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**A study of the decision-making styles of selected Michigan
superintendents**

Higgins, Marianne, Ph.D.

Michigan State University, 1988

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300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

A STUDY OF THE DECISION-MAKING STYLES OF
SELECTED MICHIGAN SUPERINTENDENTS

By

Marianne Higgins

A DISSERTATION

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Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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1988

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE DECISION-MAKING STYLES OF SELECTED MICHIGAN SUPERINTENDENTS

By

Marianne Higgins

The purpose in conducting this study was to determine whether the decision-making styles preferred by selected Michigan school superintendents were related to personal characteristics of the superintendents and/or to demographic features of the school districts in which they were employed. The two decision-making styles that were studied were the technocratic style and the political style.

One hundred fifty superintendents were selected from the universe of 525 K-12 school districts within Michigan. The researcher designed a forced-choice survey to ascertain the types of decision-making styles preferred by the selected respondents. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the survey. The reliability of the final version of the survey approached 80%.

The method used to conduct the survey was telephone interview. Using this method of contact, the response rate was 69.33%.

Marianne Higgins

Of the ten null hypotheses posed at the beginning of the study, none could be rejected at the .05 level of significance. It is recommended that this area of study be further investigated using as a premise the concept of situational competence. The decision-making-style preferences of superintendents appear to be affected less by their personal characteristics or characteristics of their employing districts than by the characteristics of a given situation in which they are expected to make a decision.

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1988

DEDICATION

Dan and Louise Higgins, my parents, were instrumental in the completion of this task. They gave me love, a thirst for knowledge, perseverance, and the luck of the Irish. All have been useful to me along the way. My sister, Jane, has been my confidante, my sounding board, and a stern taskmaster, depending on the moment.

My friends have helped me through. They have listened to me, commiserated with me about my failures, and shared the joys of my victories. Without them beside me, the completion of this task would not be nearly so sweet.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Since the early 1980s, public schools have been receiving increased attention from the public following a spate of national and state studies, including A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (Boyer, 1983), the Michigan Commission on High Schools Report (Michigan Commission on High Schools, 1983), and Michigan Schools: A Blueprint for Action (Michigan State Board of Education, 1982). As a result of this increased attention, as well as the generally critical nature of most of the reports, schools have been expected to be more accountable to the public. Such accountability has most often meant producing students who score well on achievement tests in mathematics and reading. However, heightened emphasis also has been directed to the teaching of critical thinking skills. Responsibility for implementing these curricular changes has been placed on teachers, while their classroom performance and their perceived suitability to teach have been challenged from all sides.

Concurrently, school district administrators are coping with unstable revenues and expenditures. Federal funds being allocated to education have dwindled, and, in Michigan, state support for

education has not yet returned to the level at which it stood before the 1979 recession. Furthermore, although local support of educational tax levies has become less reliable than in the past, it is to that source of revenue that school district personnel increasingly must turn if they are to maintain the level of services they have traditionally provided and to institute new programs.¹

At the same time, the school district superintendency is undergoing many changes. Superintendents are evidencing a management style that is frequently described as political. The role of the superintendent as technical expert is being challenged by the demands for accountability to competing and increasingly vocal interest groups. The link between individual decision-making behavior and organizational action has been the subject of study among organizational theorists for many years (Cohen & March, 1973; Cyert, 1963; March, 1976; March & Simon, 1958). Although these theorists' interest has been centered on various aspects of the decision-making process, their conclusions have supported the belief that how decisions are made does influence organizational actions.

To date, the emergence of the political decision-making style in superintendents has been documented primarily in self-report surveys. Little research has been focused on characteristics of the superintendent or the district in which the superintendent is

¹In Michigan in 1984, local sources accounted for 64% of a school district's general fund revenues. State school aid accounted for 30%, and other sources, including federal funds, accounted for 6%.

employed and the relationship of those variables to the superintendent's decision-making style. Such research is important to the training of current and future school administrators. By identifying those variables present in a school system or inherent in the superintendent that affect decision making, better training can be provided both at the postgraduate level and through inservice opportunities. It seems evident that the more information that is available about how school superintendents make decisions, the better one might expect those decisions to be.

Purpose

The researcher's purpose in conducting this study was to determine whether the decision-making styles preferred by selected Michigan school superintendents were related to personal characteristics of the superintendents and/or to demographic features of the school districts in which they were employed. The two decision-making styles that were studied were the classical-rational style, referred to herein as the technocratic style, and the political style.

Rationale for the Study

Many of the experts who have written on training for school administrators have advised that decisions be made in the classically rational manner defined by Simon (1945). Simon conceptualized decision making as consisting of a series of steps, to be pursued in a precise order, which will result in a "rational" decision. He defined rational as "concerned with the selection of

preferred behavior alternatives in terms of some system of values whereby the consequences of behavior can be evaluated" (p. 75).

The popularity of Simon's model was evidenced in Hoy and Miskel's (1982) text on educational administration. The chapter on decision making is headed by a quotation from Simon, followed by an elaboration of his seven-step process, which, "[when] employed by thoughtful and skillful executives and their staffs, should lead to more rational decisions" (p. 64). Zeigler, Kehoe, and Reisman (1985) used the term "technocratic" to describe the classical-rational approach to decision making. For the purposes of this study, the terms "classical-rational" and "technocratic" are used interchangeably because both refer to a decision-making method that is characterized by a rigid, less flexible process oriented toward the most technically correct choice.

Recently, a growing number of researchers have seemed to suggest that the classical-rational style of decision making may not be the most effective for school superintendents because of changes in expectations for successful job performance (George, 1971). They have described a decision-making process that is less rigid, more indirect, more oriented to compromise, and more responsive to the desires of other individuals or groups than the classical-rational style. Zeigler et al. termed this the political or responsive approach to decision making.

James (1982) identified four changes in the social setting of schools that have resulted in a shift in the job perceptions of

superintendents. They are (a) the mobility of the American family, (b) the desegregation of schools, (c) the increased emphasis on racial equality and equal educational opportunity, and (d) the democratization in the membership of school boards. James concluded that "the public today expects less of [superintendents] as authoritative professional mentors, and much more of them as skilled political negotiators" (p. 18). According to James, the change in public expectations can be attributed to the evolution of special-interest constituencies, with sometimes conflicting interests in the operations of the school district.

In three studies they conducted on superintendents, Pitner and Ogawa (1981) found that superintendents commonly believed they must ensure that their schools' programs and methods of operation were consistent with their communities' values. This necessitated the superintendent's spending a large share of his/her time communicating with the various elements within the school environment to assess their needs and desires. Thus, Pitner and Ogawa described the superintendent as a "mediator" among sometimes competing forces.

The political or responsive approach is one that appears to be recognized, although with some discomfort, by many superintendents. Blumberg (1985) interviewed a number of superintendents about this aspect of their jobs and quoted one of them as saying:

It's political, highly political. It's political because it's a human enterprise. I do things politically, yes. I am politically motivated. More in the sense of trying to get ahead of somebody. Sometimes I say to the administrative staff, "I don't want to be pressured into this, and therefore,

let's decide now whether it's a good direction to take, and if it's a good direction, let's beat them to the punch. (p. 53)

Although the political or responsive style of decision making may be unpalatable to some superintendents, some writers have found that it is characteristic of superintendents who are perceived by themselves and others as successful. In their study of politics and successor superintendents, Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) concluded,

The lack of adequate legal specification of the school superintendent's responsibilities and privileges has played a part in producing the profession's political type. He emerges as the servant who manipulates his board, selects his masters, and educates them to their responsibilities. (p. 231)

In other words, a dichotomy exists between perceptions of the role of the superintendent as technical expert and as consummate politician. In discussing the political dilemma of the nonelected public official, Blumberg (1985) observed:

[Superintendents] have responsibility for an enterprise to which some of the most deeply held values in the American tradition are attached. Superintendents assume their positions as supposed experts, yet they become useless unless they are able to develop a supportive constituency among the school board, community and professional staff. The organization that they are to lead and manage is composed of people who often have equal or more expertise in education than the superintendent. (p. 46)

The superintendent, who has been employed, at least in part, because of his/her educational credentials, finds it necessary to develop skills and strategies other than those of the technical expert to manage the school organization.

Thus, two types of decision-making strategies have emerged--the classical-rational or technocratic and the political or responsive style. Although it might be argued that one approach has simply

evolved from the other (the political might be construed as an emerging form of the classical-rational, in response to the social environment of the superintendent), superintendents, staff, school boards, and the community view them as being distinct from and often in conflict with one another. It is not uncommon to hear a superintendent characterized as being either "too political" or "too naive about the politics of the school district."

In the present study, two types of factors were examined in terms of their correlation with either the technocratic or the political style of decision making. These factors, those that pertain to the demographic environment of the school system and those that are inherent in the superintendent, were selected to explore the possibility that the decision-making style a superintendent uses can be correlated to elements of his/her own persona or factors existing in the school system and community in which the superintendent works.

The rationale for examining the two types of factors was as follows. In early research on leadership behaviors, leaders were believed to have styles that were relatively fixed and remained unchanged over time (Stogdill, 1948). Such styles were attributed to characteristics of the leader. Recently, more attention has been given to aspects of the leader's work environment that are related to specific leader behaviors (Halpin, 1966). Because both types of variables have the potential to affect preferences for particular decision-making styles, both were examined in this study.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses, stated in the null form, were formulated to guide the analysis of data gathered in the study

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the size of the school district in which the superintendents are employed.

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of prior superintendences held or years as a superintendent.

Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of years as superintendent in the district.

Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of nonwhites enrolled in the school district.

Hypothesis 5: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of school board members who have been recalled during the superintendents' tenure.

Hypothesis 6: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of school board members who have been defeated when running for re-election during the superintendents' tenure.

Hypothesis 7: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the superintendents' perceptions of their relationship with the community, the school board, and the staff.

Hypothesis 8: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the SEV of the districts in which they are employed.

Hypothesis 9: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the per pupil expenditure of the districts in which they are employed.

Hypothesis 10: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and their personal characteristics, such as age, gender, and advanced academic training.

Scope and Limitations of the Research

The sample of superintendents was drawn from the universe of all local superintendents currently employed in Michigan. The writer intentionally limited the sample to Michigan superintendents because in Michigan all superintendents are selected by school board action, thus making the selection method a constant factor across all members of the sample. In other states, various processes are employed for selecting superintendents. In Mississippi, for example, more than half of the superintendents are elected by a vote of the citizens. Thus, if states other than Michigan had been included in the study, the means by which a superintendent had secured his/her job would have become an independent variable whose effects would need to be considered. However, limiting the sample to Michigan limited the generalizability of the findings across state lines.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation.

Classical-rational decision making. The decision-making style that can be characterized as deliberate, conscious, and analytic; also designated technocratic decision making.

Conflict. A situation in which the superintendent must choose between or among competing interests.

Decision making. The thought process leading to and the act of choosing between two or more alternatives.

Per pupil instructional expenditure. The total amount spent by a school district in the 1985-86 school year, divided by the total number of K-12 students enrolled in that district for the same school year.

Political decision making. The decision-making style that can be characterized as partisan, strategic, and responsive.

School board. The governing body of the school district, which is elected by a vote of those citizens registered to vote in the district (MCL 380.6).

School district. A primary school district or a first-, second, third-, or fourth-class district, as defined by the Michigan Department of Education.

State equalized valuation (SEV). The basis for applying the property-tax levy. The legislature establishes the formula for determining the valuation of personal and real property, which shall not exceed 50% of the true cash value of the property (Michigan Constitution, Article IX, sec. 3).

Superintendent. The chief executive officer of a legally constituted school district, who received his/her position by school board appointment.

Overview

Chapter I contained a statement of the problem and purpose of the study, the rationale for conducting the study, the hypotheses, scope and limitations of the research, and definitions of terms. Chapter II contains a review of literature related to the present

study. The methods and procedures employed in conducting the research are explained in Chapter III. Results of the statistical analyses are discussed in Chapter IV. Chapter V includes a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the research findings, reflections, and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter contains a review of literature and research pertinent to the topic under investigation. The chapter includes six sections. The first pertains to the theory of educational administration. The second section is a historical review of the school superintendency. In the third section, research findings on administrative decision making are discussed. Research on the dichotomy of the decision-making role of the school superintendent is considered in the fourth section. The fifth section contains the findings of studies in which an attempt was made to relate superintendent behavior to factors in the school environment. In the last section, some trends for the future of the superintendency are outlined.

Theoretical Perspective of Educational Administration

Halpin (1966) suggested that the assumption underlying the study of administrative behavior is that such behavior is much the same across various categories of administration, such as school, hospital, and public-service administration. He explained that it is important, not to study the administrator, but rather the observable behavior of the administrator. The present writer

examined the decision-making behavior of school superintendents to gain information from which inferences could be drawn about the science of school administration in general, and the role of the superintendent in particular.

Fitting information about the decision-making behavior of superintendents into a larger theory is complicated by the context in which such information is viewed. In a recent presentation to school administrators, Sergiovanni (1988) admonished them, as well as educational researchers, to adhere to a theory that accurately reflects reality as they know it, rather than attempting to fit reality to a particular theory. In the following paragraphs, two families of theories are described, and the role that school administrators' decision-making behavior plays in them is explained.

Two families of theories address administrative decision making in the larger context of educational administration. In the first family of theories, schools are viewed as democracies in action. By the nature of these theories, organizational change is perceived as politically motivated, and decision making is the impetus behind such change. Three theories exemplify this family. The first is the continuous-participation theory (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974), according to which democracy is described as a matter of public participation in the policy process. The school administrator is (or ought to be) a facilitator of such participation. The more people who participate and the more frequently they participate, the more democratic the process.

The second theory is the decision-output theory (Wirt & Kirst, 1972), in which democracy is considered a matter of the degree of congruence between the demands of the people and the policy output of the governmental unit. The more outputs reflect the demands of the people, the more democratic the government. The school administrator's decisions are judged by the degree to which they mirror the will of the people.

The third of this family of theories is the theory of democracy by dissatisfaction (Danis, 1984; Lutz, 1962; Lutz & Iannaccone, 1978; Lutz & Wang, 1987). According to the tenets of this theory,

The essence of democracy is the freedom to participate and change policy when the people are dissatisfied enough with the policy or the freedom not to participate when the people are not dissatisfied enough with the policy to change it. (Lutz & Wang, 1987, p. 67)

Lutz and others have studied the superintendent's role in the policy process and concluded that external indicators of public dissatisfaction (e.g., school board recall, superintendent dismissal) can be used to gauge the degree to which policy decisions are meeting the needs of the people.

In the second family of theories, the superintendent's role is delineated by the degree to which the balance of power is maintained among the school board, the various constituencies, and the superintendent. The amount of conflict among these three factions is considered to indicate the success or failure of the superintendent's decision-making style.

In 1974, Zeigler and Jennings conducted an extensive study of school board members, their superintendents, and their

constituencies. The purpose of the research was to examine school governance under political and technocratic strain. The authors concluded that the factors that put school environments under stress would continue to exist and even to increase in the foreseeable future. They also concluded that the superintendent would continue to function as the center of policy governance for the schools, which would result in increased visibility of the superintendency. A successful superintendent, they speculated, was one who could manage policy governance and moderate conflict in light of the additional attention focused on the position.

Ziegler et al. (1985) conducted a study comparing school superintendents and city managers. Again the question was the management of conflict. They found that both superintendents and city managers developed complex strategies that helped them cope with inter- and intraorganizational conflict.

Splittgerber and Stirzaker (1984) hypothesized that the successful superintendent needs to maintain a state of equilibrium, through ethical behavior, among the school board, the community, and the administration. They defined ethical behavior as that which is honest and exemplifies integrity but is also flexible and compromising. The authors suggested that it is through ethical behavior and maintaining a sense of equilibrium that school leaders can move their organizations toward participatory decision making.

To illustrate the difficulty in achieving a balance of power in school districts, researchers from the American School Board Journal

and the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University surveyed a representative national sample of 2,488 school board members and 2,488 superintendents, of whom 535 board members and 817 superintendents responded (Alvey & Underwood, 1985). The purpose of the study was to determine where the respondents agreed and disagreed about their roles in school leadership. The area of greatest disagreement was personnel; board members wanted their superintendents to have less responsibility in hiring and promoting, and the superintendents wanted to have more responsibility. Other areas of disagreement included financial management, day-to-day administration, and curriculum and instruction.

Finally, March and Midlos (1983) surveyed superintendents of schools in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, Canada, regarding their perceptions of the degree of control exercised by personnel at each of five decision levels (department of education, school board, superintendent's office, principal, and teachers) over 32 decision items. Results of the analysis confirmed that, in the superintendents' views, changes in the locus of control over various items reflected a gradual yet continuing increase in teachers' and principals' influence but no dramatic change in the pattern of control over educational decisions.

Many writers of school-management texts have cited coping with conflict as a skill requisite for successful school leaders. By extension, the manner in which a school superintendent makes decisions will influence the ability to cope with conflict.

Conversely, the manner in which a school superintendent chooses to cope with conflict will affect the manner of decision making.

In summary, both the public-education-as-democracy and the conflict-management theories are pertinent to the subject of how superintendents make decisions. In both families of theories, decision making plays an integral role. Additional information about decision making will help in refining those theories.

Historical Review of the Development of the Superintendency

Most authors agree that the superintendency has evolved over the last century and a half. Their descriptions of the superintendency differ primarily in the reasons the authors have given for the various evolutionary stages.

Duke (1987) traced the development of the school superintendency through changes in concepts of leader effectiveness. The traditional concept of leader effectiveness included images of the school leader as a father, general, or coach. Traditional school leaders embodied moral qualities such as goodness and virtue. Although management of an orderly school environment was important, it was a secondary purpose.

By the turn of the century, the scientific-management movement of Frederick Taylor and others had begun to influence the perspective of the school master/superintendent. Although the premise that a leader's success could be measured by the accomplishment of organizational goals was attractive, application of that premise was difficult in the schools of the time. It was

hard to isolate which goals were to be used as standard measures of leader effectiveness.

In the late 1930s, the scientific-management school gave way to the human-relations school of thought. The focus became the quality of life in the workplace and the relations between workers and supervisors. Attention was placed on how organizational members felt about what they were doing. Duke (1987) suggested that Barth's premise in Run, School, Run, as well as some of the work by Brookover and Lezotte on the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and achievement scores, was founded in the human-relations movement. Duke concluded by addressing the superintendency of the 1980s in light of trends toward key leader behaviors and assessment of student-based outcomes.

Cuban (1985) framed the evolution of the superintendency with the constancy of conflict over time. He explained that the burdens of overseeing everyday school matters in the mid-nineteenth century led elected school boards to appoint superintendents to take care of these matters. In addition, school superintendents in that era were expected to keep records, train teachers, prepare examinations for students, and choose textbooks. By the 1920s, superintendents had become educational experts and were expected to construct educational blueprints for their schools.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the professionalization of the superintendency was hastened by its removal from local partisan politics and by the advanced training available in school

administration. However, the position again became the center of political controversy in the 1960s and 1970s, with the civil rights movement, increased citizen participation, demand for accountability, enrollment declines, and economic recessions. Cuban concluded that superintendents who wish to deal successfully with the ever-present conflict must play at least three roles: politician, manager, and teacher.

In a dissertation in which he examined administrator behavior in crisis management, George (1971) described five stages through which the superintendency has evolved in the twentieth century. The first stage was the school superintendent as schoolmaster, similar in function to Cuban's description of the late-nineteenth-century superintendent. The responsibilities of this early superintendent were largely antiseptic in nature--keeping the schools running smoothly. The next stage was that of the superintendent as statesman, a spokesperson for free public education in the tradition of Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. The next stage, beginning in the 1920s, was that of the manager superintendent, governed as Cuban noted by management principles borrowed from large corporate enterprises. In this period, superintendents supported education for all through the high school level and a diversified curriculum to meet the needs of all students. In the fourth stage, the specialized training that was becoming available for superintendents fostered the development of specialty skills, such as budget preparation, knowledge of school law, and financial accounting. It was in this period that the technically sound superintendent

emerged. During the final stage, according to George, world affairs have intruded on the operation of the schools. George postulated that this period requires a superintendent skilled in new dimensions of leadership, educational statesmanship, and genuine professionalism. He proceeded to develop a model for successful decision making by school superintendents in times of crisis. That paradigm is characterized by improvisation, spontaneity, and accommodation.

With yet a different focus, Mann (1976) traced the development of the dichotomy between politics and administration. Although not focusing solely on education, the development of Mann's dichotomy closely parallels the evolution of the superintendency as outlined by Cuban and George. Mann credited Frank Goodnow with recognizing the existence of the dichotomy in 1900. He quoted Goodnow as follows:

There is a large part of administration which is unconnected with politics, which should therefore be relieved very largely, if not altogether, from the control of political bodies. It is unconnected with politics because it embodies fields of semiscientific activity. (p. 15)

Mann argued that the dichotomy between political and administrative factors was maintained for the next 40 years in educational administration, despite the fact that it was largely disproven by social scientists in other fields of administration. He attributed this circumstance to the professionalization of the school administrator and the tendency of the expert administrator to keep politics out of schools. Mann noted that recent trends toward

decentralization of decision making, citizen participation, community control, and accountability can be interpreted as an effort to reintegrate political and administrative factors in the formulation of educational policy.

Kimbrough (1964) used still another method to examine the evolution of the role of the superintendent. He tracked the superintendency by studying the techniques employed by superintendents to realize their preferred educational policies. Kimbrough began by analyzing the early 1920s and 1930s, when most educational leaders used the public-relations approach to inform their constituents of the needs of the educational community. Leaders using such an approach assumed that informed voters would make the proper choice at the ballot box. But school administrators soon found that a well-informed citizenry did not always concur with the administrators in the policy choices they made when they voted.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, educational administrators found new hope in the field of group dynamics, especially in the area of a democratic group-decision-making process. Although use of the group process appealed to administrators who were beginning to espouse the democracy of education, the process was rife with problems, such as finding persons willing to become involved, keeping the groups at a manageable size in which decisions could be made, and coordinating the efforts of various groups. Kimbrough concluded his analysis by noting that from the 1950s onward, school leaders had been involved

in a combination of the public-relations and group-decision-making processes but had begun to pay particular attention to informal groups of power holders.

Havighurst (1979) credited political decisions and circumstances beginning in the 1950s with a rise in community members' participation in educational decision making. Among these occurrences were the following:

1. The 1954 Supreme Court decision banning racial segregation in public schools.

2. Passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of the 1960s.

3. The growing conviction among black citizens that they had the right to expect and demand educational facilities and programs equal to those provided for whites.

4. The increasing racial and economic segregation in the public schools in large cities.

5. Widespread public opinion that academic achievement was mainly a result of the quality of teaching in the schools and that equal qualities of schooling would result in equal achievement, regardless of the parents' socioeconomic status.

6. The federal government's policy of placing poor people and minorities in decision- and policy-making positions with respect to government programs, which led to these groups' increased participation in and responsibility for decision making in the educational systems of large cities.

Although Havighurst focused on community participation by the poor and disadvantaged, the changes he listed clearly influenced the manner in which school leaders made decisions. They were expected to open the decision-making process to participation by noneducators.

Research on Administrative Decision Making

In his landmark work, Simon (1945) described decision making as a process that approaches but never becomes completely rational behavior. He postulated that the human process of choosing among alternative strategies will always be flawed because there is no way the decision maker can know all of the possible alternative strategies. This situation he defined as limited rationality. Simon explained that administrative decisions are oriented toward goals and objectives; made with some knowledge of the consequences; and affected by values, personal preferences, and organizational influences.

In 1982, March critiqued the most prominent decision-making theories, including Simon's, in terms of their inadequacy in addressing several components of administrative decision making. First, March argued that theories of decision making do not accommodate uncertainty or ambiguity on the part of the decision maker. He noted that decision makers routinely ignore their own fully conscious preferences in making decisions. Further, human beings act as though some aspects of their beliefs are important to life without necessarily being consistent with their actions.

Second, March asserted that theories of choice either ignore conflict with respect to objectives or assume that the conflict can be resolved by tradeoffs or contracts before making decisions. Third, March said, theories of choice underestimate both the pervasiveness and the sensibility of an alternative decision logic--the logic of obligation, duty, and rules. Fourth, theories of choice underestimate the confusion and complexity surrounding actual decision making. Finally, theories of choice assume that the primary reason for decision making is to make choices. In actual decision situations, symbolic and ritual aspects of the behavior are often major factors. March concluded by describing an ideal view of decision making that "embraces the axioms of choice but acknowledges their limitations; that combines a passion for the technology of choice with an appreciation of its complexities and the beauties of its confusions" (p. 39).

George (1971) examined the relationship between the characteristics of crises in which a decision was required and superintendents' reactions in those situations. His findings supported March's contention that classic administrative-decision-making models do not accommodate crisis as a factor in administrative decision making. George discovered:

1. An inverse relationship between the amount of time perceived available and a contraction of authority.
2. A direct relationship between the amount of stress perceived and the use of other resources.

3. A direct relationship between the amount of uncertainty and the degree of stress.

4. A direct relationship between the amount of stress and the degree of contraction of authority.

5. A direct relationship between the amount of uncertainty and the degree of contraction of authority.

6. A direct relationship between the seriousness of the crisis and the degree of stress.

According to the conflict model of decision making (Janis & Mann, 1977) and the social-process model (Vroom & Jago, 1974), among the critical factors affecting decision making and use of information are (a) the amount of conflict involved while making the decision, (b) the importance of the decision, and (c) the content of the specific decision.

In a survey of 178 school board members from 56 schools, Brown, Newman, and Rivers (1985) found that knowledge of the superintendent's position on an issue influenced the board members' need for more time to make the decision, their need for more information, their need for informal contacts, and the use of their own experiences. The researchers concluded that conflict among the board members and between the board and the superintendent were critical determinants of the superintendents' decision-making styles.

Kimbrough (1964) postulated another model with which to consider decision making in schools. Although the superintendency is not addressed specifically in this model, the paradigm can be

used to gain important information about power groups' influence in decision making. Kimbrough conceptualized the ability to influence the outcomes of the policy decision process as being related to the amount of informal power a person or group can exert. He made the following assumptions:

1. Citizens vary greatly in the degree of influence they exercise over educational policy decisions.

2. The variation in power among persons and groups in the local school district is associated with the difference in control over, and the effective use of, power resources. Informal groups are often able to use their collective resources more effectively than formal organizations.

3. The status of public officials is often associated with the disproportionate control of resources by private institutions in meeting people's needs. As a result, members of the board of education and other governmental officials have relatively little power.

4. Decisive power is exercised in most local school districts by relatively few persons who hold top positions of influence in the informal power structure of the school district. The success of important educational projects and proposals often depends heavily on the support or lack of support of these powerful individuals.

From Kimbrough's conceptualization, it is clear that the superintendent must be able to wield informal power in order to influence the policy decisions of the school.

In summary, classic decision-making theories have been clarified by research about how decisions are made in organizations such as schools. One factor that greatly affects decision making in schools is the amount and nature of conflict surrounding the decision. A second critical factor is the amount of informal power available to and used by the participants (including the superintendent) in the decision-making process.

The Dichotomy of the Superintendent's Roles

Several authors have described two different and sometimes conflicting roles successful superintendents must play. One role, which for the purposes of this study has been called the political role, is characterized by an orientation to leadership and the ability to work with informal power groups, bring about consensus through compromise, and develop strategies to accomplish goals. The other role, which has been labeled the technocratic role, is characterized by technical soundness, attention to detail, a distaste for working with informal power groups, and a management orientation.

Halpin (1966) described the dichotomy as a dual set of duties confronting school leaders. One set of duties, he said, is to be the problem solver or decision maker; the other is to be the group leader within the immediate staff. The decision maker, he suggested, should employ the traditional decision-making processes similar to those Simon described. In Halpin's view, the decision maker should always be oriented to the organization's task. The

group leader, on the other hand, should be attentive to the effectiveness of the work group's functioning. The group leader is responsible for the care and maintenance of the group. Halpin's decision maker is similar in job function to the technocrat, and the group leader is analogous to the politician. The group leader, like the politician, works toward organizational goals through the ability to work with others. The decision maker employs deliberate processes to reach technically sound decisions.

Even earlier than Halpin, March and Simon (1959) described two types of processes commonly used in managing organizational conflict: analytic and bargaining. The analytic process is technocratically oriented, involving information gathering, problem solving, bureaucratic rules, and goals. The bargaining process, in contrast, is more political. It involves trade-offs, compromises, and cultivation of powerful allies.

Reisman (1982) conducted a study of the conflict-management behavior of 103 school superintendents and city managers in two major metropolitan areas. She found that the superintendents were more professional than the city managers. Yet, when dealing with the public, superintendents were less likely to use the analytic-technocratic conflict-management methods typically associated with professionals. Superintendents managing public-oriented conflict tended to deviate from their professional opinions and to engage in the bargaining, lobbying, and compromising behavior typical of the political bargaining approach. Reisman suggested that the superintendents' reliance on political bargaining methods may be

necessitated by the ideological nature of the public issues they face.

Monahan and Hengst (1982) described the functions of the current school administrator as falling into two categories: leadership and management. They suggested that, although the functions are closely related, different sets of skills are required for success at each. Management concerns include production, communication, training, personnel relations, resource acquisition and allocation, maintenance and operation, and public relations. Leadership functions include structuring and setting policy in the larger philosophical framework of the school environment. Monahan and Hengst said that school administrators who are successfully integrating both sets of functions display the following characteristics: (a) an orientation to action, (b) a willingness to make decisions that involve difficult choices, (c) objectivity about the consequences of their actions, (d) authenticity, and (e) tolerance.

Huff and Pondy (1983) used a systems-analysis approach to study issue management in three suburban Chicago school districts. They analyzed the superintendents' speeches, interaction among participants at board meetings, the content of written communications, and interviews with the public and staff members. The researchers defined open-system rational models of organizations as those that emphasize structural adaptation to environmental and task uncertainty. They defined open-system natural models as those

that emphasize the nonrational aspects of adaptation and the importance of survival over goal attainment. Huff and Pondy contended that the more recent open-system natural models focus on power, coalitions, language, rationalized myths, sense making, and ambiguity. They found that rational models are guided by objective analysis and that natural models are guided by "symbolic interpretation." The authors concluded that no global understanding is necessary for a political process to generate problem-solving action. They wrote: "The corresponding insight for organizational theory today is that organizational problem solving is accomplished by an interaction of rational and natural processes" (p. 83).

Although Huff and Pondy were more interested in the organizational processes than in the individuals functioning within those processes, their findings supported the concept of a dichotomy in style between rational system models and natural system models. Their descriptors of the two models could easily be applied to the political and technocratic roles.

In a paper presented at a conference for school district superintendents in Manitoba, Canada, Coleman (1976) argued that governmental institutions are affected by basic value positions and shifts in emphasis among representativeness, technical competence, and executive leadership. He explained that the rational decision-making model is ineffective in dealing with conflict that arises in schools. He suggested, rather, a decision-making model in which (a) agreement is reached by consensus, (b) each group's contribution to the decision-making process represents its value orientation, and

(c) group leaders' technical competence is downplayed. Coleman noted that the role of the school administrator in dealing with conflict increasingly resembles that of the professional negotiator or mediator. Once again, the discrepancy between the decision-making models reflects the dichotomy between the political and technocratic roles.

Cuban (1985) claimed that only by playing multiple roles can a superintendent expect to be successful. He defined the superintendent's roles as politician, manager, and teacher. Cuban said that conflict within the organization and from interest groups outside the school has necessitated the dual roles of manager and politician. He explained that the current interest in having superintendents exert leadership in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment reaffirms the historic role of the superintendent as teacher.

In summary, it is clear that the dichotomy between technocrat and politician has been perceived for some time and studied from a variety of perspectives. Whether from the point of view of the educational leader or the organizational system, the act of making decisions in an environment of conflict is the touchstone for the dichotomy.

The Relationship Between Superintendent Behavior and Characteristics of the School Environment

Researchers have linked certain characteristics of school environments to aspects of superintendent behavior. From that

research, the present writer selected the independent variables for this study.

Wachtel (1979) found that several variables were positively correlated with the superintendent's use of a rational decision-making model. These variables were experience as superintendent, central-office experience, attainment of a doctorate, recent inservice, and age.

Ferry (1981) developed the Budget Decision Criteria instrument, which contained 15 criteria for consideration in budget decisions. The superintendents in Ferry's sample were asked to rank these criteria on a four-point scale from not relevant to very relevant in making budget decisions. Ferry found that two variables, pupil enrollment and age of the superintendent, were significant predictors of a superintendent's score on the research instrument. Unlike Wachtel, Ferry did not find that length of experience as a superintendent was a significant factor in superintendents' decisions.

Zeigler and Jennings (1974) found three factors to be correlated with community input into the decision-making process through interest groups. They were size of the district, extent of public discontent with educational policy, and declining enrollment. The researchers found that in smaller, nonmetropolitan districts, conflict actually strengthened the position of the school board over that of the superintendent. The school board was more active in the policy-setting process. In metropolitan districts, such tension strengthened the position of the superintendent. One measure of the

presence of interest groups in Zeigler and Jennings's study was the demographic composition of the school districts studied. In the present study, that variable was defined as the percentage of the school population that was nonwhite.

Berger (1984) used a case-survey method to investigate superintendents' succession under conditions of declining enrollment. Variables were related to three possible explanations of succession (poor performance, strategic necessity, and politics) in 56 districts. Support was found for the general explanations of succession and specific variables as predictors; the superintendents' relations with the board, staff, and communities emerged as the strongest predictors of succession.

Lutz and Wang (1987) analyzed data collected in a study of 95 Ohio school districts. In applying the dissatisfaction theory of educational democracy, they found that a prospective school board member's defeat and an incumbent's not being re-elected were related to the degree of conflict or electorate dissatisfaction experienced in the district.

In summary, Wachtel found that experience as a superintendent, advanced academic training, and age were predictors of superintendents' decision-making tendencies. Ferry found that pupil enrollment and age of the superintendent were strong predictors of preferences for budget criteria. Zeigler and Jennings found that declining enrollment, size of the district, and extent of public dissatisfaction were related to community input into the

decision-making process. Berger found that the superintendents' relations with the school board, the community, and the staff were strong predictors of superintendent succession. Lutz and Wang found that prospective board members' defeat and incumbents' not being re-elected were related to the amount of conflict being experienced in the district.

Trends for the Future of the Superintendency

Many researchers have agreed that conflict will continue to be part of the school district environment in the future (Ziegler et al., 1985). Therefore, superintendents need to develop skills that will help them manage conflict in their districts.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) guidelines for training educational administrators include seven goals for leaders and seven competency areas. Competency Two deals specifically with the political process: "Understanding political theory and applying political theory and skills in building local, state and national support for education." The AASA has recognized the importance of skills associated with the political style of decision making by including a competency dealing exclusively with those skills as well as competencies associated with the technocratic, managerial style of decision making. In another recent publication on skills for successful educational leaders, Hoyle (1985) said that demonstrating coalition building and identifying community power structures will enable leaders to build public support for schools.

Morris (1985) suggested that a reconceptualization of educational administration is needed to deal with the schools of today and those of the future. He based his suggestion on the rational-emotive theory. Morris focused on the individual in terms of his/her cognitive functioning and psychological health, thinking in terms of new beliefs that will be required in the future, and outcome behavior in terms of visualizing goals and building strategies to obtain them.

In a construct similar to Morris's, Cunningham (1985) listed seven skills he believed could be cultivated through proper training that would aid educational leaders of the future. They are:

1. The ability to focus on the present and the future simultaneously.
2. The ability to bridge the gaps between various interest groups.
3. Scanning, monitoring, and interpreting events.
4. The ability critically to appraise everyday events.
5. The ability to understand an endless barrage of information.
6. The ability to manage symbols.

In a paper he presented at the 112th annual convention of the AASA in 1980, Nelson listed seven strategies for superintendents dealing with conflict. He noted that the effectiveness of the strategies is determined by the superintendent's ability to choose

the proper one at the most opportune time, "according to conditions that prevail in the situation" (p. 37).

Summary

The presumption underlying each of the suggested skills for successful educational leaders of the future is that school leaders need to be able to fit the strategy to the situation (Nelson, 1980). Duke (1987) referred to this ability as situational competence. The superintendency has evolved through various stages in the last 150 years. At some points the superintendent has required highly refined technocratic skills. More recently, because of the influence of informal power groups and shifts in the balance of power among the school board, interest groups, and the superintendent, more complex political skills have become necessary. Authors who have speculated about the future of the superintendency have called for a blending of technocratic and political skills (Hoyle et al., 1985). Neither type in isolation will meet the needs of school leaders of the future. The superintendent of the future, it seems, will need to be competent in both areas and possess the vision to be able to discern which skill will be effective in a particular situation.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methods and procedures employed in conducting the study are explained in this chapter. The focus of the study is restated, the development of descriptors is described, and the instrument used in the study is discussed. The pilot study procedures are explained in detail, as is the method of contacting the subjects.

Focus of the Study

The researcher's purpose in conducting this study was to determine whether the decision-making styles preferred by school superintendents were related to personal characteristics of the superintendents or to demographic features of the school districts in which they were employed. Two decision-making styles--technocratic and political--were studied. Technocratic decision making can be described as deliberate, conscious, analytic, technical/theoretical, and logical. Political decision making can be described as partisan, strategic, and responsive.

Development of Descriptors

The researcher developed sets of descriptors that represented the two decision-making styles under investigation. These

descriptors were used in selecting superintendents to participate in the pilot study, as well as in developing the instruments. The descriptors were compiled using Roget's II: The New World Thesaurus (1984), beginning with the words "political" and "technocratic." Two lists were created for each word, one for high descriptors and one for low descriptors. By cross-referencing these words, the following lists of descriptors were formulated:

<u>Low Technocratic</u>	<u>High Technocratic</u>
intuitive	deliberate
instinctive	conscious
visceral	logical
impulsive	technical
<u>Low Political</u>	<u>High Political</u>
naive	strategic
indiscreet	partisan
insensitive	responsive
artless	

Designing the Instrument and Conducting the Pilot Study

The researcher designed a forced-choice survey to ascertain the types of decision-making styles preferred by selected Michigan superintendents. To determine the reliability of the survey, a pilot study was conducted in April 1987.

Potential pilot-study participants were nominated by a panel of three persons who were knowledgeable about the Michigan superintendents. The panel members were the Superintendent of Public Instruction for Michigan, the executive director of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, and the executive director of the Middle Cities Association, which is affiliated with

Michigan State University. Each panel member was given a written description of the decision-making styles under investigation and was asked to provide the names of ten superintendents who exemplified each of the two styles. Each panel member provided 20 names, for a total of 60 prospective pilot-study participants. The lists provided by the panel members contained six duplications, and the surveyor could not contact six other individuals. Thus, only 48 superintendents participated in the pilot study.

The panel members were assured that their nominations would be kept confidential and that the superintendents would not be told how they had been selected. Panel members were also asked to add to the list of descriptors any words they thought characterized either style. (A copy of the letter given to panel members is included in Appendix A.)

The instrument used in the pilot study contained 27 pairs of statements (see Appendix B). In each pair, one statement was a description of the political decision-making style, whereas the other was a description of the technocratic style of decision making. Nine of the 27 pairs of statements were based on descriptors in the low categories for each style, nine were based on descriptors in the high categories, and nine were designed to describe a moderate presence of the style. The moderate statements used the descriptors from the high categories for each style, modified by the words "often," "sometimes," or "usually." This format was employed because the researcher thought that respondents'

scores could be calculated by adding their high scores for one category to their low scores for the other. This calculation did not prove to be useful.

Reliability analyses were performed using the results of the pilot study. Both the political and the technocratic scales were analyzed. The low, moderate, and high subscales of the political and technocratic scales were also analyzed. The results of the analyses of the total political and technocratic scales, using the Spearman-Brown and Guttman split-half reliability coefficients, are presented in Table 3.1. Because a reliability score of .70 or better is considered acceptable, these scores indicated that the total scales were reliable or that there was less than a .20 chance that the respondents' answers had been randomly selected. The sameness of the reliability scores can be explained by the nature of the instrument. Because the respondents were forced to choose one statement from each pair of statements, each choice affected their scores on both scales.

Table 3.1.--Results of reliability analyses of the total political and technocratic scales.

Scale	Spearman-Brown	Guttman
Political (n = 27)	.81167	.81185
Technocratic (n = 27)	.81167	.81185

The subscales were reviewed using the alpha scores and the standardized item alpha yielded in the Guttman split-half analysis. These scores are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2.--Guttman alpha scores for the low, moderate, and high subscales.

Subscale	Alpha	Standardized Item Alpha
Low political	.26820	.17676
Moderate political	.65137	.61787
High political	.80298	.80145
Low technocratic	.26820	.17676
Moderate technocratic	.65137	.61787
High technocratic	.80298	.80145

From the results of the Guttman split-half analysis, it appeared that the statements using the low-end descriptors had the least reliability. To investigate this finding further, the inter-item correlations for the low-end descriptors were reviewed. Specifically, the effect on the scale mean if the item were to be deleted from the computations was determined. The results are presented in Table 3.3, in which the rank order signifies the degree to which deletion of the item would affect the scale mean. The higher an item in the rank order, the greater the effect its deletion would have on the scale mean. Because seven of the nine low-end descriptors were among the statements that were associated with the most effect on the mean when they were deleted from the

calculation of the scale mean, the researcher decided that all low-end descriptors would be eliminated from the survey.

Table 3.3.--Low-end descriptors and their effect on the scale mean.

Item Number	Mean If Deleted	Reliability
3	11.83333	.79949
5	11.04762	.79056
7	11.97619	.79767
10	11.90476	.79579
14	11.88095	.79228
15	11.57962	.80502
19	11.97619	.79882
24	11.71429	.79237
25	11.73810	.80590

Scale mean = 12.02318

The reliability analyses were recalculated for only the moderate and the high descriptor statements. The results are shown in Table 3.4. Once again, the sameness of the reliability indices is explained by the nature of the instrument.

Table 3.4.--Results of reliability analyses of the revised total political and technocratic scales.

Scale	Spearman-Brown	Guttman
Political (n = 22)	.79796	.79540
Technocratic (N = 22)	.79796	.79540

The nine deleted sets of statements were replaced by four sets of statements containing descriptors from the high-end lists. These statements were constructed in the same manner as the original ones. Hence, the final version of the survey contained 22 pairs of statements. In the analyses performed on data from the full study sample, no attempt was made to distinguish between moderate and high responses on either scale.

The Director of Opinion Research for the Michigan Department of Education reviewed the final version of the survey. He suggested slight changes in the wording to avoid potentially biasing words or phrases, as well as to facilitate the administration of the survey. (See Appendix C for the final version of the instrument.)

Method of Contacting Potential Participants

In both the pilot study and the full-sample survey, the researcher initially contacted potential participants by mail to explain the nature of the survey and to request their participation, as well as to assure the superintendents that their responses would be confidential. Because part of the survey was supported financially by a grant from the Michigan Institute for Educational Management, the initial contact letter was printed on this organization's letterhead. The letter informed superintendents that a professional interviewer would be telephoning them the following week, either to complete the survey with them or to make an appointment for a time when the survey could be completed. (See Appendix D for a copy of this letter.)

Two telephone surveyors for the pilot study and two additional interviewers for the full sample survey were selected from a list of surveyors used by the Michigan Department of Education in conducting opinion research. All surveyors received a 35-minute training session on the use of the survey, conducted jointly by the researcher and the Director of Opinion Research for the Michigan Department of Education. During these sessions, the Director read the survey aloud, suggesting voice inflections and techniques to help respondents choose between the pairs of statements. The surveyors were encouraged to ask questions. In the training session for the full-sample surveyors, the two individuals who had conducted the pilot study offered suggestions of methods they had found useful.

The surveyors were given lists containing the superintendents' names, telephone numbers, and school districts. Each superintendent was assigned an interview number, which the surveyor was to affix to the completed survey. The name of the superintendent did not appear on the completed instrument.

The survey was conducted between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The surveys called from their homes, charging their calls to the researcher's credit card. If a surveyor was unable to return a call at the appointed time, she was responsible for contacting another surveyor who could make the call. The surveyors were paid \$5 an hour for the time they were engaged in surveying the

superintendents. (See Appendix E for the surveyors' opening statements for each interview.)

A telephone survey was selected as the method for conducting this research for several reasons. The researcher thought a telephone interview would be attractive to the superintendents because it would require less time to complete than a paper-and-pencil survey. Blankenship (1977) suggested that telephone surveys have numerous sampling advantages, including (a) higher completion rates, (b) usefulness in approaching special universes, and (c) a greater level of cooperation. However, Frey (1983), in his study of telephone surveys, noted that "appeals by the latter techniques (including phone survey) often end up diverted by "gatekeepers" or others who guard the time and energy of the potential respondent" (p. 43). In this study, the superintendent's secretary sometimes acted as such a gatekeeper. In these instances, the surveyors were forced to call back several times before speaking directly to the superintendent.

The researcher also believed that a telephone survey would result in a higher response rate than a mail survey. Frey noted that telephone surveys have higher response rates than mail surveys but lower rates than personal interviews. In a comparison of more than 200 measures obtained on personal interview and telephone surveys, Groves and Kahn (1979) found few of the differences between the modes were large enough to be statistically significant. However, they noted the following trends:

1. A greater tendency toward missing data in the telephone survey.
2. A tendency of respondents to prefer the personal to the telephone interviews.
3. A tendency toward greater expressions of optimism in the telephone interviews.

In this study, the lower-than-expected response rate (about 70%) may have been a result of the secretaries' gatekeeping efforts. Although Groves and Kahn identified a trend toward optimism in responses to telephone surveys, it is unlikely there would have been such a trend in the present study. Superintendents were asked to choose between two styles of decision making, neither of which is inherently optimistic.

Sample Selection

One hundred fifty superintendents were selected from the universe of 525 K-12 school districts within Michigan. The Detroit Public School District, the only Class 1 (as defined by the Michigan Department of Education, based on enrollment) district in the state, was eliminated from the universe because of its vast difference in size from all other Michigan districts. The special-class districts of Ann Arbor and Petoskey were also eliminated from consideration, as were all districts including less than kindergarten through twelfth grade.

To arrive at a sample that was representative of the proportion of Class 2, 3, and 4 districts to the whole universe of 522

districts, the ratio of the number of districts in each class to the number in the universe was calculated. That ratio was then used to determine the number of districts within a class that should be selected. The results are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5.--Ratio of number of districts in sample to number in universe, by class.

District Class	No. of Districts in Universe	% of Sample	No. of Districts in Sample
2	3	1	1
3	133	25	38
4	386	74	111
Total	522	100	150

It was also necessary to eliminate from the universe any district whose superintendent had been contacted during the pilot phase of the study. As a result, 48 districts were eliminated, including all Class 2 districts. Because this occurred, an additional Class 3 district was selected for inclusion in the study.

A table of random numbers was used to select the appropriate number of school districts from a computer printout of all districts in Michigan, by class ("School Management Detail Listing," 1986). A master list was prepared, containing the district name, the name of the superintendent, and his/her office telephone number (Michigan Department of Education, 1986).

Of the 150 subjects selected for inclusion in the study, 104 provided usable data. This represented a response rate of 69.33%.

Because the response rate was lower than anticipated, the respondent and nonrespondent groups were compared, using a t-test for significant differences between groups, on the following variables: SEV of the superintendent's employing district, enrollment of the district, and per pupil expenditure (Five Year Summary, 1986). No significant differences were discovered between the two groups on any of these variables.

Another way to examine the relationship between respondent and nonrespondent groups was to evaluate the percentage of respondents in each group by district class because this was a criterion used in the subject-selection process. Again, no significant difference was found between the groups, as shown in Table 3.6. Thus, neither the Class 3 nor the Class 4 school districts were overrepresented in the respondent group.

Table 3.6.--Response rate, by district class.

District Class	No. Selected	No. Responding	% Response
3	39	27	69.23
4	111	77	69.37

The chi-square test for independence using SPSS-X was employed to conduct a series of analyses of the data. This procedure was used to determine whether or not two independent variables were associated. The decision-making style of the respondent was one of

the variables. The factors included in the list of personal characteristics of the respondents or the demographic features of the school districts in which they were employed constituted the other variable. The .05 alpha level was set for determining the statistical significance of the results of the analyses.

Summary

The methods and procedures used in conducting the study were described in this chapter. Development of the instrument and the pilot study that was used to refine the instrument and test it for reliability were examined in detail. Also included in this chapter were a description of the telephone survey method, the rationale for its use, and a discussion of the sample-selection procedures. Chapter IV contains a discussion of the findings of the statistical analyses conducted for this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSES

Introduction

Results of the data analyses are discussed in this chapter. Each hypothesis is restated, followed by the findings pertaining to that hypothesis.

Findings

Respondents' scores on the technocratic and political scales were tabulated. Each respondent received two scores. The score for a particular scale was determined by counting the number of times the respondent selected the statement representing that type of decision making over the statement representing the alternative decision-making style. These decision-making-scale scores were then categorized, based on the following criteria:

<u>No. of Answers</u>	<u>Category</u>
0 through 8	Low
9 through 14	Moderate
15 through 22	Strong

The number of respondents represented in each category was tabulated for both the technocratic and the political scales. The frequencies for the technocratic decision-making-style categories are presented in Table 4.1. Frequencies for the political decision-

making-style categories are shown in Table 4.2. As seen in these tables, the scores for both scales were fairly evenly distributed among the categories.

Table 4.1.--Frequencies for the technocratic scale.

Category	Number	Percent	Cum. Percent
Low	36	34.6	34.6
Moderate	40	38.5	73.1
High	28	26.9	100.0
Total	104	100.0	100.0

Table 4.2.--Frequencies for the political scale.

Category	Number	Percent	Cum. Percent
Low	36	34.6	34.6
Moderate	35	33.7	68.3
High	33	31.7	100.0
Total	104	100.0	100.0

The chi-square test was used to determine whether the observed distribution of superintendents' responses differed significantly from that which would be expected in a random distribution. The .05 alpha level was selected as the criterion for significance. In the following pages, the results for both the political and the technocratic scale are presented for each hypothesis tested.

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the size of the school district in which the superintendents are employed.

Respondents were asked, "What is the district enrollment, excluding adult education?" The size of the school district was defined in terms of student enrollment. The three categories for school district size were determined by tabulating the frequencies of district size for the sample. The results by category for the technocratic scale and the political scale are shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4, respectively. No significant relationship was found between superintendents' preference of decision-making style and size of their employing districts. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4.3.--Technocratic scale by school district enrollment.

Category	School District Enrollment						Total
	< 976		977-3,820		3,821 +		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Strong	10	35.7	12	42.9	6	21.4	28
Moderate	13	32.5	23	57.5	4	10.0	40
Low	13	36.1	16	44.4	7	19.4	36
Total	36	34.6	51	49.0	17	16.3	104

Chi-square = 2.68126 df = 4 p = .6125

Table 4.4.--Political scale by school district enrollment.

Category	School District Enrollment						Total
	< 976		977-3,820		3,821 +		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	12	36.4	15	45.5	6	18.2	33
Moderate	11	31.4	19	54.3	5	14.3	35
Low	13	36.1	17	47.2	6	16.7	36
Total	36	34.6	51	49.0	17	16.3	104

Chi-square = 0.62345 df = 4 p = .9604

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of prior superintendencies held or years as a superintendent.

The respondents were asked, "How many superintendencies, other than this one, have you held?" The results are presented in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 for the technocratic and political scales, respectively. No significant relationship was found between the superintendents' preferred decision-making style and the number of prior superintendencies they had held. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4.5.--Technocratic scale by number of prior superintendencies held.

Category	Number of Prior Superintendencies				Total
	None		More Than One		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	14	50.0	14	50.0	28
Moderate	28	70.0	12	30.0	40
Low	22	61.1	14	38.9	36
Total	64	61.5	40	38.5	104

Chi-square = 2.78778 df = 2 p = .2481

Table 4.6.--Political scale by number of prior superintendencies held.

Category	Number of Prior Superintendencies				Total
	None		More Than One		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	20	60.6	13	39.4	33
Moderate	25	71.4	10	28.6	35
Low	19	52.8	17	47.2	36
Total	64	61.5	40	38.5	104

Chi-square = 2.62591 df = 2 p = .2690

Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of years as superintendent in the district.

Respondents were asked to indicate their length of experience as a superintendent in their current district. Response choices were (a) 1-3 years, (b) 3-5 years, (c) 5-10 years, and (d) over 10 years. Because the second and third categories overlapped, the data were tabulated using two categories: 1 to 5 years and 6 or more years. The results for these comparisons on the technocratic and political scales are shown in Tables 4.7 and 4.8, respectively. No significant relationship was found between superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of years as superintendent in the district. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4.7.--Technocratic scale by number of years in the district.

Category	Number of Years in District				Total
	1 to 5		6 or More		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Strong	15	53.6	13	46.4	28
Moderate	24	60.0	16	40.0	40
Low	21	58.3	15	41.7	36
Total	66	57.7	44	42.3	104

Chi-square = 0.28814 df = 2 p = .8658

Table 4.8.--Political scale by number of years in the district.

Category	Number of Years in District				Total
	1 to 5		6 or More		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	18	54.5	15	34.5	33
Moderate	22	62.9	13	37.1	35
Low	20	55.6	16	44.4	36
Total	60	57.7	44	42.3	104

Chi-square = 0.58373 df = 2 p = .7469

Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of nonwhites enrolled in the school district.

The superintendents were asked: "What percentage of your student body is nonwhite?" Because so many respondents answered 0% or 1%, two categories were constructed artificially to test for significance. The categories were 0% to 2% and 3% to 98%. The results for these comparisons are shown in tables 4.9 and 4.10 for the technocratic and political scales, respectively. No significant relationship was found between superintendents' preferred decision-making style and the number of nonwhites enrolled in their school districts. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4.9.--Technocratic scale by percentage of nonwhite enrollment.

Category	Percentage of Nonwhite Enrollment				Total
	0%-2%		3%-98%		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	22	78.6	6	21.4	28
Moderate	30	75.0	10	25.0	40
Low	26	72.2	10	27.8	36
Total	78	75.0	26	25.0	104

Chi-square = 0.33862 df = 2 p = .8442

Table 4.10.--Political scale by percentage of nonwhite enrollment.

Category	Percentage of Nonwhite Enrollment				Total
	0%-2%		3%-98%		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	24	72.7	9	27.3	33
Moderate	26	74.3	9	25.7	35
Low	28	77.6	8	22.2	36
Total	78	75.0	26	25.0	104

Chi-square = 0.24858 df = 2 p = .8831

Hypothesis 5: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of school board members who have been recalled during the superintendents' tenure.

Respondents were asked, "During your tenure as a superintendent in this district, have any incumbent board members been recalled?"

If yes, please indicate the number recalled and the year." Because only one respondent said that a board member had been recalled during the superintendent's tenure, no statistical tests could be run for this hypothesis. Therefore, no results are presented.

Hypothesis 6: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of school board members who have been defeated when running for re-election during the superintendents' tenure.

Superintendents were asked, "During your tenure as a superintendent in this district, have any incumbent board members been defeated when running for re-election? If yes, please indicate the number defeated and the year." To test the significance of the recency of the defeat(s), the years were grouped into three categories: 1979 or before, 1980 to 1983, and 1984 to 1987. The results for number of defeats and year of defeats are presented in Tables 4.11 through 4.14.

Table 4.11.--Technocratic scale by number of board member defeats.

Category	Number of Board Member Defeats				Total
	Yes		No		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	21	75.0	7	25.0	28
Moderate	19	47.5	21	52.5	40
Low	19	52.8	17	47.2	36
Total	59	56.7	45	43.3	104

Chi-square = 5.42480 df = 2 p = .0664

Table 4.12.--Technocratic scale by year of defeat.

Category	Year of Defeat						Total
	1979/before		1980-83		1984-87		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	1	14.3	1	14.3	5	71.4	7
Moderate	2	9.1	7	31.8	13	59.1	22
Low	0	0	9	52.9	8	47.1	17
Total	3	6.5	17	37.0	26	56.5	46

Chi-square = 4.85460 df = 4 p = .3025

Table 4.13.--Political scale by number of board member defeats.

Category	Number of Board Member Defeats				Total
	Yes		No		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	15	45.5	18	54.5	33
Moderate	16	45.7	19	54.3	35
Low	25	69.4	11	30.6	36
Total	59	56.7	45	43.3	104

Chi-square = 4.16518 df = 2 p = .1246

Table 4.14.--Political scale by year of defeat.

Category	Year of Defeat						Total
	1979/before		1980-83		1984-87		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Strong	0	0	8	53.3	7	46.7	15
Moderate	2	10.0	6	30.0	12	60.0	20
Low	1	9.1	3	27.3	7	63.6	11
Total	3	6.5	17	37.0	26	56.5	46

Chi-square = 3.48926 df = 4 p = .4795

No significant relationship was found between superintendents' preference for decision-making style and the number or year of defeats of school board members running for election. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis 7: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the superintendents' perceptions of their relationship with the community, the school board, and the staff.

Respondents were asked, "On a 1 to 5 point rating scale, would you describe your relationship with the community (school board, staff), as a whole, as 1 = cordial, 3 = neutral, or 5 = hostile?" Because all but one superintendent responded 1 or 2 (cordial) for all three groups, no statistical tests could be run for this hypothesis. Thus, no results are presented.

Hypothesis 8: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the SEV of the districts in which they are employed.

Superintendents were asked, "What was the SEV of your district for the 1985-86 school year? The 1985-86 school year was used because that was the most recent year for which these data were published for all Michigan districts. Since SEV was one of the factors on which the respondents and nonrespondents had been compared, consistency of data was important. The results are presented in Tables 4.15 and 4.16. No significant relationship was found between the superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the SEV of their employing districts. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4.15.--Technocratic scale by SEV.

Category	State Equalized Valuation								Total
	\$49,000 or Less		\$49,001 - \$60,000		\$60,001 - \$75,000		\$75,000 or More		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	6	21.4	7	25.0	5	17.9	10	35.7	28
Moderate	17	42.5	10	25.0	6	15.0	7	17.5	40
Low	11	30.6	9	25.0	4	11.1	12	33.3	36
Total	34	32.7	26	25.0	15	14.4	29	27.9	104

Chi-square = 5.37159 df = 6 p = .4971

Table 4.16.--Political scale by SEV.

Category	State Equalized Valuation								Total
	\$49,000 or Less		\$49,001 - \$60,000		\$60,001 - \$75,000		\$75,000 or More		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong Moderate Low	11	33.3	7	21.2	4	12.1	11	33.3	33
	13	37.1	10	28.6	5	14.3	7	20.0	35
	10	27.8	9	25.0	6	16.7	11	30.6	36
Total	34	32.7	26	25.0	15	14.4	29	27.9	104

Chi-square = 2.32122 df = 6 p = .8879

Hypothesis 9: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the per pupil expenditure of the districts in which they are employed.

Respondents were asked, "What was the district per pupil expenditure for the 1985-86 school year?" The results for this comparison are shown in Tables 4.17 and 4.18. No significant relationship was found between superintendents' decision-making-style preference and the per pupil expenditures of the districts in which they were employed. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4.17.--Technocratic scale by per pupil expenditure.

Category	Per Pupil Expenditure						Total
	Up to \$2,956		\$2,957- \$3,694		\$3,695 or More		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	9	32.1	14	50.0	5	17.9	28
Moderate	15	37.5	19	47.5	6	15.0	40
Low	11	30.6	17	47.2	8	22.2	36
Total	35	33.7	50	48.1	19	18.3	104

Chi-square = 0.87181 df = 4 p = .9286

Table 4.18.--Political scale by per pupil expenditure.

Category	Per Pupil Expenditure						Total
	Up to \$2,956		\$2,957- \$3,694		\$3,695 or More		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	9	27.3	17	51.5	7	21.2	33
Moderate	15	42.9	13	37.1	7	20.0	35
Low	11	30.6	20	55.6	5	13.9	36
Total	35	33.7	50	48.1	19	18.3	104

Chi-square = 3.34507 df = 4 p = .5018

Hypothesis 10: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and their personal characteristics, such as age, gender, and advanced academic training.

The respondents were asked their age, and surveyors judged the respondents' genders by their voices. The respondents were also

asked to indicate the amount of advanced academic training they had had beyond a master's degree: (a) none, (b) 5 or fewer courses, (c) specialist, (d) doctorate, (e) other.

Because there were only eight female superintendents in Michigan at the time of the survey and only two of them were respondents, analyses by gender were not performed. With regard to advanced academic training, respondents expressed considerable confusion. Many claimed they had doctorates, even though they told the surveyors they had not completed their dissertations. Some individuals who were working beyond the specialist degree selected both "specialist" and "other" as responses. Therefore, the data were tabulated using the response categories "degree" and "no degree." The results are presented in Tables 4.19 and 4.20.

Table 4.19.--Technocratic scale by advanced degree.

Category	Possession of Advanced Degree				Total
	No Degree		Degree		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Strong	12	42.9	16	57.1	28
Moderate	15	37.5	25	62.5	40
Low	15	41.7	21	58.3	36
Total	42	40.4	62	59.6	104

Chi-square = 0.23393 df = 2 p = .8896

Table 4.20.--Political scale by advanced degree.

Category	Possession of Advanced Degree				Total
	No Degree		Degree		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	14	42.4	19	57.6	33
Moderate	12	34.3	23	65.7	35
Low	16	44.4	20	55.6	36
Total	42	40.4	62	59.6	104

Chi-square = 0.84423 df = 2 p = 0.6557

The age data were categorized as follows: 43 or less, 44 to 52, and 53 and over. The results are presented in Tables 4.21 and 4.22.

Table 4.21.--Technocratic scale by age.

Category	Age						Total
	43 or Less		44-52		53 and Over		No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	9	33.3	14	51.9	4	14.8	27
Moderate	13	32.5	15	37.5	12	30.0	40
Low	12	33.3	12	33.3	12	33.3	36
Total	34	33.0	41	39.8	29	27.2	103

Note: One missing observation

Chi-square = 3.55874 df = 4 p = .4690

Table 4.22.--Political scale by age.

Category	Age						Total
	43 or Less		44-52		53 and Over		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Strong	11	33.3	11	33.3	11	33.3	33
Moderate	9	25.7	14	40.0	12	34.3	35
Low	14	40.0	16	45.7	5	14.3	35
Total	34	33.0	41	39.8	28	27.2	104

Chi-square = 4.98840 df = 4 p = .2885

No significant relationships were found between superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and their age or possession of an advanced degree. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Summary

Not one of the null hypotheses tested in the study was rejected. In other words, the independent variables addressed in the hypotheses did not appear to be related to the decision-making-style preference of the respondents. The research instrument, with its relatively high reliability score of .79, did not appear to be a source of error in the findings. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the study findings, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Introduction

This chapter includes a summary of the study, comments on the survey design and procedures, the results of hypothesis testing, conclusions, reflections on the research, and suggestions for further study.

Summary

The researcher's purpose was to determine whether the decision-making style of selected Michigan school superintendents was related to personal characteristics of the superintendents and/or to demographic features of the school districts in which they were employed. The variables examined in the study were (a) size of school district; (b) number of prior superintendencies held; (c) nonwhite enrollment; (d) number of years as superintendent in the district; (e) school board members recalled during the tenure of the superintendent; (f) school board members defeated when running for re-election during the tenure of the superintendent; (g) superintendent's perceived relationship with school board, staff, and community; (h) SEV of the district; (i) per pupil expenditure of the district; and (j) age, gender, and advanced academic training of the superintendent.

The two styles of decision making that were tested were the political and the technocratic styles.

Literature Review

There are two families of theories in which the decision-making style of the superintendent is a significant factor. The first family of theories is the public-education-as-democracy family. The superintendent's decision-making behavior is considered in the context of the degree to which it fosters participation in the decision-making process by others, both within the school and by outside interest groups. The second family of theories in which the superintendent's decision-making behavior is significant is that in which the balance of power within the school district is the common theme.

The position of the superintendency has evolved in the last century and a half, through stages that have been shaped largely by external factors. The demands on the superintendent have changed as the needs of school districts have changed, different management philosophies have become popular, advanced training in educational management has become available, and outside interest groups have become increasingly involved in policy decisions.

Decision-making theorists have developed models that have evolved from formal, idealized concepts to models that represent an attempt to accommodate the realities of decision making in organizations such as schools. Many recent theorists have suggested

decision-making strategies that accommodate the exertion of power on the decision-making process by a number of informal interest groups.

The dichotomy between the political and the technocratic styles of decision making has been well documented in the literature, despite the various labels assigned to these styles. The political style is characterized by sensitivity to those who hold informal power, the ability to strategize in the political process of making decisions, and a realization that decision making is participatory in nature. The technocratic style, on the other hand, is characterized by the technical expert, with attention to specific management processes--the professional school leader.

Recently, researchers have suggested that successful superintendents will need skills in both the technocratic and the political styles of decision making. The style employed will depend on the superintendent's assessment of the immediate situation. The superintendent's success will be measured by the degree to which he/she accurately assesses the situation and uses the appropriate style. Authors have referred to this skill as situational competence.

Research Design and Methodology

The survey instrument was pilot tested with 48 superintendents. The pilot instrument contained 27 pairs of statements, one of which described a technocratic style of decision making and the other a political style of decision making. These statements were generated from a list of descriptors of each of the decision-making styles.

Superintendents who participated in the pilot study were nominated for inclusion by a panel of three persons who knew the superintendents in Michigan. The panel made their nominations after reading descriptions of both styles of decision making. The results of the pilot study were analyzed for reliability using the Spearman-Guttman technique. As a result of this analysis, the survey was revised to 22 questions with high reliability. The second part of the survey contained 15 questions pertaining to the superintendent's background and the environment of the school district in which he/she was employed.

The sample was drawn from the 535 superintendents employed in Class 2, 3, and 4 districts. All districts including less than kindergarten through twelfth grade were excluded from the universe, as was the only Class 1 district in Michigan--the Detroit Public Schools. The sample comprised 150 superintendents, from whom the researcher obtained 106 usable responses. Respondents were distributed proportionately among Class 2, 3, and 4 districts. Nonrespondents did not differ significantly from respondents on the variables of district enrollment, SEV per student, or per pupil expenditure.

The superintendents were contacted by trained telephone surveyors and asked to answer a two-part survey. The first part of the survey contained 22 questions with two statements each, one representing the political style and one representing the technocratic style. The second part of the survey contained 15

questions concerning the district environmental factors outlined above and the superintendent's background.

The telephone surveyors were trained by a Michigan Department of Education employee whose specialty was public opinion research. The telephone survey method was selected over the paper-and-pencil questionnaire because the researcher thought superintendents would be more likely to respond to a method that did not require much of their time and that they would not have to make an effort to return. The telephone surveyors called from their homes, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., over a span of three weeks in early summer 1987.

Results

Survey responses were analyzed using the chi-square test for relationships. Not one of the factors was found to be significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level. Therefore, none of the null hypotheses could be rejected.

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the size of the school district in which the superintendents are employed.

The p-value for the technocratic scale analysis was .6125; the p-value for the political scale analysis was .9604. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, the size of the district, as defined in terms of student enrollment, was not related to the decision-making-style preference of the superintendent.

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of prior superintendences held or years as a superintendent.

The p-value for the technocratic scale analysis was .2481; the p-value for the political scale analysis was .2690. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, the number of prior superintendencies held was not related to the superintendent's decision-making-style preference. Also, the total number of years the respondent had been a superintendent was not related to the decision-making-style preference.

Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of years as superintendent in the district.

The p-value for the technocratic scale analysis was .8658; the p-value for the political scale analysis was .7469. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, no relationship was found between the number of years the respondent had been a superintendent in the district and the decision-making-style preference.

Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of nonwhites enrolled in the school district.

The p-value for the technocratic scale analysis was .8442; the p-value for the political analysis was .8831. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, no relationship was found between the number of nonwhites enrolled in the district (expressed as a percentage of the total school population) and the decision-making-style preference of the superintendent.

Hypothesis 5: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of school board members who have been recalled during the superintendents' tenure.

Because only one respondent answered that a school board member had been recalled during the respondent's tenure, no analysis was performed and no conclusion was drawn for this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the number of school board members who have been defeated when running for re-election during the superintendents' tenure.

The p-value for the technocratic scale analysis was .0664; the p-value for the political scale analysis was .1246. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, no relationship was found between the number of school board members who had been defeated when running for re-election during the superintendent's tenure and the respondent's decision-making-style preference.

Hypothesis 7: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the superintendents' perceptions of their relationship with the community, the school board, and the staff.

Because all but one respondent rated all relationships as cordial or very cordial, no analysis of data was performed and no conclusions were drawn for this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 8: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the SEV of the districts in which they are employed.

The p-value for the technocratic scale analysis was .4971; the p-value for the political scale analysis was .8879. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, no relationship

was found between the SEV of the district in which the respondent was employed and the respondent's decision-making-style preference.

Hypothesis 9: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and the per pupil expenditure of the districts in which they are employed.

The p-value for the technocratic scale analysis was .9286; the p-value for the political scale analysis was .5018. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, no relationship was found between the per pupil expenditure of the district and the decision-making-style preference of the superintendent.

Hypothesis 10: There is no relationship between Michigan superintendents' decision-making-style preferences and their personal characteristics, such as age, gender, and advanced academic training.

Because of the small number of female respondents, no analysis by gender was performed. The p-value for the political scale analysis by advanced degree was .6557; the p-value for the technocratic scale analysis by advanced degree was .8896. The p-value for the political scale analysis by age was .2885; the p-value for the technocratic scale analysis by age was .4690. Therefore, concerning possession of advanced degree and age, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In this study, no relationship was found between either possession of an advanced degree or age and the decision-making-style preference of the superintendent.

In summary, none of the variables selected for analysis in this study appeared to be related to the decision-making-style preferences of the responding superintendents.

Conclusions

The instrument that was developed as part of this study was proven to be of high reliability and did not appear to be a source of error in the findings. In another research setting, this instrument could be employed to discriminate between decision-making styles of educational administrators at various levels in organizations.

The sample population was evenly distributed between the two decision-making styles as well as across the categories of "Strong," "Moderate," and "Weak" within each style grouping. Since the instrument did not seem to be a source of error in the findings, it can be concluded that Michigan superintendents do have decision-making-style preferences, which they indicate when forced to select between the political and the technocratic style.

Although none of the variables tested resulted in an alpha level that equaled or exceeded the .05 level, the alpha level of the chi-square test for one variable did approach significance. For the technocratic scale, the number of board member defeats during the tenure of the superintendent produced an alpha level of $p = .0664$. It may be concluded from this finding that there is some relationship between these two variables which did not produce statistically significant findings in this study.

Finally, based on the findings described in the review of the literature, as well as the fact that on a reliable instrument superintendents do indicate style preferences when forced to choose between political and technocratic, it can be reasonably concluded

that such a dichotomy exists. Michigan superintendents' decision-making styles can be characterized as either technocratic or political, using the descriptors developed as part of this study.

Reflections

A number of writers have documented that a dichotomy exists in the role of superintendent between the political and technocratic styles of decision making (Halpin, 1966). The high level of reliability of the first part of the survey used in this study may be attributable to the participating superintendents' sensitivity to this dichotomy.

The independent variables might have failed to predict the superintendents' decision-making style because those variables were not related to decision-making styles. Alternatively, it may be that even a telephone survey is not capable of picking up strong variations in style. Many of the respondents complained that they could not make a distinction between the two statements presented to them in the first part of the survey. Because questioning superintendents about how they make decisions is somewhat personal and could be perceived as challenging their abilities, another method of data collection might yield more enlightening results. Greater success might be expected with a personal interview because the superintendent might feel free to be more open with the interviewer and expand on his/her answers.

Finally, if situational competence is the skill that is most required of successful school leaders, presenting superintendents

with scenarios before asking them how they would make a decision might yield more representative data.

Suggestions for Further Study

The skills that constitute situational competence deserve further attention by researchers and educational administration theorists. Further study should be undertaken to:

1. Analyze the behavior of successful school leaders in similar situations to determine which skills or styles are used most successfully in a given situation.
2. Determine the factors present in various situations that govern individuals' selection of styles or skills to be employed.
3. Explore training models for new and practiced school leaders that can assist them in developing situational competence.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PILOT-STUDY PANEL MEMBERS

Dear _____,

As part of a pilot study for my dissertation on the decision-making styles of school superintendents, I need to identify a group of superintendents who characterize the two styles I am interested in studying. The two styles are the political and the technocratic style of decision making. It should be noted that this study does not suggest that these are the only two styles of decision-making behavior demonstrated by school leaders. They are simply the particular styles on which this study is focused.

Your name has been suggested to me as a person familiar with most of the superintendents in our state. I request your help in two ways. Will you read the descriptive material presented here and identify for me at least ten superintendents you believe exhibit either the technocratic or the political decision-making style? Second, as you review the list of names you have provided, will you jot down any other descriptive phrases that come to your mind in characterizing a given style? Based on the information you provide, and that of others I am also asking for assistance, I will contact the superintendents named and ask them to complete a brief survey. The purpose of this exercise is to validate the survey instrument, which has never been used before in this manner. Thank you.

DECISION MAKING: The thought processes that lead to and the act of choosing between two or more alternatives.

TECHNOCRATIC DECISION MAKING: The decision-making style that can be characterized as deliberate, conscious, and analytic. Listed below are words that can be used to describe the low and the high ends of a continuum of the technocratic style of decision making.

Low Technocratic

intuitive
instinctive
impulsive

High Technocratic

deliberate
technical/theoretical
logical

POLITICAL DECISION MAKING: The decision-making style that can be characterized as partisan, strategic, and responsive. Listed below are words that can be used to describe the low and the high ends of a continuum of the political style of decision making.

Low Political

naive
artless
insensitive

High Political

responsive
strategic
partisan

Please list the names of ten superintendents you feel could be described as political decision makers.

<u>Name</u>	<u>District</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____

Please use this space to add any additional words or phrases you would use to describe a political decision maker.

Please list the names and districts of ten superintendents you feel could be described as technocratic decision makers.

<u>Name</u>	<u>District</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____

Please use this space to add any additional words or phrases you would use to describe a technocratic decision maker.

Thank you for your time.

Marianne Higgins

APPENDIX B

PILOT-STUDY INSTRUMENT

DECISION-MAKING-STYLE INSTRUMENT

Instructions

Consider job-related situations in which you make decisions. How do you usually make decisions?

I will read 27 pairs of statements to you, each describing possible decision-making styles. For each pair, please respond either "A" or "B," depending on which statement is most characteristic of your behavior.

In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your behavior; but please select the response which more nearly describes your decision-making style.

1. A. I am often deliberate in my decision making.
B. I often use strategies in making decisions.
2. A. I almost always make my decisions with logic.
B. I almost always consider which people feel most strongly when I make a decision.
3. A. I am sometimes impulsive in making a decision.
B. I generally do not consider others' feelings when I make decisions.
4. A. I frequently employ classic logic to make my decisions.
B. I often consider partisan politics in making decisions.
5. A. I use intuition when I make decisions.
B. I am sometimes naive about my decisions.
6. A. I often am responsive to the needs of others in my decisions.
B. I often make deliberate decisions.
7. A. I sometimes make naive decisions.
B. Sometimes I make instinctive decisions.
8. A. My decisions are often influenced by educational theory.
B. I often am responsive to the wishes of others when making decisions.
9. A. I almost always am strategic in my decision making.
B. I almost always am deliberate in my decision making.
10. A. Sometimes I neglect to consider aspects of a situation which later turn out to be important when I make decisions.
B. I follow my "gut" feelings in making decisions.

11. A. Almost always I consider strategies in making decisions.
B. I am almost always logical in my decisions.
12. A. I almost always employ classic logic to make decisions.
B. I almost always consider partisan positions in decision making.
13. A. I almost always consider partisan concerns when I make decisions.
B. I am a deliberate decision maker.
14. A. I am sometimes insensitive when I make decisions.
B. Sometimes my decisions are instinctive.
15. A. I sometimes make impulsive decisions.
B. I sometimes make guileless decisions.
16. A. Almost always, educational theory influences my decisions.
B. I am a strategic decision maker.
17. A. Educational theory influences my decisions.
B. I am usually a strategic decision maker.
18. A. Frequently, I consider partisan concerns when I make decisions.
B. I often make deliberate decisions.
19. A. Sometimes I follow my "gut" feelings when I make decisions.
B. I sometimes make artless decisions.
20. A. I am almost always responsive to the needs of others in decision making.
B. My decisions are made with deliberation.
21. A. I often make my decisions with logic.
B. I often consider which people feel most strongly about an issue when I make decisions.
22. A. I often think about strategies as part of my decision making.
B. Frequently, I use classic logic in my decisions.
23. A. I often make my decisions based on considerations of educational theory.
B. I consider partisan politics when I make decisions.
24. A. I rely on my intuition when making decisions.
B. I know that some of my decisions will upset people, but I make them anyway.

25. A. I think some of my decisions are naive.
B. I am impulsive in some of my decisions.
26. A. I almost always make my decisions based on consideration of educational theory.
B. I almost always consider partisan concerns when I make a decision.
27. A. I almost always make decisions that are sound from a theoretical standpoint.
B. I am almost always responsive to the desires of others when I make decisions.

Would you please answer the following questions about yourself and your district?

1. Length of experience as a superintendent in your current district:
 - a. ____ 1-3 years b. ____ 3-5 years
 - c. ____ 5-10 years d. ____ over 10 years
2. Your sex:
 - a. ____ female b. ____ male
3. Your age: _____
4. Length of experience as a superintendent:
 - a. ____ 1-3 years b. ____ 3-5 years
 - c. ____ 5-10 years d. ____ over 10 years
5. Amount of advanced academic training you have had beyond a master's degree:
 - a. ____ none b. ____ 5 or fewer courses
 - c. ____ Specialist d. ____ Doctorate
 - e. ____ other (please describe) _____
6. What is the enrollment in your district (excluding adult education)? _____
7. How many superintendencies, other than this one, have you held? _____
8. What percentage of your student body is nonwhite? _____

9. Please indicate how many of your school board members have been on the board:
- a. ____ less than 2 years b. ____ 2-5 years
c. ____ 6-10 years d. ____ over 10 years
10. During your tenure as a superintendent in this district, have any incumbent board members been:
- a. ____ Recalled? (If yes, please indicate the number recalled and the year.) _____
- b. ____ Defeated when running for re-election? (If yes, please indicate the number defeated and the year.) _____
11. On a 1 to 5 point rating scale, would you describe your relationship with the community, as a whole, as:
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
cordial neutral hostile
12. Would you describe your relationship with the school board, as a whole, as:
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
cordial neutral hostile
13. Would you describe your relationship with the staff, as a whole, as:
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
cordial neutral hostile
14. What was the SEV of your district for the 1985-86 school year?

15. What was the per pupil expenditure of your district for the 1985-86 school year? _____

SCORING KEY: DECISION-MAKING INSTRUMENT

<u>QUESTION NO.</u>	<u>POLITICAL</u>	<u>TECHNOCRATIC</u>
<u>Low ?s</u>		
3	B	A
5	A	B
7	A	B
10	A	B
14	A	B
15	B	A
19	B	A
24	A	B
25	A	B
<u>Medium ?s</u>		
1	B	A
4	B	A
6	A	B
8	B	A
17	B	A
18	A	B
21	B	A
22	A	B
23	B	A
<u>High ?s</u>		
2	B	A
9	A	B
11	A	B
12	B	A
13	A	B
16	B	A
20	A	B
26	B	A
27	B	A

APPENDIX C

FINAL COPY OF THE DECISION-MAKING-STYLE INSTRUMENT

DECISION-MAKING-STYLE INSTRUMENT

Instructions

Consider job-related situations in which you make decisions. How do you usually make decisions?

I will read 22 pairs of statements to you, each describing possible decision-making styles. For each pair, please respond either "A" or "B," depending on which statement is most characteristic of your behavior.

In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your behavior; but please select the response which more nearly describes your decision-making style.

1. A. I am often deliberate in my decision making.
B. I often use strategies in making decisions.
2. A. I almost always make my decisions with logic.
B. I almost always consider which people feel most strongly when I make a decision.
3. A. I almost always am strategic in making decisions.
B. I almost always am logical in making decisions.
4. A. I frequently employ classic logic to make my decisions.
B. I often consider partisan politics in making decisions.
5. A. I rely on educational theory in making my decisions.
B. I am responsive to others' feelings when I make decisions.
6. A. I often am responsive to the needs of others in my decisions.
B. I often make deliberate decisions.
7. A. I am a strategic decision maker.
B. My decisions are founded in educational theory.
8. A. My decisions are often influenced by educational theory.
B. I often am responsive to the wishes of others when making decisions.
9. A. I almost always am strategic in my decision making.
B. I almost always am deliberate in my decision making.
10. A. I almost always use logic when making decisions.
B. I almost always am responsive to others' needs in my decision making.

11. A. Almost always I consider strategies in making decisions.
B. I am almost always logical in my decisions.
12. A. I almost always employ classic logic to make decisions.
B. I almost always consider partisan positions in decision making.
13. A. I almost always consider partisan concerns when I make decisions.
B. I am a deliberate decision maker.
14. A. Almost always, educational theory influences my decisions.
B. I am a strategic decision maker.
15. A. Educational theory influences my decisions.
B. I am usually a strategic decision maker.
16. A. Frequently, I consider partisan concerns when I make decisions.
B. I often make deliberate decisions.
17. A. I am almost always responsive to the needs of others in decision making.
B. My decisions are made with deliberation.
18. A. I often make my decisions with logic.
B. I often consider which people feel most strongly about an issue when I make decisions.
19. A. I often think about strategies as part of my decision making.
B. Frequently, I use classic logic in my decisions.
20. A. I often make my decisions based on considerations of educational theory.
B. I consider partisan politics when I make decisions.
21. A. I almost always make my decisions based on consideration of educational theory.
B. I almost always consider partisan concerns when I make a decision.
22. A. I almost always make decisions that are sound from a theoretical standpoint.
B. I am almost always responsive to the desires of others when I make decisions.

Would you please answer the following questions about yourself and your district?

1. Length of experience as a superintendent in your current district:
 - a. ____ 1-3 years
 - b. ____ 3-5 years
 - c. ____ 5-10 years
 - d. ____ over 10 years
2. Your sex:
 - a. ____ female
 - b. ____ male
3. Your age: _____
4. Length of experience as a superintendent:
 - a. ____ 1-3 years
 - b. ____ 3-5 years
 - c. ____ 5-10 years
 - d. ____ over 10 years
5. Amount of advanced academic training you have had beyond a master's degree:
 - a. ____ none
 - b. ____ 5 or fewer courses
 - c. ____ Specialist
 - d. ____ Doctorate
 - e. ____ other (please describe) _____
6. What is the enrollment in your district (excluding adult education)? _____
7. How many superintendencies, other than this one, have you held? _____
8. What percentage of your student body is nonwhite? _____
9. How many of your school board members have been on the board:
 - a. ____ less than 2 years
 - b. ____ 2-5 years
 - c. ____ 6-10 years
 - d. ____ over 10 years
10. During your tenure as a superintendent in this district, have any incumbent board members been:
 - a. ____ Recalled? (If yes, please indicate the number recalled and the year.) _____
 - b. ____ Defeated when running for re-election? (If yes, please indicate the number defeated and the year.) _____

11. On a 1 to 5 point rating scale, would you describe your relationship with the community, as a whole, as:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
cordial neutral hostile

12. Would you describe your relationship with the school board, as a whole, as:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
cordial neutral hostile

13. Would you describe your relationship with the staff, as a whole, as:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
cordial neutral hostile

14. What was the SEV of your district for the 1985-86 school year?

15. What was the per pupil expenditure of your district for the 1985-86 school year?

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS

Dear _____,

Your district has been selected for inclusion in a study of the political efficacy of the school superintendent. The purpose of the study is to identify characteristics in the school environment that affect the way in which superintendents make decisions. This study is being supported by the Michigan Institute for Educational Management, the Michigan Association of School Administrators, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Since your time is valuable, we have departed from the traditional method of paper-and-pencil survey. We realize that superintendents have many other pressing issues that need attention. Rather, we would like to set up a time that would be convenient for us to speak with you by telephone.

The interview should take about ten to fifteen minutes to complete. There are twenty-seven questions that will inquire about your decision-making style and thirteen that will deal with general information about yourself and your school district.

A professional interviewer will be contacting your secretary the week of _____ to set a time for the appointment. The interviews will take place the week of _____.

The results of the survey will be incorporated in a dissertation studying the decision-making styles of Michigan superintendents by Marianne Higgins, a student in Educational Administration at Michigan State University. A synopsis of the results will be available in the fall. If you would be interested in receiving this synopsis, indicate this to the surveyor.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Don Elliot
Executive Director
MASA

Phillip Runkel
Superintendent of Public Instruction
MDE

David Kahn
Executive Director
MIEM

APPENDIX E

OPENING STATEMENTS MADE IN PILOT AND FINAL INTERVIEWS

Interview # _____

Date of interview

Schedule for call back _____
 date time

OPENING

Hello, I'm _____, calling in connection with a survey of superintendents' decision-making styles. You may recall a letter you received recently about this doctoral study, which is being supported by the Michigan Institute for Educational Management. The survey is in two parts and will take about ten minutes or so. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by your name or your district. Your participation, of course, is strictly voluntary. Is this a convenient time for you to complete the survey? [IF NOT, MAKE A CALL-BACK APPOINTMENT.]

APPENDIX F

**PERMISSION LETTER FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON
RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INVOLVING
HUMAN SUBJECTS (UCRIHS)
238 ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(517) 355-2186

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1046

May 21, 1987

Ms. Marianne Higgins
201 S. Fairview
Lansing, Michigan 48912

Dear Ms. Higgins:

Subject: Proposal Entitled, "A Study of the Decision Making
Styles of Michigan Superintendents as they are Effectuated
by the Political Governance Characteristics of the
School Districts in Which They are Employed"

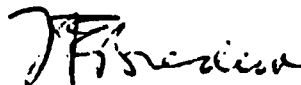
UCRIHS' review of the above referenced project has now been completed. I am pleased to advise that since the reviewers' comments have been satisfactorily addressed, the conditional approval given by the Committee at its May 4, 1987 meeting has now been changed to full approval.

You are reminded that UCRHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRHS approval prior to May 4, 1988.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by the UCRHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



Henry E. Bredeck, Ph.D.
Chairman, UCRHS

HEB/jms

cc: Dr. Samuel A. Moore, II

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