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From a review of empirical studies of supervisory behavior recorded over a 20-year period, a scheme was formulated for classifying supervision as a form of interpersonal behavior, according to five dimensions: Source, viewpoint, object, mode, and task. Tabulated summaries indicate literature sources utilized and increments of new items of information in each of 100 studies. Considerable redundancy was found among the studies and many findings, on second analysis, proved to be normative listings about amorphous role incumbents, rather than descriptions of actual behavior. (JK)

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Abstract

A review of literature about supervisory behavior disclosed a body of information largely disconnected and hortatory, clearly in need of organization. Information was obtained from an investigation of empirical studies of supervision extracted from eight reference sources and forty-five journals and periodicals covering a span of twenty years. A classification system inspired and guided by the work of McGrath and Altman (1966) and Foa (1955) was utilized in organizing the findings from ten studies. A procedure was also formulated to determine the least number of studies required to summarize the empirical knowledge about supervision.

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Results show that only 10.6% of the information was non-redundant and that the bulk of knowledge was covered once any twenty studies were reviewed. General conclusions indicate that:

1. The classification scheme was useful
2. There is too much repetition
3. Many findings were largely descriptive and can best be described as normative listings of amorphous role incumbents.
4. Most studies examined referred to non-behaviors or duties of supervisors and consequently there was a dearth of specific concepts, thus obviating the possibility of any theoretical integration.

Many textbooks on the topic of supervision ask the question, "What is school supervision, anyhow?" (Bartky, 1953 p.v.) The answers provided to this question cover a very broad spectrum, seemingly limited only by the varied lexicons of the many people who write about supervision. For example, consider the following three definitions:

> "supervision is a function of superintendent, principal and teacher ... directed toward improvement of the educative process" (Flower, 1953 p. 9)
>
> "the purpose of supervision is to maintain and improve the quality of instruction" (Enns, 1963 p. 28)
>
> " to grow in many ways which increase the effectiveness in teaching, to become closer to the achievement of truly creative teaching are mutual goals of supervisor and teacher working together. If growth is to occur, the individual must be aware of the need for it. Foremost among the important functions of a supervisor is that of helping teachers become aware of their needs for growth" (Crosby, 1957, p. 26)

While these definitions are not very specific, they do indicate the complexity of the term. One writer when dealing with supervision as supervisory behavior has identified ten tasks, five

processes, and twenty-four specific skills which have subsumed under them thirty-seven "patterns of behavior." (Harris, 1963, pp. 11 - 16) Indeed, in their attempts to be extremely comprehensive about supervision, writers often seem to find themselves in a "pontifical box;" referring to how a supervisor "ought" to behave. Sometimes, this stance of providing normative prescriptions about supervisory behavior is the one with which supervisors themselves are comfortable and which they seek. (Croft 1968) The profusion of statements relating to supervison often clouds attempts to identify and integrate empirical relationships in the study of supervision. As Harris (1963, p. 328) has noted " ... these rather diverse ideas about supervision not only fail to compete openly in the professional marketplace; they tend to exist side by side as though no other view existed."

The problem with which this paper is concerned can be put as a question -- "What do we know about supervisiory behavior from a review of the empirical studies?" And an equally important question is "How can we organize the information which we find from those studies?" In answer to these questions, this paper deals in turn with the methodology of the review, the description and the use of the classification system, and the results of our review of the literature. The paper closes with a brief summary and our conclusions.

Methodology

The search for empirical studies on supervisory behavior led us through eight reference sources, forty-five journals and periodicals, and back some twenty years. We found empirical studies, that is

descriptive rather than normative studies of supervisory behavior, in twenty-three or approximately one-half of the journals. Rather early in our search we observed that supervisory behavior was at least tentavely considered to be interpersonal behavior. Studies showed that supervisors were doing things to, for, or with other people such as teachers and principals etc. and they were being observed by these kinds of people.

We noticed also that the supervisory function encompassed many variables which were rather confusingly linked. This situation seemed much like the state of affairs that recently existed in small group research. There seemed to be no systematic ordering of the data or study of existing relationships to point out where gaps existed for future research. In short, order needed to be brought out of a proliferation of chaos by developing a systematic classification scheme.

Such attempts have been made in the area of small group research by Cartwright and Zander (1953), Hare, Borgatta and Bales (1954) and many others including the recent definitive work by McGrath and Altman (1966). Also some studies done in industry by Foa (1955) gave us some additional hunches on how to classify supervisory behavior when considering it as interpersonal behavior. As a result, we developed a somewhat modified form of the McGrath and Altman (1966) scheme for use with studies in supervision. The major question before us was not the validity of the classification scheme but how to make a systematic attempt to handle so much information in a descriptive but comprehensive way when looking at supervisory behavior as interpersonal behavior, (Falusi 1968).

The Classification System

Given the hunches alluded to above, we assumed at the outset that any form of interpersonal behavior, including supervisory behavior, could be classified along the following few dimensions:

1. the source of the data
2. the frame of reference of that source particularly if that source is a human observer
3. the object, or the person about which information is being given by the source
4. the characteristic of that object, or person, which is being considered
5. the level at which the characteristic of the object is being considered

We call these essential dimensions, or "parameters" after McGrath and Altman, the source, the viewpoint, the object, the mode, and the task. Each of these parameters were made up of one or more categories which take in all descriptive information relevant to the parameters mentioned above. It was assumed, therefore, that the information in the categories which are described exhaust the major part of elements relating to supervisory behavior.

To understand the application of these parameters to concepts from studies of supervisory behavior, consider this hypothetical example. Assume that in a certain study an investigator wanted to describe the behavior of a supervisor when interacting with various teachers. The investigator observed various supervisor-teacher interactions and also obtained teachers' perceptions of the interaction, by interview. The various elements of this hypothetical study can be related to the parameters in the following way.

Object: The supervisor is the object seen as interacting. Although two people participate in any given interaction, of specific interest is the supervisor's actions. Thus he is the object in the investigation referred to the above.

Mode: The action of the supervisor rather than the attitude he has when he interacts with the subordinate is the mode under study.

Task: (Coombs, 1964) The level at which the behavior of the object (in this case the supervisor) is being considered is descriptive. The behavior of the supervisor is observed and described.

Source: The interaction is observed by the investigator and is also perceived by teacher respondents. Thus there are two sources of information.

Viewpoint: There are two points of view; the investigator's and the teachers'.

The following statements summarize concepts presented in the example and show their relationship to the parameters: The investigator (source) observes, and the teachers (source) perceive, each from their point of view (viewpoint), the supervisor's (object) behavior (mode) toward the subordinate. This describes (task) the supervisor's actions.

This specific example illustrates our general procedure in using the classification scheme. The findings from the studies reviewed were termed "information items." These information items were of two types. One type was any unique combination of one category from each and every parameter. Thus information was recorded about who was behaving (parameter - object: some possible categories - supervisor, his subordinate, his superordinate) the type of behavior (parameter - mode: some possible categories - actions, attitudes), the level of the type of behavior (parameter - task: categories - descriptive, evaluative), as perceived by whom (parameter - source: categories - supervisor, subordinate, superordinate, outside investigator) and from whose frame of reference (parameter - viewpoint: categories - supervisor,

subordinate, superordinate, outside investigator). The total possible number of information items of this type for any study was 172, (3 x 2 x 2 x 4 x 4). See the illustration below:

Parameter	Categories
1. Object	(a) supervisor (b) subordinate (c) superordinate
2. Mode	(a) action (b) attitude
3. Task	(a) descriptive (b) evaluative
4. Source	(a) supervisor (b) subordinate (c) superordinate (d) outside observer
5. Viewpoint	(a) supervisor (b) subordinate (c) superordinate (d) outside observer

The other type of information item was the specific supervisory behavior which was listed in the findings of the study.

Determining the Point of Diminishing Returns

In addition to applying the classification scheme to the studies, a method was also devised to determine two things. First, were all "information items" different or were some being repeated? Second, what was the least number studies which must be extracted in order to cover the bulk of empirical knowledge about supervision. This was accomplished by throoughly shuffling the studies and randomly selecting without replacement, and replicating this procedure to verify results. For each replication, the number of new items obtained from successive studies was plotted against

the number of studies examined and if the question about whether facts from succeeding studies were repeating themselves was valid, the curve would become asymptotic to the "number of studies" axis.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the various literature sources and the number of studies in each source which were fruitful. It will also be noted that studies in the mid 1940's were also considered in order to obtain a broad spectrum.

- insert table 1 -

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the results of randomly selecting all the studies and determining the increments of new items of information in each successive study. It will be noted that the total number of information items bears no relationship to the increments of new information items. The "leveling off" trend is pointed up by the fact that studies 21 and 30 inclusive produce only three new information items out of a total of 120. Similarly in table 3, studies 21 to 30 contain 151 information items while providing 6 new items.

- insert tables 2 and 3 -

When the data from tables 2 and 3 were plotted, the asymptotic nature of the increments curve is clearly shown as it continually declines despite the haphazard peaks of the total number of information items curve. These are given in figures 1 and 2.

- insert tables 1 and 2 -

Summary and Conclusions

From the 100 studies examined 966 items of information, of which 103 (10.6%) were non-redundant or new items, were found. The number of items per study ranged from 3 to 27. We applied a rather straight forward classification scheme which was inspired by and modified for our purposes from a classification scheme developed by McGrath and Altman (1966). With this scheme we hoped to gain some grasp of the empirical knowledge of supervisory behavior. The results of our analysis lead us to the following conclusions:

1. The classification scheme was useful. Perhaps any classification scheme would be useful. We do have some idea of some gaps in the study of supervisory behavior. For example, in 99 of the 100 studies in the source and viewpoint parameters were identical. In only one study were respondents asked to assume the point of view of another person. This is well worth more investigation if supervisory behavior is as mutually dependent as the three definitions quoted at the beginning of this paper seem to indicate.

2. There is much too much repetition. It seems that any 20 studies on supervision will yield the entire body of knowledge on the subject. Admittedly, replication is a desirable aspect of scientific research. But most of these studies reviewed began blind. This trend was not reversed. Apparently very few of the researchers knew anything about the identical findings of other researchers. This certainly smacks of needless repetition rather than healthy replication. Moreover many of those findings are rather unspecific. For example, what do we really know about supervisory behavior when one researcher discovered in 1944 that "classroom visitation" was a supervisory behavior (Miller 1944) and another researcher "discovered" the same thing in 1967 (Carr 1967).

3. There were many apparently descriptive findings about supervisors which on second analysis can best be described as normative listings about amorphous role incumbents. Most descriptions were more on the order of "List the duties of a supervisor," thus treating the actual behaviors of persons in those roles as phantom.

4. Instead of a large body of empirical knowledge about supervision we found many studies of the non-behavior of supervisors. We had hopes in the beginning of attempting a theoretical integration but found that there wasn't much to integrate. Perhaps this paper has demonstrated this to you and indicated some of the major gaps that exist.

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TABLE 1

A list of Periodicals Researched, the Number of Studies Obtained from Each and the Time Span over which Studies were considered

Periodicals	Number of Studies	Time Span
Administrator's Notebook	8	1954-1966
American School Board Journal	3	1949-1956
A.S.C.D. Yearbook	4	1946-1965
Bulletin of the School of Education: Indiana University	1	1965
California Journal of Educational Research	2	1950-1962
California Journal of Elementary Education	2	1954-1957
California Journal of Instructional Improvement	1	1961
Canadian Administrator	3	1963-1966
Clearing House	1	1968
C.S.A. Bulletin	1	1964
Dissertation Abstracts	30	1954-1967
Educational Administration Quarterly	2	1960-1968
Educational Leadership	9	1950-1961
Elementary School Journal	2	1953-1965
Journal of Counselling Psychology	2	1964-1965
Journal of Educational Research	6	1945-1963
Journal of Experimental Education	7	1944-1967
N.A.S.S.P. Bulletin	8	1960-1966
National Elementary Principal	2	1948-1966
North Carolina Education	1	1944
Nation's Schools	2	1951-1952
Personnel and Guidance Journals	1	1967
Phi Delta Kappan	2	1959

TABLE 2

The Increments of New Items of Information and the Total Number of Items of Information Obtained from Each Study Selected - for 100 Studies First Random Selection

Selection Number [a]	Study Number[b]	Increments of New Items of Information	Total Number of Items of Information Per Study
1	96	16	16
2	70	9	10
3	19	11	11
4	47	2	4
5	91	5	12
6	75	3	7
7	87	2	3
8	79	0	5
9	71	3	6
10	61	2	3
11	12	1	9
12	92	5	16
13	8	1	9
14	85	2	9
15	90	1	4
16	68	2	6
17	29	1	10
18	41	1	7
19	67	0	8
20	17	0	23
21	9	0	11
22	13	1	5
23	7	0	6
24	40	0	9
25	30	0	6
26	100	0	10
27	53	1	14
28	23	0	4
29	88	0	4
30	77	1	13

TABLE 2 (continued)

Selection Number [a]	Study Number[b]	Increments of New Items of Information	Total Number of Items of Information Per Study
31	38	0	20
32	84	2	12
33	43	0	10
34	99	2	8
35	28	0	4
36	72	0	3
37	26	0	8
38	98	0	7
39	64	0	6
40	25	1	7
41	66	2	16
42	48	0	14
43	83	0	17
44	21	1	19
45	51	0	8
46	10	0	7
47	89	0	9
48	86	0	22
49	1	0	9
50	69	0	6
51	35	0	12
52	16	0	12
53	39	0	6
54	44	11	11
55	5	1	17
56	20	2	26
57	4	0	3
58	63	0	9
59	52	0	12
60	11	1	8
61	60	0	6
62	31	0	13
63	50	0	27
64	36	0	12
65	2	0	7
66	97	0	4
67	34	2	15
68	27	0	9
69	33	0	11

TABLE 2 (continued)

Selection Number[a]	Study Number[b]	Increments of New Items of Information	Total Number of Items of Information Per Study
70	80	0	7
71	45	0	22
72	32	0	8
73	37	0	9
74	42	0	17
75	54	0	11
76	57	0	18
77	94	0	3
78	18	0	5
79	58	0	12
80	55	3	4
81	76	0	9
82	59	2	6
83	73	0	8
84	78	0	5
85	24	0	12
86	82	0	14
87	74	1	4
88	49	0	10
89	56	0	5
90	81	0	16
91	15	0	18
92	93	0	8
93	14	0	7
94	95	0	3
95	62	0	8
96	3	0	3
97	6	0	6
98	46	0	4
99	22	0	6
100	65	2	6

[a]Selection number refers to the position of the study in the selection sequence. Thus selection number 93 refers to the 93rd study selected.

[b]Study number refers to the number which was arbitrarily assigned to a study after the 100 studies were shuffled.

TABLE 3

The Increments of New Items of Information and the Total Number of Items of Information Obtained from Each Study Selected - for 100 Studies Second Random Selection

Selection Number	Study Number	Increments of New Items of Information	Total Number of Items of Information Per Study
1	94	3	3
2	48	14	14
3	96	14	16
4	80	5	7
5	64	3	6
6	57	8	18
7	93	3	8
8	90	1	4
9	55	3	4
10	27	2	9
11	32	3	8
12	41	1	7
13	74	2	4
14	98	1	7
15	23	0	4
16	35	2	12
17	59	2	6
18	54	1	11
19	75	0	7
20	69	0	6
21	42	0	17
22	12	1	9
23	92	0	16
24	84	0	12
25	58	1	12
26	24	0	12
27	47	2	4
28	17	0	23
29	66	0	16
30	65	1	6

TABLE 3 (continued)

Selection Number	Study Number	Increments of New Items of Information	Total Number of Items of Information Per Study
31	89	0	9
32	97	1	4
33	61	2	3
34	86	1	22
35	87	1	3
36	14	1	7
37	1	0	9
38	43	0	10
39	22	2	6
40	51	0	8
41	23	0	4
42	16	0	12
43	34	1	15
44	56	0	5
45	3	1	3
46	6	0	6
47	15	0	18
48	52	0	12
49	71	2	6
50	53	0	14
51	38	0	20
52	76	0	9
53	31	0	13
54	85	0	9
55	88	0	4
56	45	0	22
57	44	11	11
58	68	0	6
59	4	0	3
60	78	0	5
61	8	0	9
62	60	0	6
63	11	1	8
64	2	0	7
65	91	1	12
66	99	0	8
67	20	2	26
68	63	0	9
69	62	0	8

TABLE 3 (continued)

Selection Number	Study Number	Increments of New Items of Information	Total Number of Items of Information Per Study
70	77	1	13
71	50	0	27
72	19	0	11
73	5	0	17
74	73	0	8
75	18	2	5
76	25	0	7
77	33	0	11
78	95	0	3
79	21	0	19
80	82	0	14
81	37	0	9
82	67	0	8
83	40	0	9
84	100	0	10
85	39	0	6
86	10	0	7
87	13	0	5
88	36	0	12
89	7	0	6
90	83	0	17
91	72	0	3
92	46	0	4
93	49	0	10
94	29	0	10
95	9	0	11
96	26	0	8
97	79	0	5
98	81	0	16
99	30	0	6
100	70	0	10

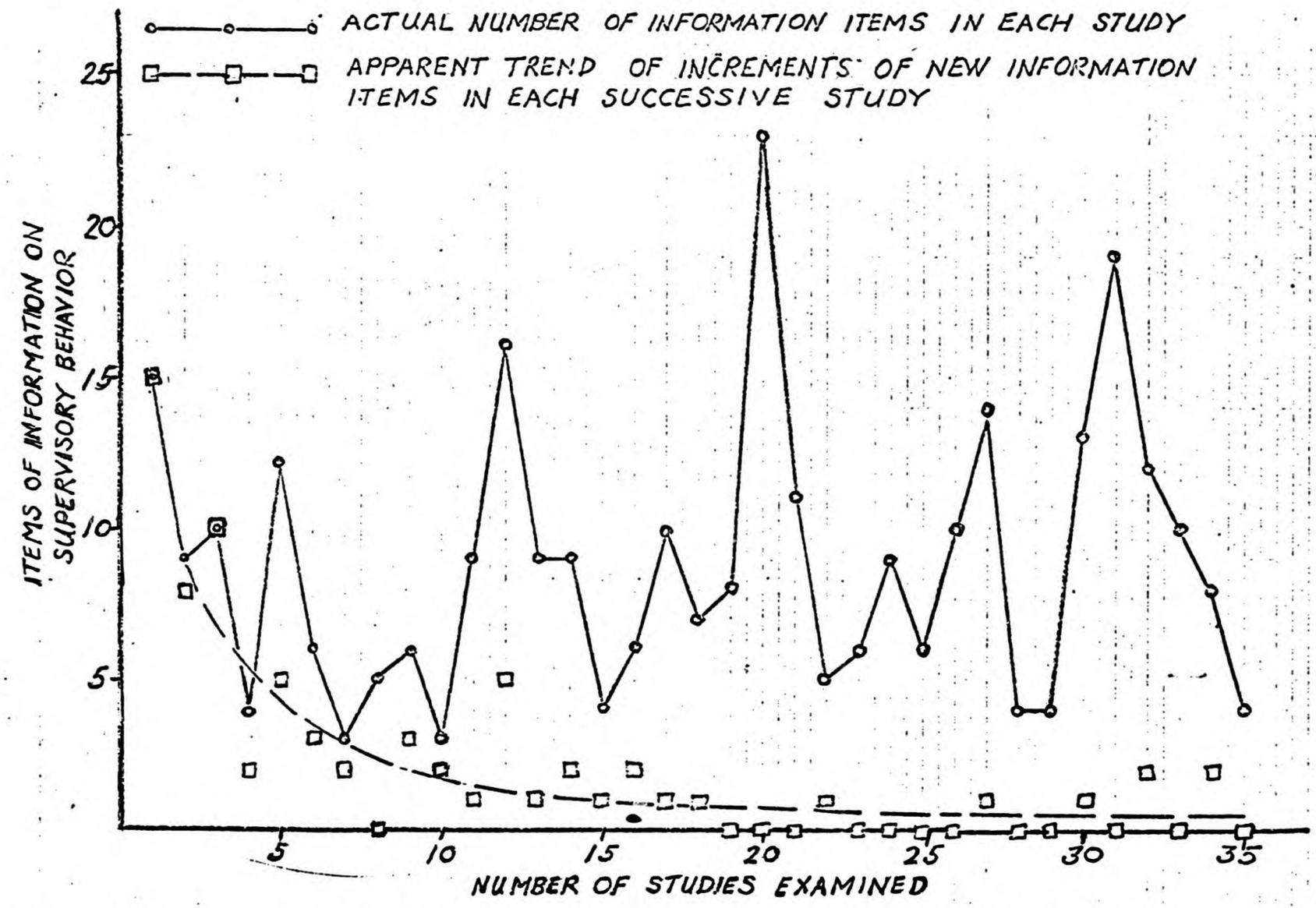

FIGURE 1. "THE POINT OF DIMINISHING RETURNS" GRAPH FOR 35 STUDIES - FIRST SELECTION

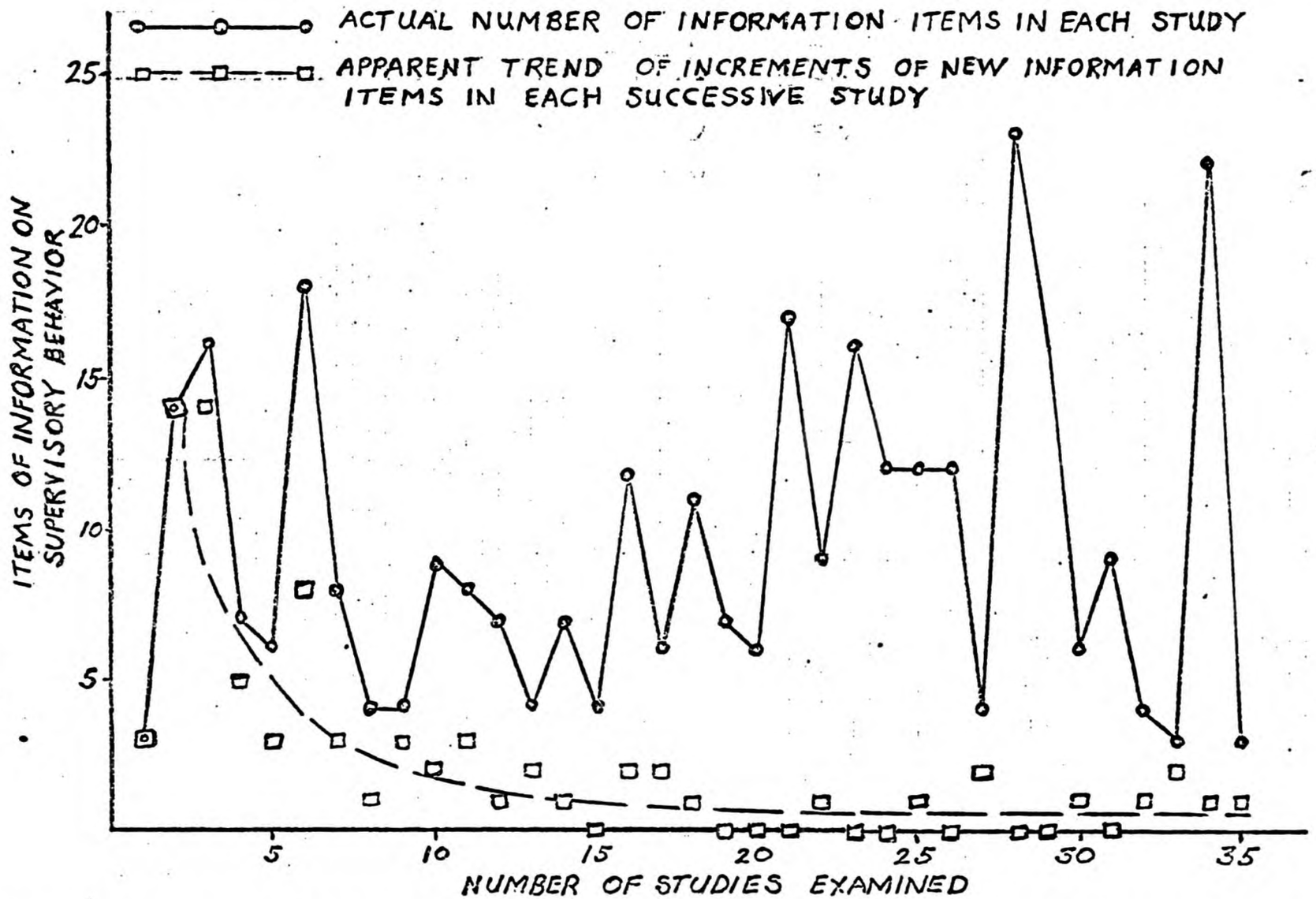

FIGURE 2 "THE POINT OF DIMINISHING RETURNS" GRAPH FOR 35 STUDIES - SECOND SELECTION