



Superintendent hiring policies of Montana school board members
by Theodore Christopher Mattocks

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

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The study was conducted in the spring of 1987. The population consisted of Montana school board members representing all segments of local boards of trustees.

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Of the five major groups analyzed in this study, three evidenced only one combined policy. Large school district board members and female board members displayed two distinct policies in their groups. Both groups of large school district board members and board members in small school districts felt that organizational skills should receive the highest priority in the superintendent selection process. Medium size school district board members felt that people-centered skills should receive top attention. Male board members and both groups of female board members felt that organizational skills should receive the highest consideration. Male board members, small school board members, and one group of female board members felt that the people-centered skills should receive the second highest consideration. However, large school district board members and the second group of women board members felt that the number of years experience as a superintendent deserved second billing. The demographic variable of gender was viewed most negatively by both groups of female board members in the study.

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MONTANA SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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Theodore Christopher Mattocks

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Theodore Christopher Mattocks

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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November 17, 1987

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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to determine the importance placed by Montana school board members on selected organizational skills, people-centered skills, and several demographic criteria when selecting a superintendent of schools. In this study the judgment policy of each board member was analyzed in relation to the use of information contained in the profile cues of hypothetical applicants for the position of superintendent.

The study was conducted in the spring of 1987. The population consisted of Montana school board members representing all segments of local boards of trustees.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the history of our American educational system that dates back over 350 years, the position of the school superintendent is a relative newcomer to the profession. School boards have been employing superintendents for the past 150 years with varying degrees of success in what has become a vastly different job today than it was when it was created in the 1830's. Knezevich (1984) noted that the position of superintendent has undergone a transformation from a clerical one, with the superintendent having little control over the operation of the school district, to today's executive who controls what is, in some of the nation's largest cities, a billion-dollar corporation.

The various stages of transformation of the superintendency were due to many factors. At times the transformation was due to sound planning on the part of those school board members involved, while at other times it was out of sheer necessity that the school board would change the superintendent's job function in order to have a better way of operating the school district.

The role of school board members, as elected representatives of the community, has also undergone a gradual

transformation over the 170 years that school boards have been in existence. This has resulted in board members today who are far different from their predecessors. The early school board members had almost total control over the events that occurred at the school, and were highly involved with every aspect of daily operation. It was not until the population of the country began concentrating in the urban centers that the pressures of overseeing the daily operation of the school system became too much for the abilities of most lay, part-time board members to handle (Gilland, 1935). The result of this overburden of work for school board members was the creation of the position that is today known as the school superintendent.

In the century and a half that school boards have searched for superintendents with the necessary skills to fulfill the aspirations of the local community for their schools, many and varied attributes have been used to justify the hiring of one candidate over another. These attributes, or leadership qualities, have been identified in studies by the American Association of School Administrators (1979), and by Cunningham and Hentges (1982), and may be generally described as organizational skills and people-centered skills. Organizational skills are generally those that relate to knowledge of curriculum, finance, planning, plant management, and other skills requiring knowledge of the organization of structures.

People-centered skills are generally those skills that relate to human relations, public relations/community relations, and internal management skills that would help one to deal well with co-workers, board members, and others within the school setting. Each candidate for superintendent also possesses certain demographic characteristics that may influence the hiring decision of a school board member. Such factors as number of years of administrative experience, age, gender, highest degree earned, current job title and the location of the current job, could all potentially sway a board member one way or another in the hiring process.

When school board members perform their constitutional duty of selecting a superintendent, it would seem that the more closely each individual board member's perception of what constitutes a "good" superintendent matches the attributes of the person finally selected, the higher the likelihood that both will be able to work together for the betterment of the school district.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study will be to determine the importance placed by Montana school board members on selected organizational skills, people-centered skills, and several demographic criteria, when selecting a superintendent of schools.

Purpose of the Study

There is general agreement among the taxpayers of any community that the position of superintendent is one of the most demanding in any Montana community. The expectations of the position are in a state of constant flux. These changing demands, and the consequent shifts in board member support of the incumbent superintendent, have led to an inordinately high rate of turnover for Montana superintendents over the years. Cunningham and Hentges (1982) found that the average length of superintendents' contracts or letters of appointment was 2.6 years. In the last six year period, an average of over 20 percent of the superintendencies in Montana have become vacant in any given year, which would mean that the average length of superintendents' contracts in Montana is less than 2.0 years. Of the 203 school districts in the state that employ a superintendent, 53 were vacant for the school year beginning July 1, 1987; 45 were vacant for the school year beginning July 1, 1986; 31 were vacant for the school year beginning July 1, 1985; 49 were vacant for the school year beginning July 1, 1984; and 40 were vacant for the years beginning July 1, 1983, and July 1, 1982 (Directory of Montana Schools, 1982-87).

Whether the superintendency becomes vacant as a result of a unilateral action of the local school board, or due to

a mutually-agreed upon separation, the local school board members are placed in the position of finding a new chief executive. For approximately one-fifth of all school board units in the state each year, then, the perceptions that each board member has of the importance of selected organizational skills, people-centered skills, and the demographic criteria found in candidates for the position of superintendent becomes highly critical as the board goes through the hiring process.

This study attempted to identify the varying degrees of importance placed on these factors by local school board members. This study differs from previous studies of administrative competencies in that it attempted to determine the relative importance of those factors that school board members consider in the hiring process by presenting them with a list of variables attributed to several candidates, and then asking the school board member to estimate a particular candidate's chances of being hired as a superintendent in that board member's school district. Other studies, such as Behner (1979), Phillips (1981), Ross (1983), and Hahaldi (1985), chose to study ideal and perceived roles of the superintendent. Vigil (1977) studied which competencies are most important to be a superintendent, while Powell (1982) centered his attention on the competencies most important in selection and evaluation of the chief executive. Discovery of the

varying degrees of importance placed on each of these factors in the hiring process should add greatly to the body of knowledge, and can be useful to school board members in the field, to practicing school administrators, to those institutions that train prospective administrators, and to the professional organizations in which board members and superintendents hold membership.

General Questions to Be Answered

This study and its subsequent statistical analysis was designed to answer four questions. The four questions were:

- (1) Was there more than one policy used by school board members in each of the three district classification sizes when determining which of the variables were most important in hiring a superintendent?
- (2) Did the school board members in each of the three district classification sizes perceive a difference in the importance of any of the variables when making their decision to hire a superintendent?
- (3) Was there more than one policy used by male and female school board members when determining which of the variables were most important in hiring a superintendent?
- (4) What importance was placed on each of the variables by the male and female school board members when making their decision to hire a superintendent?

General Procedure

The population for this study was school board members of Montana school districts whose school board was a member of the Montana School Boards Association. A stratified proportional random sample of 400 board members, based on district size and percentage of the total number of superintendents employed by each size district, was drawn in order to determine who would receive the survey instrument. Due to the need for a proportional stratified sample of the entire population, it was possible that more than one member of a school board in a school district was selected to receive a survey instrument.

The survey instrument format consisted of a series of protocols, or profiles, of typical applicants for the position of superintendent in Montana school districts. These protocols contained the two combined administrative competency factors described earlier and the seven demographic variables. Each board member who received a copy of the survey instrument was asked to make a judgment, or "hiring decision," for each of the protocols presented. Through statistical analysis with a technique known as Judgment Analysis (JAN), a composite "score," or criterion, was established for each board member as to the factors they deemed most important when hiring a superintendent. By grouping the scores of all board members within a

certain school district size classification, a generalized criterion was established for that size group when it came to hiring a superintendent. Grouping all district size classifications together proved impractical due to computer limitations involved in processing more than 200 individuals' judgments at one time, and thus it was not possible to determine a generalized criterion for the entire state. By grouping the scores of all female board members into one group, and the scores of all male board members into another group, it was possible to determine a generalized criterion for each gender of respondent throughout the state.

Survey participants were given two weeks to mail back the survey instrument before a followup reminder was sent. If the selected participant had not returned the survey within one week after the followup request was sent, a final attempt to collect the survey instrument was made by sending a postcard reminder. If, after the third attempt, no return was received from the participant s/he was considered a non-participant in this study.

Limitations and Delimitations

- (1) Only those residents of Montana who were serving on a local school board during the 1986-87 school year were initially eligible for participation in this study.

- (2) Only those school board members whose school board belonged to the Montana School Boards Association were eligible to receive a copy of the survey instrument.
- (3) Only two mailed followup requests were used to try to elicit a response from those selected to participate in this study.
- (4) The majority of sources considered in the review of related literature was from the author's personal library, the Montana State University Library, an ERIC computer search of relevant materials, and professional journals.
- (5) The ERIC computer search was delimited to the years 1980 through 1987.

Definition of Terms

- (1) Superintendent of Schools: The chief executive officer of the Board of Trustees of a Montana elementary and/or secondary school district.
- (2) School Board Member: A registered voter in a local school district who was elected or appointed to serve on the school board for the 1986-87 school year.
- (3) School Board: The legally constituted governing body of the local school district in each Montana school district. It may consist of anywhere from a minimum of three members in the smaller school districts to a

minimum of seven members in the larger school districts.

- (4) Organizational Skills: Those qualities, traits, or skills exhibited by an individual that generally relate to curriculum, finance, plant management, or facilities development.
- (5) People-Centered Skills: Those qualities, traits, or skills exhibited by an individual that generally relate to human relations, public relations/community relations, and internal management.
- (6) Administrative Competency Factors: A combination of organizational and people-centered skills possessed in varying degrees by an applicant for the position of superintendent of schools.
- (7) Demographic Criteria: Those factors that are possessed in varying degrees by each applicant for the position of superintendent. These factors include age, gender, highest degree earned, number of years experience as a superintendent and as a principal, current job title, and the location of the current job, whether in Montana or out-of-state.
- (8) Judgment Policy: Defined by Dudycha (1970) as the extent to which one is able to predict the behavior or actions of a judge (rater) from the known characteristics of the stimuli s/he is being required to

evaluate. Thus the judgment policy is the prediction equation of each judge or group of judges.

The following chapter will detail the historical development of the roles of school board member and superintendent, as well as identify relevant research regarding administrative competencies and decision making theory.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND
RELATED RESEARCH

In order to gain a portrait of boards of trustees and public school superintendents a review of the literature on the history of education as it relates to these two roles in this country is essential. The theoretical literature on decision making and human judgment will provide insight into the process of individual and group policy formulation. Since the purpose of this study was to delineate the varying degrees of importance placed on an established list of administrative competencies and demographic factors by local school board members when hiring a superintendent, the literature concerning how individuals combine discrete pieces of information to make judgments will also be reviewed. Due to the different nature of the tasks of school board members and superintendents, each group will be reviewed separately from a longitudinal point of view to reveal historical trends.

In order to draw together the large amount of literature on schools, school boards, superintendents, and the hiring process that links all three together, the following major topics will be developed in this chapter:

(1) historical development of the school board, (2) historical development of the superintendency, (3) the evolving role of the superintendency, (4) identifying basic administrative competencies, and (5) theories about decision making and judgment.

Historical Development of the School Board

Local school governing bodies are known under many titles. For example, this body is called the school committee in Massachusetts, the school trustees in Indiana, the board of school directors in Oregon, the school board in Nebraska, and the board of education, board of school commissioners, or board of school inspectors in other states. In Montana, they are legally known as the board of trustees. By whatever name, they are the policymaking bodies by tradition and legal interpretation. In the United States, lay control of public institutions, especially schools, has had a profound effect on society and the nation.

The significance of lay governance must not be underestimated. Cremin (1970) credited the lodging of the governance of education with ordinary citizens as a critical feature of the revolution in education during the early colonial period. Cremin (1970:70) noted further that, "The laicizing of the sponsorship and the control of

education was paralleled by a significant broadening of clientele." This was the beginning of universal free public education.

School districts are extensions of the states, subject to the will of the legislatures. School board members are agents of the state, chosen locally in accordance with constitutional or statutory provisions and derive their authority from the state. Boards fulfill their control obligations in two general ways. First, they are the official link with the public. Boards are to apprehend, understand, and reflect the public in what they do. Second, boards have internal management responsibilities which are crucial to the enterprise's operation. The selection of top administrative leadership, such as the superintendent, in addition to allocation of fiscal resources and the examination of the system's product are examples of the latter (Campbell et al., 1985).

The origin of lay involvement in the control of education began barely 20 years after the first colonists landed at Plymouth Rock. The famed Massachusetts School Ordinance of 1642 was quite specific in delegating the responsibility for education to the "townsmen." In the words of the Ordinance as quoted by Dexter (1922:584):

This court, taking into consideration the great neglect of many parents and masters in training up their children in learning and labor...do hereupon order and decree that in every town the chosen men appointed for managing the prudential

affairs of the same shall henceforth stand charged with the care of the redress of this evil, so as they shall be sufficiently punished by fines for the neglect thereof upon presentment of the grand jury, or any other information or complaint in any court within this jurisdiction; and for this end they, or the greater number of them, shall have the power to take account from time to time of all parents and masters, and of their children, concerning their calling and employment of their children, especially of their ability to read and understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of this country.

The tone of the Ordinance was very clear and specific. Not only is the state supreme, but the delegation to local citizens is exact and binding. Dexter (1922) further noted that the pattern established in the Ordinance of 1642 was reinforced in the Massachusetts Ordinance of 1647, and in amendment to the 1647 Ordinance passed in 1671 and 1683. It is interesting to note, however, that in the 1642 Ordinance, control was placed in the "townsmen," people who also had other local government responsibilities. The control of education was not separated from other local regulatory and service functions of the townsmen. According to Reeves (1954), the townsmen were both legislative and administrative officials. They made "policies" either as townsmen or through the mechanism of the town meeting at which other citizens could be heard. Reeves (1954) further credits the townsmen, or selectmen as they are sometimes called, with deciding such things as the levy of the town taxes, the selection of teachers and the

determination of their wages, the length of the school year, and provisions for housing the schools.

Ordinances passed by the General Court of Massachusetts became the models for subsequent actions of other colonial legislatures. In 1677, Plymouth Colony passed an act similar to the Massachusetts Ordinance of 1647. The Plymouth Colony law not only called for the establishment of schools, but provided state aid to the local community to be collected from assessments against profits arising from Cape Cod fishing. The Connecticut Laws of 1650 likewise followed the Massachusetts pattern but were considerably more specific and detailed in describing the duties and responsibilities of the selectmen, the nature of the education and apprenticeships to be provided, and the ways and means of supporting local colonial schools. The Connecticut Laws were much stronger than the Massachusetts Ordinances. The language was sharp and the consequences for failure to observe the intent of the law were prescribed. When selectmen found parents or apprentice masters negligent in observing the laws, they were directed to take the children from their parents, or to take the apprentices from their masters, and place them with acceptable masters until the age of 21 for boys and 18 for girls. Dexter (1922) noted that the justifications for such arbitrary actions were implied in the act itself by

advocating that an educated citizenry was imperative if representative government was to survive.

The New England Colonies set the standard for other colonies and subsequently for other states within the union. The control of schools vested in the selectmen continued for nearly two centuries until the task of governing the schools became so great that it was separated from the other affairs of the local government by legislative fiat. The initial split of the duties of the selectmen into two different areas began with the appointment of the first permanent school visiting committee in 1721 in Boston. The Boston visiting committee was a subcommittee of selectmen with a specific task or assignment. The members of the committee were to visit schools and report their observations to the selectmen. This led gradually to the delegation of other school responsibilities to this committee until the subcommittee of selectmen was given full legal status. Even though the Boston selectmen appointed their committee in 1721, it was not until 1826 that the state of Massachusetts officially established school committees as separate from other governing authorities (Reeves, 1954).

Historical Development of
the Superintendency

Knezevich (1984) noted that throughout the early years of this new country there existed a very strong negative attitude toward executives, perhaps as a reaction to the system from which the colonists had so recently escaped. This limited view of the executive's role, especially in any form of government, was espoused by Thomas Jefferson. This view caused early school board members to be involved in all aspects of the school's operation. Individual board members interviewed all candidates prior to their employment as teachers, purchased all instructional and building maintenance supplies, supervised all employed personnel through a program of frequent visitations, and evaluated the school system in general by frequent and continual observation of all personnel and instructional activities.

Gilland (1935) stated that the strong Jeffersonian logic continued until the middle of the nineteenth century and had the effect of preventing the appointment of full-time administrators as executive officers for the school systems until many boards became overwhelmed by the duties of the growing school system. By 1850, many school boards were ready to admit that executive problems such as supervising instruction, evaluating the school's performance, and keeping track of school property were beyond the

capabilities of a lay, part-time administrative agency. At about the same time, Alexander Hamilton's point of view concerning how government should be run was coming into vogue. It was Hamilton's theory that there should be a division of responsibilities between the legislative and executive branches of government. This Hamiltonian model fit the needs of the overburdened school board members very well in the search for a better way to operate the growing school systems of America in the mid-nineteenth century. Hamilton and Reutter (1958) noted that as an outgrowth of the Hamiltonian concept, it became natural for school boards to believe that a determined policy should be delegated to a full-time person with professional preparation, competencies, and experience for implementation. That is, policy makers should not be policy implementors. Other problems arose, however, as local school boards sought to establish this new position of the school executive.

From a legal point of view, school board members were officers of a government corporation known as the school district, and state statutes defined in a general way their responsibilities and administrative powers, as well as those matters left to the discretion of the school board. This legal and discretionary authority lay at the root of much of the controversy and debate as full-time executive professionals were being hired to take over what was

formerly the board's role. Hamilton and Reutter (1958) asserted that the basis of the controversy was that powers delegated to a board by the legislature could not be redelegated or allocated by the board to others without specific legislation to allow such to be done.

The honor of establishing the first superintendencies, in 1837, goes to the cities of Buffalo and Louisville. Table 1 details the establishment of the school superintendency in 39 cities across the eastern and midwestern parts of the country during the nineteenth century. By 1850, eleven other cities had established the position of superintendent in their school systems. Due to the fact that some state legislatures took exception to a local school board creating a position of which they had not approved, five of the cities had to reestablish the position after permissive legislation had passed through the state capitol (Reller, 1935).

Tyack (1976) noted that school boards that hired superintendents during the nineteenth century, especially in the cities, were often not sure what the job should entail. Especially in the years before 1890, many superintendents shifted back and forth from education to other occupations, such as the ministry, law, business, or politics. The actual duties of superintendents usually depended on the expectations of school boards and the drive and personality of the school superintendent. Some were clerks

Table 1. Establishment of the school superintendency in 39 cities.

City	Year of Establishment	Year of Re-establishment	Population as of Nearest Census
Buffalo	1837		18,213
Louisville	1837		21,210
St. Louis	1839		16,469
Providence	1839		32,171
Springfield	1840	1865	10,985
Philadelphia	1840	1883	93,665
Cleveland	1841	1853	6,071
Rochester	1841		20,191
New Orleans	1841		102,193
Brooklyn	1848		96,838
Memphis	1848		8,841
Baltimore	1849	1866	169,054
Cincinnati	1850		115,435
Jersey City	1851		6,856
Boston	1851		136,881
New York	1851		515,547
San Francisco	1851		56,802
Nashville	1852		10,165
Newark	1853		38,894
Los Angeles	1853		1,610
Chicago	1854		29,963
Indianapolis	1855		8,091
Detroit	1855	1863	21,019
Worcester	1856		24,960
Minneapolis	1858		2,564
Milwaukee	1859		45,246
New Haven	1860		45,267
Savannah	1866		28,235
Kansas City	1867		32,260
Pittsburgh	1868		86,076
Washington, DC	1869		109,199
Richmond	1869		51,038
Wilmington	1870		30,841
Denver	1871		4,759
Atlanta	1871		21,789
Omaha	1872		16,083
Portland	1873		8,293
Seattle	1882		3,533
Salt Lake City	1890		20,768

(Source: Reller, 1935:81-82)

in function as well as in name. Some were really head teachers, people who inspired and guided the staff and concentrated on classroom instruction. Others saw the job as comparable to that of drill sergeant or inspector general who certified rigid compliance with rules and regulations. Some superintendents compared their managerial duties with those of supervisors of factories, though the analogies were rarely more than superficial. On occasion, a noted scholar would become superintendent, such as William T. Harris of St. Louis, who thought of himself as an educational statesman, almost a philosopher king, whose duty was to shape the educational thought and practice of city and nation. Before the end of the nineteenth century, the superintendency concept was to be recognized as the only promising solution to the administrative problems confronting public education (Tyack, 1976).

The Evolving Role of the Superintendency

Four stages can be identified in the development of the superintendency. Most superintendents in the mid-to-late nineteenth century focused on instruction. To begin with, the office was mostly a clerical one, for board members needed someone to relieve them of minor details. Even though the superintendent may not have been formally trained as an educator during this time period, the local

school boards did not think it was a problem for the new executive to supervise the mostly female teaching corps as they went about the performance of their duties with mostly pre-teen children.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century and first part of this century, educational programs became more complex and board members began to rely more on their superintendents for assistance with these baffling problems, such as staffing patterns, building problems, and legal issues. In this second stage, the superintendent was chiefly an educator, often a scholar of some reputation. However, the business affairs of the school district were still solidly in the hands of the school board. As Moehlman (1940:246) noted, many boards held the opinion that the "scholarly executive" did not have "a head for business" and had "little interest in many of the supplementary executive activities." Tyack (1976:258) described the early pioneer superintendents in the following manner:

[Superintendents in the nineteenth century conceived of their task in part as an evangelical enterprise, a search for organizational means to realize the goal of creating a 'redeemer nation.' As aristocrats of character in their own idealized self-conception, they were certified not so much by professional training as by church membership and a shared earnestness. In short, they were quintessential Victorians: evangelical Protestant, British-American, bourgeois. Although this tradition became much attenuated by newer sources of ideology in the twentieth century, it left behind a legacy of millennial optimism and an ideal of heroic leadership.

With the continued growth of the educational enterprise, boards of education often felt it necessary to employ a superintendent of business as well as a superintendent of instruction. Since many boards still felt that it was not possible for a "scholarly executive" to be involved with the business affairs of the district, this is understandable. This did, however, frequently lead to a dual administrative organization: one executive for business and one executive for education, both reporting to the board.

Dissatisfaction with this dual plan, plus the influence of a business culture, led to the third stage in the development of the superintendency in which the superintendent became a business manager (Callahan, 1962). At this time, superintendents were budget builders, managers of property, school plant specialists, and directors of elections to pass tax levies and bond issues. This stage, which started about 1920 and lasted until the middle of this century, was probably as much a function of the need to keep up with the record growth of the nation's burgeoning population as it was a metamorphosis of the position. The superintendents of this stage demonstrated business acumen, but they tended to neglect educational purposes and instructional procedures. The emphasis on business also tended to establish unitary control in most school districts as school boards found that the need for two

different people to fulfill the business and educational roles created duplication. The superintendent became the chief executive officer for the board of education. This, however, was clearly not enough; the board needed professional advice on the purposes and procedures of education itself. The role of the superintendent is now in its fourth stage, one that is still evolving, in which the superintendent is the chief executive officer of the school board and the chief professional adviser in the school system (Campbell et al., 1985).

The Educational Policies Commission Report (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1965:247) stated the importance of the position of superintendent by calling it:

...one of the most crucial and perhaps most difficult positions in American life today. The occupant of this position, more than any other single person in the community, influences the shape of public education. Thus, he/she has a basic role in determining what will become of the young people in his/her community, and through them, what his/her community and the nation will become.

Identifying Basic Administrative Competencies

Most educational researchers have ignored the area dealing with the perceptions that board members have during the superintendent hiring process as to what administrative competencies and demographic variables are necessary in a

prospective superintendent. Vigil (1977) undertook a study to identify the perceptions of school board presidents in Colorado relative to the priorities of competencies which they deemed important for a superintendent to possess. Vigil discovered that the behaviors that prospective and practicing superintendents should have, in descending order of importance, are: (1) human relations skills, (2) general knowledge and skills related to the administration of the total school program, and (3) understanding and skills related to subject matter areas. Powell (1982) found in his study that the most important criteria used in the selection and performance evaluation of superintendents fall into three general categories: (1) personal philosophy, (2) professional-technical skills, and (3) interpersonal relations skills. Hilario (1984) conducted a study in California to determine if personal characteristic factors, administrative factors, or experience factors were the most important in the superintendent selection process. Experience factors were found to be moderately important, while personal characteristic factors, with the exception of personal experience, were perceived as not important in the superintendent selection process.

Cunningham and Hentges (1982:23) concluded, after an exhaustive survey of superintendents, that more than two-thirds of them attribute their selection to personal characteristics and qualifications. The superintendents

believe their hiring was based on: (1) personal characteristics/qualifications (66.6 percent), (2) a person to solve specific problems (16.0 percent), (3) a person to achieve specific program improvement (11.4 percent), (4) a person to maintain the status quo (4.0 percent), and (5) other reasons (2.0 percent).

While few researchers have turned their attention to measuring the perceptions that board members have regarding prospective superintendents, several researchers have attempted to discover what it takes for a superintendent to be successful once he has been hired by the board.

The American Association of School Administrators, in a joint publication with the National School Boards Association (1979:35) stated that the superintendent should have knowledge of:

- (1) Classroom and laboratory environments, tools for teaching and structural organization for the deployment of staff and students.
- (2) What science and research show about the expectations, drives, fears, interests, and personal diversities that exist within groups of teachers, parents, and youth.
- (3) The public and what makes it tick, including: what it is; what its dynamics are; how it is organized; who leads it; where the power lies; how it makes itself felt; and how to work with it instead of against it.
- (4) The constantly changing needs of a school district and the society it serves.
- (5) How to plan wisely for the future.

Harris (1977:11-12), then chairperson of the Pittsford, New York Board of Trustees, wrote a first-person

account of that board's search for a new superintendent following the death of the incumbent officeholder. Three strands come out of her writing that apply to the current situation.

- (1) The board should specify the academic requirements, experience, and personality traits which best equip the superintendent to implement the district's educational policies.
- (2) What competence areas are of primary importance to the school district--personnel administration, financial administration, school plant management, instructional program, supplementary pupil services, public relations, or general planning?
- (3) The importance of matching the superintendent to the school district and the community cannot be overemphasized. The superintendent does not function in a vacuum; he or she interacts with the school district staff and the community in the pursuit of shared educational goals.

Several authors and researchers sought to establish the roles that superintendents assume in order to succeed in a particular job. Heller (1985), Professor of Educational Administration at the State University of New York, Buffalo, listed the following traits as being necessary for the successful school executive: (1) grow a healthy ego, (2) communicate well, (3) develop people power, (4) set clear priorities, (5) show integrity, (6) be visible, (7) become well-rounded, (8) hire talented people, (9) manage effectively, (10) be politically savvy, and (11) be decisive.

Cunningham and Hentges (1982:35) asked a group of superintendents to name the two primary expectations that board members have of them in the performance of their current job. Their responses were:

- (1) Skills in human relations (46.4 percent),
- (2) Knowledge of finance (45.2 percent),
- (3) Internal management skills (42.3 percent),
- (4) Public relations/community relations (19.8 percent),
- (5) Planning skills (17.8 percent), and
- (6) Curriculum development skills (14 percent).

Ficklen (1984), associate editor for The Executive Educator magazine, polled those in subordinate educational positions who report to a "boss," and found these qualities as being the most desirable in bosses: (1) creates a team spirit, (2) looks out for the employees, (3) has demanding, yet clear, expectations, (4) trusts the employees, (5) allows mistakes, and (6) has a sense of humor.

Four researchers have found significant differences between the perceptions of superintendents and school board members concerning the ideal and actual leadership role of the superintendent. Phillips (1981) found that there was no relationship between the superintendents' and the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendent's ideal leadership role in Louisiana, and that there was no agreement between the two groups as to the superintendent's actual leadership role in the areas of: (1) instructional

leadership, (2) curriculum, (3) staff personnel administration, (4) pupil personnel administration, (5) financial administration, (6) public relations, or (7) general planning. Behner (1979) found that significant differences existed between superintendents and board presidents with respect to the areas in which it is perceived that a superintendent should act in his role as a superintendent. The primary area in which incongruencies were found was in the relationship with teachers; superintendents felt they should be more supportive of the teaching staff than did board presidents. A secondary area of difference was noted in dealing with the community. Superintendents believed that it was more important that they be available to the community and that lay committees be involved in studying school problems than did board of education presidents. Ross (1983) found that there was a significant difference at the .001 level between the school board members' real and ideal perceptions of the school superintendent's leadership behaviors. Finally, Hahaldi (1985) found significant differences in the ideal and actual roles of the superintendent as viewed by school board presidents in the areas of community relations and business management.

Identifying the Demographic Variables

Research on the demographic variables included in this study are nonexistent in some areas. Determining whether

or not the applicant's job chances are influenced by the number of years of administrative experience possessed by the applicant, whether or not there is a pro-Montana or pro-out-of-state applicant emphasis, and measuring how one's level of education affects employment are all areas that are nebulous and difficult to measure. Some strong tendencies in recent Montana educational history can be noted. There seems to be a strong tendency for one classification of school districts, first class districts, to hire their superintendents from out-of-state. Of the eight largest first class school districts in Montana, only one has a native Montanan as superintendent. A native Montanan superintendent is one who was educated entirely in the state, and one who has Montana administrative experience. However, five of these eight first class school districts did hire superintendents who had previous Montana experience prior to being hired in their current position, even though they received their education out-of-state.

Another tendency is in the area of the amount of professional education needed to be a superintendent. Recent actions by the Montana State Board of Public Education to require superintendents certified after 1991 to have at least a master's degree plus 30 credits finally moved Montana off the bottom of the "training ladder" among the 50 states (Montana Board of Public Education, 1985). When the new higher level of training requirements are

effected, superintendents practicing in Montana will at least be part way up the "ladder" that already calls for a minimum training level of an earned doctorate in over 20 states (Voorhis, 1986). There are strong suspicions among practicing administrators about each of these areas, but they must remain in the realm of conjecture at this point.

Important information does exist in the area of age and sex discrimination that could affect how a board member would view an applicant for the superintendency. The area of sex discrimination is widely known through various Title IX guidelines, lawsuits, and regulations that have been the object of much media attention in Montana during the past several years. For example, there are six female superintendents in Montana during the 1987-88 school year, half of whom are serving in third class school districts.

Less known, and perhaps appreciated, is the aspect of age discrimination and how it affects employment. Recent enactments by the U.S. Congress have abolished any mandatory retirement age, and Montana state statute has followed suit to the point that dismissal for reasons of age must be linked to one's competency. When Congress enacted the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), it was "to prohibit discrimination in employment on account of age in such matters as hiring, job retention, compensation, and other terms and conditions of employment" (U.S. Congress, 1978).

Schuster and Miller (1984) state that there are three major theories that have dominated the economics literature on employment discrimination: (1) statistical discrimination, (2) monopoly power, and (3) personal prejudice. In their opinion, age discrimination would be most likely found under the personal prejudice theory of employment discrimination. Personal prejudice theory involves the perceptions one has of another in certain aspects of the other's abilities, attitudes, appearance, and other personal traits.

Researchers in the field of gerontology often assume that the existence of prejudice against the old, simply because of their age, has been clearly established (Barron, 1953; Bennett and Eckman, 1973; Butler, 1969). Recent studies, however, have suggested that people may not possess negative attitudes toward the elderly (Brubaker and Powers, 1976; McTavish, 1971). In addition, most research in the area has relied on one very limited methodology, an attitude survey in which individuals are asked to indicate which traits apply to a generalized old person. Connor et al. (1978) assessed individuals' perceptions of the competence of a specifically described old or young person acting in an important life situation, such as a job interview, to determine if there was a negative attitude toward the competence of the aged. They concluded that

there were no clear differences in the assessment of old and young job applicants.

A study by Locke-Connor and Walsh (1980) to assess the importance of such factors as an applicant's ability, demographic characteristics, effort, and the number of other applicants in determining the outcome of an interview revealed that older applicants are not seen as less competent than younger applicants. Their study also found that even though there was an equal evaluation of competence among the applicants, regardless of age, an older applicant's failure to be hired is more expected than a younger applicant's. The demographic characteristics were given more importance than all other factors in explaining why the older applicants were not given the job. Interestingly, there was no recognition that the demographic characteristic of age might work to the advantage of younger successful applicants in the same way that it worked to the disadvantage of the older unsuccessful applicant.

A 1986 study by Braithwaite et al. to determine the use of age stereotypes in evaluating individuals' behavior in context-specific situations found that while stereotyping can occur in specific contexts, its form is greatly influenced by other aspects of the situation such as demographic variables.

Theories About Decision Making
and Judgment

A review of the literature on the theories of decision making and judgment needs some review in order that the reader may be able to understand how a group of geographically separated raters (school board members) can react to a complex set of superintendent applicant variables (administrative competencies and demographic criteria) and produce a single classwide or statewide conclusion (policy) that will have a high degree of validity.

Research on information processing, especially as it precedes and determines human judgment, was not available before 1960 due to the laborious nature of working problems by hand that contained as few as four or five variables. Given computer facilities, however, scientists are free to work with large numbers of variables, expressed either in continuous or categorical form.

In making judgments, people use many intertwined bits of information. The success of their judgments is dependent upon their ability to interpret, integrate, and differentially weight information to arrive at an appropriate decision. An underlying judgment policy governs a person's process for integrating information to arrive at a judgment. Knowledge of people's judgment policies provides

a basis for understanding why they make certain judgments with respect to a given problem (Anderson, (1977)).

Several researchers contend that there is no substantial difference between judgments and decisions (Slovic and Lichtenstein, 1973:16). Rappaport and Summers (1973:4) stated in their study that:

...judgment is a uniquely important functional aspect of thinking that allows persons to cope with, or adapt to, uncertainty... [and] because of its central role of mediating between intentions and purposes of the persons and uncertainties in his environment, judgment can only be understood by scrutinizing person-environment interactions.

Anderson (1977:72) contended that a person's "motivation, attitude and surroundings may exert an influence" on the decision making situation, and that "judgment policies will be more reflective of real-life decision making if subjects have some freedom in determining the context" of the decision making situation, such as at home at a time when it is convenient to them.

For a person to be able to make successful judgments about a set of administrative competencies and demographic criteria is not an impossible task. It does depend upon an individual's ability to interpret and weigh varying bits of information, and to apply his/her own underlying judgment policy to each situation. By applying a statistical technique such as Judgment Analysis (JAN) to the results of the survey, a single classwide or statewide policy

concerning the qualities most sought after when hiring a superintendent can be established.

JAN was devised by Christal in 1962 (Christal, 1968a) and is a special adaptation of a technique developed by Bottenberg and Christal in 1961 (Bottenberg and Christal, 1968). The JAN technique allows a rater, or judge, who is presented with a number of stimulus situations (profiles) to make a decision on each profile based on the various characteristics (cues) within the profile. By varying the intensity of the cues within each profile, a weighted policy judgment is produced by each judge. By combining the judges with the most similar policies, a new combined policy is produced that has the least loss in predictive validity over the old separate policies. By continuing to combine all policies in a similar manner, an overall policy is developed for all judges (Leonard et al., 1982).

Now the question arises as to which of the stated competencies and demographic criteria, or combination of these two, is most important when the school board is looking for a superintendent. Maybe there are several that are equally important. Perhaps different size districts in Montana have different requirements for a person to be hired as superintendent. Perhaps the gender of the school board member makes a difference. The following chapter will detail the methods to be used in this study to try to answer some of these questions.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

This chapter describes the procedures by which the data were gathered, processed, and analyzed in order to delineate the most important factors in the hiring process in the view of school board members. The major divisions in this chapter are: (1) population description and sampling procedure, (2) methodology, (3) method of data collection, (4) method of organizing data, (5) research questions, (6) research hypotheses, (7) analysis of data, and (8) precautions taken for accuracy.

Population Description and
Sampling Procedure

The Montana School Boards Association is a statewide group of men and women who are members of their local boards of education. Membership in the Association is voluntary, and those school boards who vote to join the Association are assessed a dues fee based on a certain percentage of the total general fund budget of the local school district. The state group is a subgroup of the National School Boards Association, which is similarly composed of local school board members from around the

nation. Even though membership in the state organization is voluntary, over 90 percent of the board members in districts that employ a superintendent are members of the Association (Buchanan, 1986).

The Montana School Boards Association maintains an up-to-date, accurate directory of the members of the Association which includes the address of the member, and the size of district that the member represents. This mailing list was made available to the researcher for use in this study.

By state statute, local school districts are identified as either first class, second class, or third class districts (School Laws of Montana, 1985). First class districts are defined as those school districts that have a resident population of 6,500 or more. Second class districts are defined as those school districts that have a resident population of at least 1,000 but less than 6,500. Third class school districts are defined as those school districts that have a resident population of less than 1,000. Of the 548 public school districts in Montana, 16 are identified as first class school districts, 106 are identified as second class school districts, and 426 are identified as third class school districts (Anderson, 1987). Even though there are 548 school districts in the state, only 202 employ superintendents. All of the 16 first class districts employ superintendents, as do all of the 106 second class school districts. However, only 80 of

the third class school districts employ a superintendent. The remaining 346 third class school districts are under the supervision of a "head teacher," a "teacher-principal," or the county superintendent of schools who gains his/her office through the electoral process on a countywide basis.

Since this study concerns the hiring process for superintendents, only those school board members that serve in a school district that hires a superintendent were eligible for participation. Another requirement for participation was that the local board of trustees had to be a member of the Montana School Boards Association so that the mailing list of the Association could be utilized. A proportional stratified random sample was drawn from the list of eligible board members who belong to the Association.

Due to the fact that first class school districts employ about 7.9 percent of the total number of superintendents in the state, they were represented by about 7.9 percent of the population of the survey. Second class school districts that employ about 52.5 percent of the total number of superintendents in the state were represented by about 52.5 percent of the population in the survey. Third class school districts that employ about 39.6 percent of the superintendents in the state were represented by about 39.6 percent of the population in the survey. Considering there are about 1,000 school board members in the

Association that represent a school district that hires a superintendent, some statistical method of choosing an appropriate sample size had to be utilized if the entire population was not going to be included in the survey. This researcher chose to be led by the formula developed by Cochran (1960) which takes population size into account, and allowed a .05 level of confidence to be established on a minimum sample size of 384. In this manner, Cochran's formula asserts that there is a 95 percent probability that there could be no more than a five percent error in the findings. Accordingly, a sample size of 400 was utilized in this study. By applying the varying percentages regarding superintendent employment against the sample size, the following numbers of board members from the various sized school districts were asked to participate in this study (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants in study by percentage of superintendents employed.

District Classification	Percentage of Superintendents Employed	Number of Participants in Study
First Class	7.9	32
Second Class	52.5	210
Third Class	<u>39.6</u>	<u>158</u>
Total	100.0	400

Methodology

In order to identify the factors considered most important in the superintendent selection process by school board members, a technique termed Judgment Analysis (JAN) was utilized in this study. Wherry and Naylor (1966:267) stated that judgment analysis is "based upon defining the capturing of rater policy as the extent to which one can predict the actions of a rater from the human characteristics of the data he is being required to evaluate." Houston and Stock (1969) pointed out that JAN allows the researcher to identify the policies that may be present in the decision making process of an individual or group of individuals. Christal (1968a:24) stated that "Judgement Analysis is a simple but powerful technique for identifying and describing the rating policies that exist within a board or committee of judges." Bottenberg and Christal (1968) described JAN as a method which retains maximum predictive efficiency and enables the researcher to make a complete analysis of interrater agreement.

To be able to use the JAN technique, a simulation instrument was developed. An example of this simulation instrument is found in Appendix C. It consisted of a series of protocols, or profiles, of typical applicants for the position of superintendent of schools. These protocols included an organizational skills competency, a people

