least; those in the next-largest generally perceive most. The implications are that the larger the district becomes, the more stress factors the superintendent faces, yet after a certain size is reached, he has a greater number of assistants to handle interpersonal situations, which is the highest stressor in this study.

2. Superintendents in the smallest districts experience greater amounts of stress from students than do any other group of superintendents, due to their greater accessibility to contact with students.

3. The current health status of a superintendent is important to his ability to deal with occupational stress. Therefore, the most beneficial method used by the respondents in coping with stress is physiological activity, the most popular method the respondents employ.

4. The greatest amount of stress experienced by superintendents as a total group comes from two interest groups with whom the superintendent interacts most closely—the school board and the staff. Interpersonal relationships, therefore, are far more stressful to the respondents than
groups which are further removed from them, such as the state education agency and the students, with whom the principals have more contact in all but the smallest districts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon the data used in this study.

1. Because the highest stress factor to the superintendents is dealing with the lives of others, good communications with the individuals whose lives are affected by the superintendent's decisions is absolutely essential. Superintendents should conduct a yearly in-service session, at which time job descriptions and expectations are defined, discussed, and understood by all.

2. The local board of education, as the highest-stressor interest group, should adopt a policy regarding administrative evaluation and development which is related to the job description and/or expectations. Better communication between the individual board members and the superintendent should be cultivated.

3. Development and refinement of an instrument to provide a more precise tool to identify specific coping methods used by individual superintendents to combat occupational stress is recommended.

4. Development and refinement of an instrument to provide a more detailed study of stress factors on
superintendents in the school size having an average daily membership of 1000 to 2999 is recommended. Since this group is consistently the most highly stressed group in this study, determination needs to be made as to what administrative changes may be made in these districts, such as greater delegation of authority to subordinate administrators.

5. The instrument should be refined to include those superintendents who have left the profession, either through choice or retirement.

6. The instrument should be refined to provide opportunity for the respondents to include a more comprehensive health history.

7. Instruments currently in use for measuring stress in the business environment and for psychological testing should be adapted for the purpose of measuring stress in school superintendents.

8. Each school district should provide each district superintendent with a complete annual physical examination. The superintendent should understand his or her limitations for daily physical exercise. A routine for physical exercise should be developed with the physician that is in accordance with these limitations.
APPENDIX
February 24, 1982

Dear Administrator:

I am conducting a doctoral study to determine the major sources of stress among school superintendents. Your cooperation in completing the enclosed questionnaire will be appreciated. A stamped self-addressed envelope is included for your convenience.

We hope the study will not only provide useful information for administrative preparation and inservice programs but that it will also suggest alternatives for increased health and longevity of administrators. To date little information has been collected concerning stress and school administrators.

In order to protect respondents to the questionnaire, data will be used only in statistical form. No names are requested or will be used. In accordance with Protection of Human Subjects policy and regulations, your participation in this study is voluntary. Return of this questionnaire will serve as your consent to participate in this study.

If you would like a summary of the results, please send me a card with your return address and I will send an abstract of the completed report. If you have questions or would like additional information, please feel free to call Tom Myers at 1-817-683-5124.

Thank you for your time.

THOMAS C. MYERS
Superintendent of Schools
Bridgeport ISD
A. School administrators have identified the following 35 work-related situations as sources of concern. It is possible that some of these situations bother you more than others. Rate how each of the following special-interest groups bother you in each of the situations listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NA—Not applicable</th>
<th>1—Never bothers me</th>
<th>2—Rarely bothers me</th>
<th>3—Occasionally bothers me</th>
<th>4—Frequently bothers me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Supervising and conducting the tasks of many people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feeling that staff members don't understand my goals and expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Knowing that I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who have authority over me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trying to resolve differences between/among students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Feeling not enough is expected of me by my Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Having my work interrupted frequently by staff members who want to talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself

11. Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable

12. Writing memos, letters, and other communications

13. Trying to resolve differences with my Board

14. Speaking in front of groups

15. Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.)

16. Not knowing what my Board thinks of me, nor how they evaluate my performance

17. Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)

18. Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time.

19. Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by the authority over me

20. Trying to resolve parent/school conflicts

21. Preparing and allocating budget resources
22. Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me

23. Handling student discipline problems

24. Being involved in the collective bargaining process

25. Evaluating staff members' performance

26. Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal workday

27. Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies

28. Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be

29. Administering the negotiated contract (grievances, interpretation, etc.)

30. Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are

31. Feeling that meetings take up too much time

32. Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time

33. Trying to resolve differences between/among staff members

34. Trying to influence my Board's actions and decisions that affect me

35. Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs
B. May we please have the following information about you and your school/district?

1. Your age: [ ] under 30 [ ] 30 to 39 [ ] 40 to 49
   [ ] 50 to 59 [ ] 60 or over

2. Size of District by ADM: [ ] 0-99 [ ] 100-499
   [ ] 500 to 999 [ ] 1,000-2,999
   [ ] 3,000 and over

3. Years in present position: [ ] 1-2 [ ] 3-5 [ ] 6-10
   [ ] 11-15 [ ] 16-20 [ ] over 20

4. Years in superintendency: [ ] 1-2 [ ] 3-5 [ ] 6-10
   [ ] 11-15 [ ] 16-20 [ ] over 20

5. Hours of physical exercise per week: [ ] less than 1
   [ ] 1-3 [ ] 4-6 [ ] 7-9 [ ] 10-12 [ ] over 12

6. Current physical health: Excellent 5 4 3 2 1

7. What percentage of the total stress in your life results
   from your job? [ ] 10 [ ] 20 [ ] 30 [ ] 40 [ ] 50
   [ ] 60 [ ] 70 [ ] 80 [ ] 90 [ ] 100

8. Degrees held: [ ] Baccalaureate [ ] Master's
   [ ] Doctorate

9. Recognizing that school administration is a demanding occu-
   pation, what ways have you personally found useful in
   handling the tensions and pressures of your job?
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Articles**


Shannon, Thomas A., "Here's How Alioto Survives," The Executive Educator, 6 (June, 1982), 34-35.


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