



A survey of Montana superintendents and school board members attitudes toward education for personal and family living
by Elizabeth Creel

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SCIENCE in Home Economics
Montana State University
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Abstract:

Determining the opinions of Montana superintendents and school board members on the need, initiation and related concerns in establishing a family life and sex education course termed "Education for Personal and Family Living" (ED.P.&F.L.) was the purpose of this study.

The opinionnaire mailed to all Montana superintendents netted a 63.2% return: 74.7% superintendents and 51.7% chairmen and trustees respectively.

The typical respondent was found to be: male, married, had spent two to five years in that position, was in the 36-54 age range and if superintendent had a Master's degree; if chairman or trustee, had a high school education.

Over three-fourths of the sample believed ED.P.&F.L. would meet students' present and future needs and help them learn about themselves. The majority favored teaching this course in the public school. Their response on the latter was found by chi-square analysis to be independent of their ages, educational level, time spent in the school system and size of the school system. Only 30.2% indicated that sex education was offered in their school districts. This was found by chi-square analysis to be related to the size of the school system.

Nearly half of the respondents believed an ED.P.&F.L. course should be for students' general information. Half believed it should be offered as an elective. Parents and citizens' committees were considered the best initiators of an ED.P.&F.L. course, and two-thirds acknowledged an adult education course as an acceptable method of introducing it to the community.

The largest number of respondents stated ED.P.&F.L. was not offered because of lack of qualified teachers. An acceptable teacher was a married, regular teacher with special training.

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Date May 28, 1971

A SURVEY OF MONTANA SUPERINTENDENTS' AND SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS'
ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION FOR PERSONAL AND FAMILY LIVING

by

ELIZABETH CREEL

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

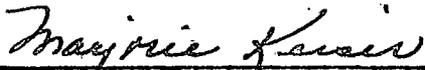
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Approved:



Head, Major Department



Chairman, Examining Committee



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ABSTRACT

Determining the opinions of Montana superintendents and school board members on the need, initiation and related concerns in establishing a family life and sex education course termed "Education for Personal and Family Living" (ED.P.&F.L.) was the purpose of this study.

The opinionnaire mailed to all Montana superintendents netted a 63.2% return: 74.7% superintendents and 51.7% chairmen and trustees respectively.

The typical respondent was found to be: male, married, had spent two to five years in that position, was in the 36-54 age range and if superintendent had a Master's degree; if chairman or trustee, had a high school education.

Over three-fourths of the sample believed ED.P.&F.L. would meet students' present and future needs and help them learn about themselves. The majority favored teaching this course in the public school. Their response on the latter was found by chi-square analysis to be independent of their ages, educational level, time spent in the school system and size of the school system. Only 30.2% indicated that sex education was offered in their school districts. This was found by chi-square analysis to be related to the size of the school system.

Nearly half of the respondents believed an ED.P.&F.L. course should be for students' general information. Half believed it should be offered as an elective. Parents and citizens' committees were considered the best initiators of an ED.P.&F.L. course, and two-thirds acknowledged an adult education course as an acceptable method of introducing it to the community.

The largest number of respondents stated ED.P.&F.L. was not offered because of lack of qualified teachers. An acceptable teacher was a married, regular teacher with special training.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Study

The current fast-paced world, the rapidly changing technology and expanding human awareness demand changes in the family. Some family functions are relegated to other societal institutions, while the others gain in importance. Religion is taught by the church, protection is the duty of the police, goods and services are produced and managed by businesses, and education is mainly the school's responsibility. The families' primary remaining functions are the continuing affectional and personality needs of its members (Leslie, 1967). The families' difficulties, however, in the transition from agricultural to technological society and in the fulfilling of the remaining functions, affectional and personality needs of its members, could be factors related to the increase of: divorce, premarital pregnancy, venereal disease, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Our values, mores and morals still do not face sexuality honestly and openly. Sex is somewhat naughty and illicit and, therefore, can be sensationalized and exploited. Youth are bombarded by sex everywhere they turn. Magazines: Playboy and Cosmopolitan; books such as The Sensuous Woman, Naked Came the Stranger; R and X rated movies that highlight homosexuality, perversion, pre-marital sex and infidelity; theatre: "Hair," and "Oh! Calcutta"; advertising that

directs its efforts to an adult audience and popular "rock" songs emphasize drug use and sexual activity. Ironically, the child or adolescent is taught, by his parent's silence or reprimands, to suppress his sexual interest and feelings. Then upon marriage, he is expected to make a smooth transition into marital bliss and the heavy interpersonal demands of the remaining family functions.

Education for Personal and Family Living cannot prevent the plethora of sexual stimulus a child receives any more than it can propose to be the preventative for divorce, premarital pregnancy, venereal disease and drug abuse. It can help the student understand himself as a sexual being, as a family member, as a potential parent and as a citizen.

Need for the Study

There seems to be little doubt that children and youth are asking for help from the schools to find a meaningful moral code and to prepare for interpersonal responsibilities in their society. Connecticut State Board of Education has gone on record that children are more mature in thought and judgment, and eager to take responsibility in learning and acting than adults assume. Children are aware of the persuasive powers of the sex-pervaded communications media.

Byler states:

Burdened by the hodgepodge of contradictory information that barrage them from all sides, they ask the school to teach honestly

and clearly - and early enough - and to help them build up their critical powers so that they themselves may act responsibly (1969, p. 165).

"The Citizen's Committee Report to the School Board on Family Life and Sex Education," Bozeman, Montana (1968, Appendix VII and VIII) revealed 61% of seventh-grade girls and 64% of the boys, increasing to 95% of the senior girls and 88% of senior boys believed that "sex education should be part of the school curriculum."

Montana superintendents and school boards, after receiving a report conducted for Montana's Superintendent of Public Instruction, may be considering Education for Personal and Family Living to meet the educational needs cited. The Arthur D. Little study revealed as the top two most pressing needs for improvement in Montana's schools:

The relevance of subjects to student's future needs.
The relevance of subjects to student's present needs.

and fifth:

Students learning about themselves (1970, pp. 2-3).

The board of trustees is the local policy-making body of the school district and the superintendent is their administrator. It is here we must deal with the implementation of Education for Personal and Family Living in the curriculum. Johnson and Schutt (1966) stated that educators are faced with three problems when considering initiation of the potentially touchy subject of family life education that includes sex education. They must deal with their own, perhaps

conflicting, attitudes about sex. They must retain the responsibility of the school to manifest the traditional values of society all the while dealing with the newer scientific attitudes which should be evaluated, but that may interfere with the foundation of their own sexual morality.

Purpose of the Study

The United States Office of Education states it is the school's and community's responsibility to meet the family life and sex education needs of their youth. The question of having family life and sex education programs in Montana's schools is one that, at present, will be answered by local boards of trustees and their school administrators. The purpose of this study was to delineate the opinions of superintendents and school board members toward:

1. A course in Education for Personal and Family Living meeting the educational needs cited by the Arthur D. Little study (March, 1970).
2. The teaching of sex education in the public schools.
3. Who should be the initiators of Education for Personal and Family Living courses.

In addition the study may clarify Montana's superintendents' and school board members' opinions concerning:

1. An adult education course as a method of introducing Education for Personal and Family Living to the parents and community.
2. Why sex education should be taught.
3. Education for Personal and Family Living status in the curriculum: an elective or required course.
4. Characteristics of an acceptable Education for Personal and Family Living teacher.
5. The extent Family Life and Sex Education is offered in Montana's schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History

Family life and sex education in the public school is not a new concept. It appears to have developed around 1900 from separate influences. The recognition of the importance of these topics to the overall development of youth has slowly gained support over the past fifty years.

Family Life Education

Family life education began with the establishment of child care and study groups: Child Study Association of America, The American Association of University Women and The National Congress of Parents and Teachers (Stewart, 1968). The primary concern was the welfare of children.

Professor Ernest R. Groves, answering student requests, developed the first family life course, Boston University, 1922. Recognition of family life education as a worthwhile inclusion in the curriculum came with the adoption of the term "Education for Home and Family Life" by the 1930 White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. One of the earliest successful high school family life programs was established by Mrs. Elizabeth Force at Toms River High School, New Jersey in 1941 (Ibid.).

Sex Education

Sex education began in 1905 with the establishment of the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis by Dr. Prince Albert Morrow. The main concern of the early sex educators was the pathological aspects of sex, namely the prevention of venereal disease.

Sex education has made gains in recognition and importance mainly in the last twenty years. Kirkendall and Libby believe:

. . . The frank and open treatment which sex has been receiving in the mass media and an increasing awareness on the part of parents, teachers and professional people of the need for sex education, especially for youth (1970, p. 11)

has contributed to its development. They also believe that "publicity about 'the sexual revolution' and 'declining moral standards' brought some parents to favor sex education" (Ibid., p. 12).

Family Life and Sex Education Grow Together

The professionals concerned with child welfare realized the family should be the target of their concern. The teaching of venereal disease broadened to teaching all aspects of sexuality. Gradually it became apparent that one could not honestly teach about family and interpersonal relationships without including the sexual aspects of inter-relationships. The sex educators realized that students need more than biological facts to come to terms with their sexuality.

Family life education crept easily into the curriculum as a home economics course. Not so for the emotionally loaded topic of sex education. It first made a tentative appearance in the public school as education on menstruation to girls or an occasional unit on reproduction by a brave biology, health or physical education teacher.

Recently an organization has been established to assist the teaching of family life, including sex education: SIECUS (Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S.). Sommerville states:

SIECUS was established in 1965 to help bring about, within the framework of family life education, constructive dialogue between youth and adults on the pros and cons of the various sexual patterns that can be identified in American life (1967, p. 375).

Weinstock succinctly states why the responsibility for family life, including sex education, falls upon the school:

1. Demonstrated inability of the home, church, library and medical profession generally to promote effective sex education.
2. The public's assumption that the school should teach morality within various (though undefined) limitations.
3. School being the sole institution which reaches children consistently over an extended period.
4. The enhancement of the success of sex education in the school through the effectiveness of its professional educators.
5. Vast amounts of pedagogary material about sex education already is available for curricular development.
6. The ungrounded basis for most arguments against the school's role in sex education (1970, p. 195).

Scope of Family Life and Sex Education.

Family life and sex education programs range from a one-hour assembly on menstruation to a comprehensive inclusion of family life and sex education in grades K-12 covering all aspects of sexuality.

Larry Rodick reports " . . . most states had no law either authorizing or prohibiting the teaching of sex or birth control education in their schools" (1970, p. 157). In fact he found that six states and the District of Columbia had laws or regulations that favored or authorized sex education. He also learned thirteen states gave informal support to sex education, indicated by provisions or curriculum guides, sex education workshops and proposed laws favoring its inclusion. No state prohibited sex education, although there was legislation under consideration to ban or curb it in some states.

Baker and Darcy explain " . . . Such courses as do occur are incidental to a local situation, existing because some concerned teacher or principal took the initiative to inaugurate them" (1970, p. 232). The program usually remains local, with little state or district coordination. Furthermore, the teachers including this material are unaware of what others in the same school may be doing.

In an interview, Paul Landis (Stewart, 1968) expressed that even though family life education programs have spread rapidly at the secondary level, few changes have occurred in the nature of the

programs. The exception seems to be that programs are initiated at earlier grade levels and extended over several school years.

Kirkendall and Libby (1970) list the following as being consistent throughout comments of sex and family life education professionals. (1) Sex education must go beyond just the prevention of venereal disease and reproductive education. (2) Sex education should reflect positive, life-enriching attitudes rather than negative attitudes. (3) Sex education is best offered by being integrated into the curriculum.

Montana's Family Life Programs

A study (Little, 1970) of community leaders, parents, elementary educators, secondary educators, and students in Montana revealed that 24.3%, 23.4%, 18.6%, 10.7% and 26.7% respectively stated family life and sex education is available in their schools. It is interesting to note that secondary educators were the group reporting the least amount of this instruction.

General Attitudes

Warren R. Johnson states:

It would be difficult to take a position against teaching such things ("responsibility," "morality," and "male and female roles") and school board members, school administrators, presidents of institutions of higher learning as well as large numbers of parents and clergymen are on record as being very much in favor of initiating sex education programs.

Virtually every recent study concerning opinions and attitudes toward the inclusion of family life and sex education in the curriculum finds the majority in favor (Eggert, 1954; Nation's Schools, 1960; Erskine, 1966; Johnson and Schutts, 1966; Dappen, 1968; Stewart, 1968; McIntire, 1969; Patton, 1969; Libby, 1970; Little, 1970; Weinstein, 1970). McIntire and Eaton (1969) found an item of interest: Eighty-eight per cent of a parents' group supported the idea of schools offering family life courses. But when the same group was asked how they saw other parents (Do you think "most other parents feel sex education should be taught in the schools?") only 57% agreed. Perhaps the administrators as well are overly concerned with sex education and "what the Joneses think."

Don Oaks, a principal at Hayward, California, Union High School (their family life program began in 1948) indicated:

In a recent graduate follow-up study of our graduates, the family life program received more votes than any other course mainly because it fulfilled a need. This need was not filled by the home or by friends, or by any other agency (1963, p. 109).

Montana's Attitudes

Little (1970) found of the parents, community leaders, elementary educators, secondary educators and students 88.9%, 90.8%, 89.3%, 90.0% and 95.7% respectively believed that units or courses in family life and sex education should be included in the curriculum of Montana schools.

Attitudes Concerning Specific Aspects of Sex Education

Researchers have found that certain groups have more favorable attitudes in regard to the inclusion of sex education in the schools. Libby (1970) found that higher social class people hold more liberal attitudes toward sex education. Dappen (1968) as well as Erskine (1966) and Patton (1969) learned that the lower age groups have more positive attitudes toward sex education.

In a poll conducted by Potter and Libby (1970) parents selected doctors, family life and sex education consultants, ministers, teachers and social workers, respectively, as those to plan a sex education course.

Baker and Darcy (1970) found that family life and sex educators were mainly female (70.6%) and the majority of these were teachers of home economics, health and physical education.

Libby (1970) revealed that most parents were not concerned about teacher qualification unless the teacher was to teach sexual values with which the parent did not agree. They did, he found, prefer a teacher with many years of teaching experience and just under 50% wanted a married teacher, as did in McIntire's (1969) and Patton's (1969) studies. Dappen (1968) found that 59% of parents believed family life education should be taught as a separate course by a specially trained and selected teacher.

Research by Dappen (1968) and a Nation's Schools survey (1960) revealed that the upper high school grades were the most favored for teaching sex education.

Family life and sex education has long been recognized as useful and needed information. Programs have been initiated and are successfully fulfilling the gap left by the home and church. A majority of polled people express the opinion that they favor the teaching of family life and sex education in the public schools. Just what, then, is keeping the subject from a comfortable place in the curriculum?

Sex Education Controversy

The organization of the opposition to the teaching of sex education in the schools gained momentum about July, 1968 (Calderone, 1969). Before then, the dissent was scattered and unorganized; groups of citizens voicing legitimate concerns. Since then, fundamentalist religious sects and far right-wingers - the Christian Crusade of Tulsa, Oklahoma and the John Birch Society - have taken up the cry as a tactic to win people into their political groups. The Christian Crusade, in 1968, lost its tax exemption as a religious group due to its political activities (Goodman, 1969).

Baker (1969) explains two modes of attack used by these groups. One method is name-calling: sex education being termed "un-American"

or "anti-Christian" and its supporters called "dupes," "degenerates" and "atheists." The other is guilt-by-association: showing some remote tie with groups investigated by the House Committee on Un-American Activities as Communists or Communist-front organizations.

MOTOREDE (Movement to Restore Decency) is the John Birch group. Among other cleverly named groups against sex education are: POSE (Parents Opposed to Sex Education); PAUSE (People Against Unconstitutional Sex Education); POSSE (Parents Opposed to Sex and Sensitivity Training); PAMS (Parents Advocating Morality Standards) and SOS (Sanity on Sex).

The blatant misinformation and scare tactics used by the opposers caught teachers and supporters of family life and sex education unprepared. The first onslaught created some upheaval and curtailment of programs.

Fulton states:

. . . opposition is active in forty-one states. In at least 19 states extremists have induced legislatures to consider action which would prohibit or limit the content of a family life and sex education curriculum in the schools (1970, p. 263).

Force (1970) reported from a regional survey in six western states that all states felt some opposition and that some opposers had succeeded in getting on the school boards. California, at the time of the study, was the only one affected by "new legislation effecting

content and curricula related to human reproduction" (Ibid., p. 297).

Goodman states:

Lawsuits have been brought to bar sex education programs; so far they have proved unsuccessful, but the harrassment has compelled several districts to draw back on family life instruction (1969, p. 3).

Few family life and sex education programs were spared the attack by opposers of sex education. Teachers, administrators and PTAs felt the pressure. The attack occurred at all levels: state legislature, local school board elections, even in the classroom. All modes were implemented: letters to the editor, telephone calls and the "noisy minority" in heretofore orderly PTA and school board meetings.

Goodman (1969, p. 3) believes that this attack represents a real threat to the "professional independence of our schools." Baker (1969, p. 7) states that the "moral integrity exhibited in the . . . distortion and falsehood suggest that the organized opposition is interested only in takeover, not truth." He believes their attack is aimed more at the public school system than sex education.

Dr. Mary Calderone of SIECUS sees the attack this way:

Agreement appeared to be that extremist religious groups, using Christian Crusade materials, and radical extremist techniques and SIECUS as whipping boy, were sowing seeds of distrust toward educators in their own local communities, with the objective of gaining control of Boards of Education at election time (1969, p. 675).

Programs, however, are not stifled, as evidenced by the increase in family life and sex education workshops offered by colleges and universities each summer. Houdek (1971) reported, "Sixty-one courses and workshops were known to have been scheduled for the spring and summer of 1970."

This "furor" has served a vital service to the progress and future of family life and sex education. It has forced the schools and teachers to take a long and thoughtful look at their programs, the results being their strengthening and improvement. It has clarified the idea that parents, teachers and administrators must carefully plan and cooperate on the initiation and continuation of a family life and sex education program.

School Administrators and Sex Education

Naugle (1967, p. 16) defines the Board of Trustees as, "The governing body of a school district. . . . They may prescribe courses of study but the State Board of Education sets the standards for courses." As representatives of their community, board members have the responsibility for setting the general policy within which the superintendent, principal, and classroom teacher operate. Naugle (1967, p. 110) states that the superintendent ". . . provides information, makes suggestions, gives advice to the board and directs the affairs of the school system as authorized by the board."

In a report of a 4% proportional sampling of all school administrators in the United States, 58% answered "yes" to the junior high's having a responsibility to teach sex education and 72% to the senior high (Nation's Schools, 1960). Johnson and Schutt's survey says, "more than 84% believe and do or would approve such instruction in their schools" (1966, p. 66). Eggert's survey of 48 state departments of education (1954, p. 21) showed "93% of the state superintendents of public instruction responding 'indicated' a need for and would support a well-planned sex education program as a part of the elementary school program." Patton (1970, p. III) found 71.7% of the responding school board members favored teaching of sex education in the public schools.

Johnson and Schutts (1969, p. 66) reported 82% of the respondents "thought inadequacy of teacher preparation was the most important [reason for holding back] and 57% feared parental reactions." Whittaker (1967) concluded that the public school dragged its feet because of fear of public disapproval, difficulty of incorporation into the curriculum and lack of qualified teachers. Eggert (1954) summed up that the existing information points to the school administrators and the lack of qualified teachers as the main "bottlenecks." Each study mentioned the lack of qualified teachers.

Sex education is an emotional subject and administrators usually exercise extreme caution when establishing courses in the curriculum.

Gruenberg and Kaukonen (1939, p. xv) reported that "in 1928 the American Association of School Administrators went on record that 'youth's problems of sex was a professional and social responsibility.'" It took thirteen years for them to "recommend that sex education be included in the curriculum" (Whittaker, p. 34).

Harper and Harper (1957) divide administrators and teachers into four groups of "sex education rationalizers." They are: "I favor sex education but it should be done in the home rather than at school." "Sex education is all right if kept to reproductive education in science or biology." "I believe in teaching about sexual adjustments in school but the public won't stand for it." And - "Sex is important, but it is overstressed; other courses are more important."

Although a majority of administrators express favoring sex education in the schools, they are not completely "sold." There are also the technical concerns of: who teaches it, where and how it fits in the curriculum, and handling public reaction. They have their own personal feelings about sex and sex education with which to contend. The combination of these concerns has been so powerful that the universal inclusion of family life that includes sex education in the school has been over a three-decade project.

Elizabeth Force (1970), the initiator of one of the first successful high school courses in family living, states the

following elements are essential to a sound program of family
life:

. . . strong school administration leadership and support,
school and community interaction, parental involvement and ac-
ceptance; quality, comprehensive teacher education, both pre-
and in-service, on a continuing basis; sound curriculum that is
realistic and basic to the needs and lives of the students
(Force, 1970, p. 299).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether, in the opinion of superintendents and school board members, a course in Education for Personal and Family Living would meet the educational needs of Montana youth and their opinions on selected questions pertaining to the establishment of such a course.

Sample

The Montana EDUCATION DIRECTORY¹ listed one hundred seventy-eight superintendents. Each Montana school district has at least three to four school board members, 534 to 712 total. For the purposes of this study the opinion of the superintendent and a school board member, chairman or trustee, from each district was desired. In order to keep the sample size at a minimum, the superintendent was sent one of two cover letters, one requesting him to ask the chairman of the board, and one requesting him to ask any trustee but the chairman of the board, to fill out the second of two opinionnaires enclosed with the letter. The first eighty-nine superintendents listed in the EDUCATION DIRECTORY were asked to have the chairman fill out the opinionnaire, while the remaining were asked to have a trustee complete

¹Montana EDUCATION DIRECTORY is a yearly publication of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, listing all the superintendents and board chairmen in Montana, 1971.

it. It was believed that this was an efficient method to receive a somewhat balanced sampling of chairmen and trustees. Further it was considered the most workable plan to obtain a sample similar to a random selection. A random sample would be theoretically ideal for the areas analyzed by chi-square tests.

A mailed opinionnaire seemed the most effective method to reach all the superintendents and a board member. Questions pertaining to the Arthur D. Little study were direct quotes from the report expressed in question form to ascertain if the respondents agreed with the findings as stated by the study. The bulk of the questions were selected from a previous study;² thus no pretest was felt necessary.

Procedures

Identical opinionnaires were mailed to all Montana superintendents on December 4, 1970. Each was accompanied by a cover letter (Appendix B). A self-addressed, coded, stamped envelope was included so the investigator could identify each return. A follow-up letter was sent three weeks later to those not responding.

²Irene S. Patton, "Attitudes and Opinions of School Board Members Regarding Sex Education in Florida Public Schools," unpublished Master's thesis, Florida State University, Tallahassee, 1969.

TREATMENT OF DATA

The opinionnaires were tabulated by percentage for the majority of variables. Two variables - (1) the status of family life and sex education in the district or county, and (2) opinions of superintendents, chairmen and trustees regarding the inclusion of Education for Personal and Family Living (including sex education) - were tested in relation to background factors of: age, education, size of school system, and time spent in their respective positions. The chi-square test for independence was utilized at the .05 level of significance.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Within the general public as well as school administrators, the majority favor the teaching of family life and sex education in the public schools. Still this course is absent in nearly three-fourths of Montana's junior and senior high schools (Little, 1970). It was believed that attitudes of Montana's superintendents and school board members could clarify the situation.

To eliminate the emotional connotation of the word "sex," the title of the class was designated as "Education for Personal and Family Living" (ED.P.&F.L.). Unless specifically stated otherwise, the term refers to a separate, distinct course using as subject matter individual development and interpersonal relationships as one grows toward maturity, marriage and parenthood.

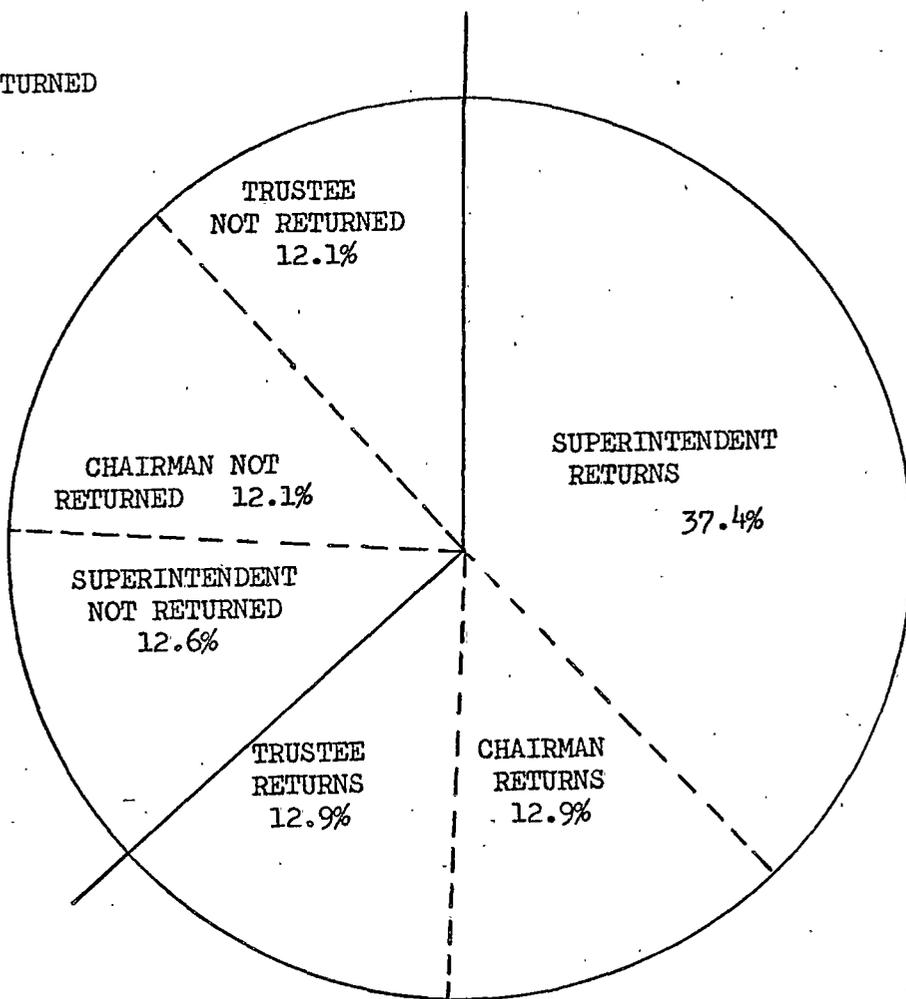
Sample

Three hundred fifty-six opinionnaires were mailed to 178 superintendents, 89 chairmen and 89 trustees. A total of 225 (63.2%) responded: 113 (74.7%) superintendents; 46 (51.7%) chairmen; and 46 (51.7%) trustees. This is slightly more (10.2%) than that of Johnson and Schutt (1966) received in their study of Maryland's superintendents and school board members (Figure 1).

The responses represented fifty of Montana's fifty-six counties (Figure 2). Opinionnaires were not received from persons in:

TOTAL NOT RETURNED

36.8%



TOTAL RETURNED

63.2%

Figure 1. Per cent return of response.

