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A DESCRIPTIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE OCCUPATIONAL ETHOS OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

The Ohio State University

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A DESCRIPTIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE
OCCUPATIONAL ETHOS OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Rodney Takashi Ogawa, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are few things in life that an individual can accomplish without the advice, cooperation, and encouragement of many people. This dissertation is not an exception.

The author is especially indebted to Dr. Walter G. Hack, who as the author's advisor, provided many helpful insights and much needed encouragement; to Dr. Luvern L. Cunningham, who so often took time from a busy schedule to lend assistance and constructive criticism; to Dr. George Ecker, who nurtured the author's appreciation for the sociological perspective and who shared novel views of administration; and to Dr. Wen L. Li, who gave the author an increased appreciation for the rigor of social scientific inquiry.

The author also wishes to thank Dr. Dwayne Gardner and Dr. Lonnie Wagstaff whose patience enabled the author to fully appreciate the opportunities provided by graduate study and whose expertise provided important insights to school administration; and to Dr. Roy Larmee, who willingly shared personal copies of research on the superintendency.

Special thanks are owed to John Hauck, Executive Director of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, whose support greatly facilitated the completion of the study; and to the American Association of School Administrators, whose survey of school superintendents
provided necessary data for the research.

Finally, the author is grateful to the twenty school superinten-
dents who shared insights about their occupation and without whom the study could not have been undertaken.
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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

There are some fourteen thousand individuals in the United States who earn their living as superintendents of public school systems. In spite of the pervasiveness of the occupation, most people would be hard pressed to explain what it is that school superintendents do. As will be shown, even scholars in the field of educational administration have only limited understanding about what the job of school superintendent entails. The study reported here was undertaken to contribute to an improved understanding of the school superintendency. Its aim was to describe the occupational ethos of school superintendents.

Background to the Problem

During the past century, activists in American social and political movements have focused much of their attention upon the nation's public schools. While the specific issues raised over the years have reflected fluctuations in social, political, and economic conditions, there have been several recurrent themes. Among them has been a general concern for the effectiveness of school management. This theme was evident in the late 19th century reform movement's successful efforts to remove education from the world of political spoils and was clearly of central
concern to those who advocated the implementation of the principles of scientific management in the operation of schools and school systems.¹

During the period of social unrest which began in the mid-1960s, school administrators drew sharp criticism from many sides. While liberal social critics accused school administrators of representing the interests of the "establishment" and, thereby, maintaining social injustice, political conservatives often accused administrators of being overly acquiescent to the demands made by liberal and radical elements.

Most recently, public attention focused upon issues of educational finance and quality of instruction. While these two issues may have had separate geneses, they have been linked to create an updated rendition of the recurrent theme, a concern for the efficiency and effectiveness of school management.

Several authors have noted that the dramatic social and political changes which marked the late 19th century and most of the 20th century contributed to a heightening of the influence that American school superintendents exerted in the governance and management of public school systems.²

¹Raymond E. Callahan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

The belief that superintendents play an important role in the operation of school systems has been reinforced by findings of studies on the influence that administrators have on the behavior of subordinates. For example, Caldwell and Easton found that superintendents' management behavior influenced the management behavior of subordinate school principals. Studies conducted in private sector organizations reported similar findings. The point to be made here is that school superintendents are assumed to play an important role in American public education and that there is some evidence to support this belief. In spite of this, the position of school superintendent, even as the institution of public education and the occupation of teaching, is not very well understood.

In his preface to Schoolteacher, Lortie observed that:

Despite their pivotal role, public schools have received relatively little sociological study. Schooling is long on prescription, short on description. That is nowhere more evident than in the case of the two million persons who teach in public schools.

---


This observation holds for the over fourteen thousand individuals who serve as superintendents of American public school systems. Superintendents are the targets of severe criticism; and university courses, textbooks, journal articles, and homilies which suggest ways to improve school management practices abound. Yet, few empirically based descriptions of the superintendency or superintendents exist.

In light of the long-standing concern for the effectiveness of management and leadership practices employed by school administrators, and the assumed importance of the superintendent in affecting the operation of a school system, the paucity of such descriptive work is troubling. Conventional wisdom suggests that in order to improve systematically upon some condition, its present state must first be thoroughly understood. Attempts to improve the performance of school superintendents without a full and accurate description of the superintendency and its incumbents will necessarily be unsystematic (that is, non-cumulative) and will be subject to the fruitless adoption of fads and panaceas. Thus, systematic descriptions of the school superintendency are needed.

The Superintendency as an Occupation

The social sciences provide a broad array of conceptualizations that suggest the value of describing the school superintendency from a number of perspectives. For instance, the superintendency might be viewed from the perspectives of role theory, decision theory, or leadership theory. One perspective which would appear to be both intuitively interesting to students of educational administration, as well as rooted
in sociological and social-psychological theory is to view the superintendency as an occupation. Richard Hall defined an occupation as:
"... the social role performed by adult members of society that directly and/or indirectly yields social and financial consequences and that constitutes a major focus in the life of an adult." Clearly, the superintendency is, if nothing else, a line of work that provides sustenance for, and occupies the time of a large number of individuals. The study reported here, then, will focus on describing the school superintendency as an occupation.7

The Occupational Ethos

As Pavalko has noted, occupations can be described and analyzed along any number of dimensions.8 The focus of this study will be the occupational ethos of school superintendents. In an example of an excellent study of another school-related occupation, Daniel Lortie described what he termed the "ethos" of the classroom teacher.9

---


7The term "occupation" has been purposely used here instead of the term "profession". Everett Hughes has suggested that certain terms, such as "professional", are value laden and, hence, can serve as blinders in social scientific inquiry. Therefore, the more neutral term "occupation" has been adopted for this study. Note that among occupational sociologists, the term "occupation" is usually seen as encompassing the entire professional/non-professional continuum. See Everett Cherrington Hughes, Men and Their Work (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958), p. 44; George Ritzer, Man and His Work: Conflict and Change (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972), p. 49, and Ronald M. Pavalko, Sociology of Occupations and Professions (Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc. 1971), p. 16.

8Pavalko, Sociology of Occupation and Professions, p. 2

9Lortie, Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study.
Lortie defined the occupational ethos of the school teacher as:

> The pattern of orientations and sentiments which is peculiar to teachers and which distinguishes them from members of other occupations.¹⁰

Similarly, ethos is defined in Webster's New International Dictionary as: "The character, sentiment or description of a community or people, the spirit which actuates manner and customs ..."

Both the general dictionary definition of "ethos" and Lortie's application of the term to a specific social context provide broad statements of meaning. However, neither is sufficiently specific to serve as a definition to which social scientific research can be anchored. Note Charter's concern in his critique of Lortie's Schoolteacher:

> With my empirical turn of mind, I began to wonder how Lortie would ever know when he had "the ethos" in hand, what rules would he go by? How will he, and how will you and I, be able to tell in the end if he has captured all the ethos, only part of it, or none at all?¹¹

Perhaps the definition of occupational ethos can be sharpened by reviewing the broader social scientific conceptualizations from which it stems.

Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist, pioneered the use of the concept of ethos in the analysis of cultures. In his study of Naven, the ceremonial rites of the Iatmul tribe of New Guinea, Bateson defined ethos as:

---

¹⁰Ibid, p. viii.

A culturally standardized system of organization of the instincts and emotions of individuals.\textsuperscript{12}

In a later application of ethological analysis, Bateson suggested how, in his view, ethos was related to behavior:

The next step, therefore, is to ask about Balinese ethos. What actually are the motives and the values which accompany the complex and rich cultural activities of the Balinese?\textsuperscript{13}

Thus, for Bateson, the notion of ethos referred to a culture's standardized system(s) of affect which were, to a degree, the motives and values that accompany behavior. Note that ethos was not viewed as a cause of behavior but as accompanying it.

This broader description of ethos generally coincides with Lortie's more specific use and definition of the term. Both suggest that ethos involves some system of affect which is shared by members of a culture or subgroup of that culture. However, Bateson, unlike Lortie, is more explicit in his description of the relationship that exists between ethos and social behavior.

Ethos, if viewed as a standardized system of affect that accompanies activity, can be seen to reflect many of the basic concepts of symbolic interactionism.

Herbert Blumer, who coined the term "symbolic interaction", posited these three premises as the foundation for his theories of social behavior:


1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings things have for them.

2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction one has with others.

3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.¹⁴

Thus, in symbolic interactionist terms, ethos might be defined as a culturally standardized system of emotions which give meaning to things, a meaning which serves as a basis for action and which is derived by individuals from social interactions in relation to things. Transposing this definition of ethos to an occupational context, occupational ethos might be defined as: an occupationally standardized system of emotions which give meaning to things based upon social interactions in relation to those things, a meaning which serves as a basis for occupation member's actions. It is this dimension of the occupation of school superintendent that will be described in the course of this study.

**Approaches to the Description of Ethos**

How does one determine the nature of an occupation's ethos? The approach taken here to develop a description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents was based conceptually upon the work of occupational sociologists and social-psychologists, and borrowed heavily from Lortie's work on the classroom teacher. The description was the product of the analysis of two occupational dimensions: structures and meanings.

Occupational structures. Ritzer observed that, "studying professional occupations has been the preeminent concern of sociologists in the work world." 15 Much of that study has been directed toward identifying a set of characteristics which differentiates professions from other occupational types, and which can be used to locate occupations along a continuum from most to least professional. 16 Pavalko has noted that the identification of such differentiating characteristics is tantamount to "building a theoretical model with which occupational groups can be analyzed." 17 This suggests that the occupational characteristics identified and discussed in the professional-continuum literature provide a conceptual foundation for the analysis of an occupation's ethos.

In an early attempt to develop a professional continuum, Hughes considered three aspects of an occupation: entry into the profession, commitment to the occupation, and the standing of the occupation "in the eyes of the community." 18 In another accounting of characteristics that differentiate occupations, Pavalko identified: "theory or intellectual technique", "relevance to basic social values", "training period", "motivation", "autonomy", "sense of commitment", "sense of community", and "code of ethics." 19

15 Ritzer, Man and His Work: Conflict and Change, p. 48.
16 Ibid., p. 50.
17 Pavalko, Sociology of Occupations and Professions, p. 15.
18 Hughes, Men and Their Work, p. 12.
19 Pavalko, op. cit., p. 25.
Among these characteristics of occupations are several that appear to have direct bearing upon an occupation's ethos. Certainly, entry processes — recruitment, screening, training — affect occupation members' basic beliefs and feelings about their work. The types of commitment and sources of motivation which characterize an occupation should suggest much about its ethos. And the nature of the theories upon which an occupation operates will most certainly affect the way members of an occupation approach their work.

A quality shared by these occupational characteristics is their predominantly structural nature. Scott has maintained that social structures are those social processes which maintain a system's existing form. In view of this definition, occupational entry processes and the nature of theories upon which an occupation operates can certainly be characterized as structural aspects of an occupation.

This suggests that one way to approach the description of the superintendents' occupational ethos involves the analysis of the occupation's structures for patterns that suggest general orientations which result from these structures. This, in fact, was one of the approaches adopted by Lortie to describe the classroom teachers' ethos:

... It deals with recruitment, socialization, and the distribution of rewards. In each instance, I relate the ways these issues are resolved to their implications for orientations among teachers. Three major orientations receive repeated reinforcement from the structure of the occupation.

---


Thus, one approach taken to describe the occupational ethos of school superintendents involved the analysis of three occupational structures: recruitment, training (socialization), and rewards. This analysis was aimed at describing occupational orientations which could be expected to rise out of patterns identified in these structures.

**Occupational meanings.** Another occupational dimension that would appear to have some bearing on an occupation's ethos lies in the way that individual members of an occupation deal with the tasks or activities that characterize their occupation. Hughes in his pioneering volume, *Men and Their Work*, appeared to reflect this view of occupations.

But the trend towards large organizations and toward the bureaucratizing of careers does not do away with the struggle of the individual to find a place and an identity in the world of work or with the collective efforts of occupations to exert control over the term of their work with and for others.22

On a broader conceptual level, Robert Dubin developed the notion of "central life interests"23 to explain the ability of individuals to cope with the seemingly conflicting demands that a complex society places on them.

Meanings, and the possibility of realizing consistency in values, attitudes, and behavior is attained in the individual's life space by focusing on only a small segment of it, making that segment a central life interest. Where we invest our emotions, we are likely to develop a perceptual

---

22Hughes, op. cit. p. 8.

gestalt of order and consistency. 24

Assuming that the superintendency is a central life interest for the individuals who serve as superintendents, then it follows from Dubin's conceptualization that they derive meanings from their work, and that they perceive that work world to have some fundamental order.

Mead's concept of "mind" suggests further that the meanings and order which superintendents derive from their work will, in part, be reflected in superintendents' verbal characterizations of that work. Mead concluded that language as a system of symbols for characters enabled human beings:

To isolate ... characters in relationship to the object and to the response which belongs to the object ... 25

Thus, superintendents or members of any occupational group, for that matter, could be expected to indicate the meanings and order they derive from their work by the way they describe what they do.

Again, this was an approach Lortie utilized to describe the classroom teachers' ethos:

I will talk less about structure and more about meanings. The approach will be more phenomenological as we examine the tasks teachers perform and the ways they define them. I will pay particular attention to "cathected attitudes" to the work sentiments among classroom teachers ... 26

24 Ibid., p. 25.


26 Lortie, op. cit., p. 106.
Summary. Two approaches, then, were taken to describe the occupational ethos of school superintendents. First, three of the occupation's structures — recruitment, socialization, rewards — were analyzed for patterns from which general orientations might stem. Second, superintendents' characterizations of their work were analyzed for patterns that suggested the order with which they saw that work and sentiments they attached to it. The total process might best be characterized as one of analytic distillation. Two fundamental views of occupations reflected in the sociological-social psychological literature, structure and personal meanings, were analyzed for the essential orientations and sentiments which characterize school superintendents. The accompanying chart depicts the approach taken in this study to develop a description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents.

Problem Statement

The general purpose of this study, then, was to describe the occupational ethos of the American school superintendent by analyzing:

1. The processes and structures which develop and sustain the occupation for the general orientations which they encourage among occupation members; and

2. Superintendents' descriptions of their activities to determine the meanings and sentiments they attach to their work.

Flowing from this general purpose were three general research questions and related sub-questions which focused the description of the ethos of school superintendents.
Phase I
Analyze occupational structures for themes which indicate orientations which they engender among occupation group members. The structures are:
1. Recruitment
2. Socialization
3. Reward

Phase II
Analyze superintendents' descriptions of their work to identify themes which indicate meanings and sentiments they attach to that work.

Phase III
Synthesize orientations, meanings, and sentiments to describe the basic elements of the ethos.

ETHOS
Approach to the Description of the Occupational Ethos of School Superintendents

FIGURE 1
1. What orientations do superintendents derive from the structures of their occupation?

   a. What patterns exist in the recruitment of school superintendents into the profession?

      1) What attracts individuals to the occupation of school superintendent?

      2) What patterns exist in the processes by which individuals are recruited into the superintendency?

   b. What patterns exist in superintendents' characterization of the profession's socialization process?

      1) What attitudes do superintendents express towards the socialization through which they moved?

         a) To what extent do superintendents view formal university programs as useful in preparing for the superintendency?

         b) To what extent do superintendents view on-the-job experience as useful in developing skills necessary to the superintendency?

         c) To what extent do superintendents view their experience in other positions in educational organizations as useful in preparing for the superintendency?

   c. What do superintendents perceive to be the rewards of their occupation?

      1) How is the reward structure tied to career advancement?

      2) What general patterns characterize the reward structure of the occupation of school superintendent?

2. What is the nature of meanings and sentiments that superintendents attach to their work?

   a. What do superintendents identify as their typical tasks and chief professional responsibilities?

   b. What do superintendents perceive to be their occupation's requisite skills, knowledge, and attributes?

   c. How do superintendents judge their professional performance?
d. What particular activities provide superintendents with feelings of satisfaction?

e. How do superintendents characterize their relationships with:

1) students
2) teachers
3) other administrators
4) board members
5) other community members

3. To what extent are superintendents' characterizations of their work congruent with their characterizations of the processes and structures that develop and perpetuate the profession?

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions, then, were adopted:

Ethos: An occupationally standardized set of emotions which gives meaning to things based upon past social interaction; a meaning which serves as the basis for occupation member's actions.

Orientations: Characteristic outlooks shared by school superintendents which result from processes that develop and perpetuate the structure of the profession.

Sentiments: An enduring pattern of emotional dispositions held by an individual in relation to another person, an object, or an idea.\(^{27}\)

Meanings: An interpretation of the significance of a situation, act, idea, or object with reference to how one should respond.\(^{28}\)

\(^{27}\) This definition was taken from George A. Theodorson and Achilles Theodorson, Modern Dictionary of Sociology (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), p. 376.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 250.
Assumptions

To conduct this study, it was necessary to make the following assumptions:

1. The sample of superintendents who served as interview subjects is representative of the total population of school superintendents, although the sampling procedure utilized does not lend itself to statistical verification.

2. The interviewees' responses reflect their actual perceptions and attitudes.

3. The ethos of an occupation can be inferred from the patterns which emerge in occupation members' characterizations of their work.

4. The questions to which interview subjects responded did focus upon important aspects of the work and occupation of school superintendents.

Significance of the Problem

Cuban (1976) has observed in Urban School Chiefs Under Fire, that:

There is precious little agreement on where the superintendency has come from, where it is moving or even what its present nature is ... \(^{29}\)

A search of the existing literature on the superintendency generally corroborates this observation. While numerous articles, chapters in books, and whole volumes have been written about superintendents, few empirical descriptions have the superintendents, themselves, as their primary focus. Thus, on a basic level, this study is significant in

its contribution to what is known about the American school superintendent.

Beyond this, the description of the ethos of the school superintendency resulted in findings of both practical and theoretical significance.

The findings should be useful in assessing and redesigning school administrator programs. Findings that reflect school superintendents' identification of helpful training experiences, necessary occupational competencies, impediments to professional success, and important professional responsibilities suggest the need for the improvement of current training programs.

Additionally, improved understanding of elements of the superintendents' ethos could affect the operation of school systems in particular ways. The discovery of tendencies among superintendents to emphasize certain aspects of their work could be exploited by groups or individuals interested in impacting upon the policies or operations of school systems.

To the individual aspiring to a school superintendency, the findings provide clues to strategies which one could employ to enhance the probability of becoming a school superintendent.

Thus, the proposed study has significance for a number of practical applications at individual, organizational, and institutional levels.

Beyond such practical significance, this work also contributes to the theoretical analysis and explanation of leadership behavior and the structure of and behavior in complex organizations. In recent years, students of complex organizations have identified the need to compile
rich descriptive accounts of organizational life. They have argued that such data are necessary for theorists to develop insights which will move them beyond the limitations of existing theoretical conceptualizations. The description of an important element of educational organizations, the school superintendency, contributes to an improved understanding of organizational structure and behavior.

To summarize, this description of the ethos of the school superintendent produced findings of both practical and theoretical significance. The findings should be useful to those who train school administrators, to school districts' constituent groups, educational policymakers, and individuals whose professional aspirations include the school superintendency. It has also contributed to the descriptive body of data concerning complex organizations by providing a description of one element of educational organizations which suggests the nature of the relationships that link it to other organizational elements.

A caveat regarding the relationship between the findings and their apparent application to actual situations must be raised. As a descriptive investigation, this study was not intended to test hypotheses. Thus, whatever practical applications are derived from the findings should be viewed as suggestive rather than prescriptive.

Plan of the Study

The findings which resulted from this investigation are presented in the following manner.

In Chapter Two, a Review of Related Literature is reported. Particular emphasis is given to works which provide insights to the structure and meanings of the occupation of school superintendent.

In Chapter Three, the Design of the Study is presented. The procedures employed to identify the sample of respondents, collect, and analyze data are described.

The findings of the study are presented in three chapters. In Chapter Four, findings which resulted from the analysis of interview and survey data regarding recruitment, socialization, and reward structures are presented. The general occupational orientations which stem from these occupational structures are described in the concluding section of this chapter.

In Chapter Five, findings which resulted from the analysis of superintendents' descriptions of their work are presented. The nature of the meanings and sentiments which occupational members attach to their work is presented in the concluding section of this chapter.

In Chapter Six, the occupational ethos of school superintendents is described. First, the basic elements of the ethos are identified. Then, an initial attempt to describe the relationships which exist between these elements is reported. Additionally, the findings of the study are placed within the framework of existing social scientific theory and compared to findings of previous research.
In Chapter Seven, summary, recommendations for future research and conclusions are presented.
CHAPTER II

THE LITERATURE ON THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Numerous books, journal articles, and monographs have been written about various dimensions of the school superintendency. In this chapter the results of a review of that body of literature are reported. The review was undertaken specifically to identify research findings that provide insights to a description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents.

Aside from a handful of biographies that trace the lives of pioneers in the occupation, research on the superintendency has, for the most part, either been concerned with the simple compilation of superficial and largely unconnected modal characteristics, or has only tangentially focused on describing school superintendents.

While no existing studies were found to address the description of the superintendents' ethos, the findings of several studies provide fragmentary insights. These studies varied in terms of their research foci, and research techniques.

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1 See for example, Frank E. Spaulding, School Superintendent in Action (Rindge, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Publisher, Inc., 1955).
In order to fashion a reasonably coherent synthesis from the disparate data and insights gleaned from these studies, this review of the literature is organized around three basic themes: the processes that develop and sustain the occupation of the school superintendency (i.e. recruitment, socialization, and rewards), superintendents' description of their work, and the sentiments and meanings superintendents attach to their work.

These themes reflect the definition of the ethos adopted for this study, as well as the approach which was employed to describe the occupation of school superintendents.

Processes that Develop and Sustain the Profession

The first clear pattern that emerged in the literature regarding the processes that develop and sustain the ranks of school administrators generally, and thus of school superintendents, is that they are secondary processes. That is, the pool of individuals from which superintendents are recruited is itself an occupational group (i.e. classroom teachers) that has already undergone occupational recruitment and socialization and receives occupational rewards.2

This suggests that an understanding of the classroom teachers' ethos is an important element in developing an understanding of the school superintendents' ethos. Daniel Lortie provided an insightful description of the classroom teachers' ethos in, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*.

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To summarize briefly, Lortie discovered that the recruitment of individuals into teaching was neither a highly selective process nor was it "calculated to produce great homogeneity with teaching ranks." He concluded, however, that the recruitment process favored particular types of entrants. The occupation seems more attractive to women and to those whose "bias is toward the perpetuation of the occupational status quo." With regard to the socialization of teachers, Lortie found that it "places the occupation between those marked by casual entry and those in which protracted and difficult demands are made on would-be members." He suggested that such socialization, "leaves room for the emergence and reinforcement of idiosyncratic experience and personal synthesis." Teachers learn principally from on-the-job experience. Lortie concluded that this type of socialization negatively affected the status of schoolteachers, imposed "subjective costs" on occupation members and reinforced conservatism.

Finally, Lortie described the reward structure of the teaching occupation as "front-loaded" and as emphasizing "psychic" rewards. Based upon his analysis of these patterns of occupational recruitment, socialization, and rewards, Lortie discovered three "recurrent themes" which he took to be the "characteristic outlooks" among teachers. They were conservatism, individualism, and presentism.

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4 Idem
5 Ibid., p. 79.
6 Idem
7 Ibid., p. 80.
8 Ibid., pp. 84 and 101.
9 Ibid., p. 106.
There are two very important questions that the present study must address; 1) What are the characteristics of the processes and structures by which superintendents are recruited from the ranks of classroom teachers, socialized and then rewarded in their new position, and 2) What general orientations or characteristic outlooks do superintendents derive from these processes?

The literature does not answer these questions, but provides sketchy and varied insights.

With regard to recruitment, Carlson concluded in his 1972 investigation of School Superintendents: Careers and Performance that little is known about the process by which individuals move "up the ladder from teacher to superintendent." What is known is sketchy and only begins to scratch the surface of the recruitment process.

Numerous studies did indicate the obvious, that the most common career line to the superintendency was teacher - school principal - superintendent, the three major professional positions found in American public school systems.

Griffiths' The School Superintendent focused upon the recruitment of students into graduate schools of education as an indicator of the process by which superintendents were recruited. He concluded that such recruitment was practically "non-existent".

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10 Carlson, op. cit., p. 9.
11 Ibid., p. 8; Griffiths, loc. cit.
Practically all of the universities choose from among those who "knock on the door." Almost all superintendents are "self-recruited."  

He also found that teaching experience, certification to teach, or a bachelor's degree were the only requirements for admission into many programs of graduate study in educational administration.

However, when universities did become more selective they based admission decisions on the conventional criteria of test scores, interviews, recommendations, and undergraduate grade averages, with grade requirements ranging from "C" to "B+".  

In a slightly more recent work, Carlson similarly concluded that, "The barriers for entry into the occupation are few." However, in his search for "career contingencies" he found that what few barriers existed homogenized the ranks of superintendents along various social characteristics. He indicated that superintendents tended to be male caucasians in their forties who attended protestant churches, came from small town lower-middle to middle-class families, were politically conservative, married, and were only moderately successful as students. Many of these same characteristics emerged in other descriptions of superintendents. For example, Griffiths found that superintendents' median age was fifty-one years, that they came from small communities, tended to be the first born in their families and taught high school social studies, science, or mathematics. Frederick Bair noted in 1932 that superintendents were the oldest child in large families,

13 Idem
14 Ibid., p. 50
15 Ibid., p. 50
16 Carlson, op. cit., p. 35.
17 Ibid., pp. 11-35
reared in small towns or on farms, and came from deeply religious backgrounds. 18

These findings that superintendents by-and-large share a number of social attributes suggest that some systematic form of screening or recruiting is at work. However, they do not indicate either the nature of these recruitment processes or of the "characteristic outlooks" that superintendents develop as a result of undergoing them.

In tracing the social history of the school superintendency, David Tyack posited an explanation for the predominance of these attributes and thereby provided some clue to superintendents' "characteristic outlooks" or orientations. He observed that the ambiguity and diffuseness of goals that characterize schools contributed to the difficulty with which the performance of professional educators can be objectively measured. This, he concluded, reinforced the use of subjective criteria to select school administrators. 19 Tyack further observed that the personal attributes that characterized superintendents were also characteristic of the board members that hired them and of the community leaders with whom superintendents interacted. 20

Lortie indicated in his investigation of the school teachers' ethos that an important part of any recruitment scheme was the system of enticements an occupation can offer prospective members. 21 Here again, the literature provides little indication of what it is that attracts people

19 Tyack, op. cit., p. 264.
20 Ibid., p. 265.
21 Lortie, op. cit., p. 27.
to the superintendency. Robert E. Wilson described what he considered to be five advantages of the superintendency in his 1960 publication, *The Modern School Superintendent*:

The principal advantages are those which are apparent to any onlooker: higher income, prestige, greater opportunities for leadership, freedom of movement and decision, and the privilege of practicing the management function. The intangible satisfactions which a superintendent might gain from rendering service to mankind are no more than those derived from other levels of educational endeavor.22

While this statement is helpful in gaining some insight to the attractions of the superintendency, it only represents the "position" of one individual.

A review of the literature substantiated Carlson's point that little is known about the recruitment of superintendents. We know that most superintendents follow the career line of teacher–principal–superintendent. Studies, however, indicate that there is a tendency for superintendents to have worked in secondary education and not primary or elementary. At least two authors conclude that the selection process is an open one. Yet, several surveys indicate that superintendents tend to share a number of social characteristics and attributes, a finding which suggests that some screening or recruitment process is at work. What that process is and what general orientations superintendents develop as a result of it are not described in the literature.

In addition to recruitment, at least two occupational processes and

structures can shape the general orientations of occupation members. They are the socialization process new members undergo and the occupation's reward structure. Again, the literature on the superintendency provides only scattered and rather shallow understandings of both.

Most of the studies that address the socialization of school superintendents focus upon formal college training.

Bair, in his 1934 study of the *Social Understandings of Superintendents of Schools*, traced the educational backgrounds of superintendents in his sample. His findings indicated that, "characteristically, the Superintendent of Schools may be said to possess a baccalaureate degree." They also showed that 58% possessed Masters' degrees, while only 4% held Doctorates. Bair further discovered that:

> An analysis of the character of graduate work, however, shows almost a complete absorption in what may be called the mechanical business and statistical aspects of school administration.

A comparison of findings of a survey conducted by the American Association of School Administrators in 1958-59 to findings of similar studies conducted in 1950-51 and 1933 indicate that the amount of formal training received by school superintendents has increased since Bair's 1934 findings. A Master's degree was the highest degree held by 56.7 percent of superintendents surveyed in 1933 compared to 78.7 in 1950-51 and 56.3 percent in 1958. A Doctorate was the highest degree held by less than 3 percent of superintendents surveyed in 1933 compared to 14 percent in 1950 and over

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Bair, op. cit., p. 92.
Idem
Idem
Using data from the same 1958-59 AASA survey, Griffiths determined that the typical educational administration graduate program:

Consists of course work in the organization and administration of education, the curriculum, supervision, finance, history, and philosophy of education, school law, research, educational psychology, human growth and development, the school plant, and personnel. These are the conventional courses for preparing school administrators and, with the exception of personnel, have been taught for the past thirty to forty years. Modern administrative thought stresses such course titles as human relations or administration theory, yet, one finds them absent from the top ten areas of study offered in graduate school.\(^{28}\)

A search through the literature turned up only very gross descriptions of the training which school superintendents receive. Studies have focused on the number of years of training, terminal degrees earned, and general listings of course offerings. Little or no attention has been paid to either the importance that superintendents place on training or the orientations superintendents could be expected to have for their job as a result of such training.

Of course, formal university training programs are only one type of socializing process which any professional is exposed to. The experiences one has in climbing the career ladder can also have a powerful socializing effect.\(^{29}\)

As indicated in the earlier discussion of the recruitment of superintendents, several studies, including those reported by Carlson and Griffiths, indicated that the most common career path to the superintendency included

\(^{28}\)Griffiths, op. cit., pp. 52-53.
\(^{29}\)Tyack, op. cit., p. 268.
teaching and the secondary principalship. However, no studies were found which attempted to analyze the effects such experiences have on the occupational orientations of superintendents. David Tyack and Robert Cuming's historical account of the development of the superintendency provides an insight to this relationship. They suggested that the lifetime involvement of professional educators within one institutional context, the school, might contribute to the general conservatism which characterized the operation of school systems.

James C. March and James G. March considered the recruitment and socialization of superintendents in presenting a novel interpretation of superintendent career patterns in an investigation of the "match between individual educational administrators and local school districts in Wisconsin from 1940 through 1972...".

March and March observed:

The extent to which the observed structure of careers and chronologies in one set of chief executive jobs can be approximated by assuming that the pairings are random combinations of indistinguishable individuals and indistinguishable organizations.

In light of the common belief that differences in the behavior or performance of individual administrators account for differences in career

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32 March and March define career as a "sequential list of organizations managed by the individual," and chronology as "a sequential list of individuals who have managed the organization," March and March, p. 377.
33 Ibid. p. 381.
outcomes, the March and March findings are rather startling. They concluded that as a result of the filters which screen entrants to the superintendency, the ambiguity of educational settings, the stability of educational organizations and activities, and a lifetime spent in educational settings, superintendents are largely indistinguishable "in their behaviors, performances, abilities, and values." They further inferred from their findings that:

If executives are indistinguishable but jobs are not, success will be random but movement will not be; and reputations of individuals will depend more on the job they hold than will the reputations of jobs depend on the individuals holding them.

While these conclusions do not contribute to an explication of the superintendents' ethos, they do suggest that superintendents may share common work orientations and sentiments, a condition suggestive of an ethos.

The third occupational structure, which was analyzed in the present study to describe the ethos of school superintendents, was the occupation's reward system. Rewards serve to initially attract individuals to a line of work, and contribute to retaining members in the occupation. What, then, does the literature tell us about the rewards of the superintendency?

Again, as with recruitment and socialization, the literature provides little in the way of insights or data regarding what superintendents perceive to be rewarding about their job. Robert E. Wilson in The Modern School Superintendent, described what he saw as the "advantages of the superintendency." He named five such advantages: salary, prestige, freedom of movement and decision, opportunities for leadership and the management function.

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34 Ibid., p. 405
35 Ibid., p. 406
36 Wilson, loc. cit.
About salary:

The superintendency constitutes the most lucrative device by which a person engaged in education can barter his talents. 37

On prestige:

As head of the school system, which likewise claims general approval by citizens, he represents education's summit within a normal community. 38

About the advantage of freedom and movement:

The position also offers the opportunity for making one's own decisions with odds favorable for getting them accepted. Moreover, he enjoys the most gratifying thrill of freedom - the right to rise or fall on his own decisions. 39

On the management function:

Planning, economics, law, engineering, logistics, as well as education, are included in the responsibility, but above all, the management function involves corralling all the knowledges into an orderly process of getting a job done by people. 40

About opportunities for leadership:

The leadership potential for a superintendent of schools is obvious and limitless. Not only is there the opportunity to demonstrate leadership powers in building an outstanding educational program, but the superintendent may play an equally important role in guiding ... nearly any activity that society considers desirable. 41

While these descriptions are certainly impressive, they must be

37 Idem
38 Ibid., p. 16
39 Ibid., p. 18.
40 Ibid., p. 19.
41 Ibid., p. 18.
viewed with some skepticism. For they reflect only Professor Wilson's opinions and as he candidly pointed out in prefacing them:

> The cleanest linen will be spread before the prospective superintendent in order to demonstrate the merits of considering the superintendency as an occupation. ⁴²

However, this was the only description of occupational rewards uncovered by the literature search. Furthermore, of the rewards listed by Wilson, other studies only dealt with one: salary, to even a limited extent. The AASA surveys conducted in 1933, 1950-51, and 1958-59 gathered data on superintendents' salaries but did not attempt to analyze them in terms of the occupations' reward structure.

Gross, Mason, and McEachern reported data in Explorations in Role Analysis: Studies of The School Superintendency Role, which indicated that while a vast majority of the superintendents in their sample were either "fairly well satisfied" or "very well satisfied" with their salaries, a strong majority also had "some desire," "would very much like to," or were "extremely anxious to" obtain a higher salary. ⁴³

As with recruitment and socialization of superintendents, the literature does not deal with superintendents' perceptions of their occupation's rewards or with the general, occupational orientations which result from the reward structure. Only a platitudinous description of "advantages" and survey data regarding salary levels for superintendents were uncovered.

To summarize, a search of the literature uncovered little in the way of data based descriptions of the processes and structure which develop

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and sustain the occupation of school superintendent. For the most part, the data reflect a tendency on the part of researchers to describe superintendents in terms of easily identified and/or quantified characteristics and attributes. We know how old they are, how much they earn, where they were born and what jobs they have held; but we know little about how they are recruited, socialized, and rewarded and know less about how they think about their work.

The Work of Superintendents

A second approach taken in the present investigation to describe the ethos of school superintendents was to study the ways that superintendents describe what they do; how they mentally structure or make sense of their work.

Although no existing studies were uncovered that focus specifically on superintendents' descriptions of their work, several studies do appear in the literature which describe the work of superintendents from varying perspectives and which focus on different dimensions of superintending. These studies are of three basic types. The first to be reviewed here includes studies that focus upon the superintendent's interaction with other elements in the school system. The second are the studies, or at least writings, that outline the general "functions" of the superintendency. The last set of studies describe the day-to-day activities in which superintendents are involved.

A substantial body of literature treats schools and school districts as social systems and focuses upon the relationships which exist between superintendents and other elements of the system. An example of a study with this focus was reported by DeGood in 1959. He investigated the
relationship which exists between the accuracy of superintendents' perceptions of "community viewpoints" on education and their administrative effectiveness. One finding of DeGood's study which has some relevance to the description of the superintendents' ethos was that "administrators vary in viewpoint." He found that the eight administrators surveyed agreed unanimously only on seven of the thirty-six items, while opinions were "evenly divided" on nine items. However, DeGood never indicated what the seven were other than to indicate that they reflect "educational viewpoints," nor did he analyze the superintendents' responses for patterns which might suggest general orientations among the subjects. However, this does not so much indicate an oversight on DeGood's part, as it does that he was not focusing primarily on the views or work of the superintendent.

Similarly, Hencley reported in 1960 on a study directed toward the development of a typology of "administrator-reference group conflict." The typology is based upon three variables: superintendents' self-expectations, superintendents' perceptions of others' expectations for the superintendent, and others' actual expectations for the superintendent. While Hencley did produce a typology of five conflict types, he never reported his findings on superintendents' self expectations. Thus, this study, like the study reported by DeGood, did not provide any insight to the ways that superintendents characterize their work.


Among the studies which focus upon superintendents' relationships with other organizational elements, the relationship which has easily gained the most attention is that which exists between superintendents and their boards of education. Interest in this particular relationship apparently stems from two concerns. First, by law, school boards are responsible for developing district policies, which superintendents are to function as chief executive officers in implementing these policies. The superintendent is an employee of the board. Secondly, since school boards first began appointing individuals as superintendents to manage schools in America's burgeoning cities, there has been a continuous and vacillating struggle over who should control the governance of school districts.47

An example of an investigation of this crucial relationship is the study conducted by Gross, Mason and McEachern and reported in 1966 in Explorations in Role Analysis: Studies of the School Superintendency Role.48 The authors elicited from a sample of superintendents and Board of Education members their expectations regarding superintendent and board responsibilities (division of labor), superintendent attributes, and superintendent performance. Ultimately, Gross, et al. focused upon the effects of varying

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47 Laurence Iannacone describes what he perceives to be the second revolution in the politics of education to occur in the last century. The first occurred near the turn-of-the-century when liberal reformers wrested urban school systems from the control of political machines and instituted the corporate model with its small boards of "upstanding citizens" and increased influence of professional administrators. The second, he argues, will grow out of teachers' organizations' push for increased influence in policy matters and the call for greater "community-based influence." See Laurence Iannacone, "Three Views of Change in Educational Politics," in Jay D. Scribner (ed.), The Politics of Education (The National Society for the Study of Education - 76th Yearbook, 1977), pp. 255-286.

48 Gross, et al.
degrees of role consensus on the organization and the role incumbent. In the course of conducting the study, the authors collected data reflecting superintendent's expectations for performance, personal attributes, participation in community affairs, friendship, as well as superintendents' aspirations, and job and career satisfaction levels. However, as the focus of the investigation was on the effects of role consensus and conflict on the behavior of role incumbents, no analysis of superintendents responses for patterns that suggested general orientations or sentiments was reported.

In another study of superintendent-school board relations, Abbott described the relationship between board members' perceptions of their superintendents' values and their levels of confidence in the superintendent as a leader. He reported findings that indicated the existence of a positive relationship between the similarity of board member and superintendent values, and the level of confidence board members express in their superintendents' leadership abilities. Abbott also indicated that board members were more willing to accept information from their superintendents or to permit them to implement board established policy without prior board approval, than they were to accept recommendations from superintendents. Abbott did collect superintendents' responses to the Differential Values Inventory. These data were analyzed to determine the level of congruity which existed between superintendents and their boards of education to establish the accuracy with which board members perceived the superintendents' value orientations. Again, the focus of the analysis was a relationship involving school superintendents rather than the superintendents, themselves.

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50 Abbott, p. 2.
In an investigation of communication and decision-making in public school systems, Zeigler, Tucker, and Wilson documented the role of superintendents as dominant actors in school governance.\(^{51}\) They reported that superintendents had a strong influence on the policy-setting and decision-making processes as a result of their agenda-setting function\(^{52}\) and their control over the flow of information.\(^{53}\) By monitoring public meetings of boards of education in three school districts, the authors found that boards were dependent upon their superintendents and other staff members for data, alternatives and policy recommendations. These conclusions certainly provide important insights to the world in which school superintendents must work but do not speak directly to the manner in which they characterize that work.

Andrew Halpin reported the findings of a study on superintendents', school staff members' and board members' expectations for and perceptions of superintendent leadership behavior in The Leadership Behavior of School Superintendents.\(^{54}\) Halpin measured the expected and perceived superintendent behaviors along two dimensions: "Initiating Structure" and "Consideration." Among the study's findings were that: each of the three reference groups held different expectations for superintendent leadership behavior and actually perceived behavior differently, and the perceived leadership


\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 241.

\(^{53}\)Ibid., p. 249.

\(^{54}\)Andrew Halpin, Leadership Behavior of School Superintendents (Columbus, Ohio: College of Education, The Ohio State University, 1956).
behavior of superintendents differed from ideal behaviors as described by all three groups. Because the study's focus was upon comparisons of, between, and within group perceptions and expectations, Halpin did not emphasize superintendents' perceptions of their leadership behavior except to state that "superintendents themselves perceive a significant difference between their actual behavior and ideal behavior." Thus, the findings are only minimally useful for describing the ways that superintendents describe their work. Thus, studies reported in the literature which focus upon relationships which exist between superintendents and other elements of the school system do provide some insights to the work of superintendents and to their occupational orientations. However, these come only as by-products of the investigators' efforts to determine the nature of such relationships, or to identify the impact that superintendents' attributes and attitudes have on these relationships.

Another sizeable portion of the literature on the superintendency is devoted to identifying and describing the functions of the office. Writings with this focus might be expected to provide some indication of the ways that superintendents characterize their work.

In 1923 and 1933, the National Association of Education surveyed national samples of school superintendents. In both surveys, the respondents were asked to name and/or rank a series of "functions" which were divided into three major groups: "initiatory functions," "functions to execute" and "rights of approval." The Association's findings are presented

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55 Halpin, pp. 77-78.
56 Ibid., p. 70.
In addition to such survey findings, several authors have listed the roles or functions of the superintendency. Robert E. Wilson noted in 1960:

Professional studies of the administrator's duties are also misleading in their oversimplification of the administrative process. Through an apparent attempt to condense the kaleidoscopic activities of the superintendent into a handy package for classification purposes, their conclusions are scholarly but highly generalized.\(^{59}\)

Wilson then proceeded to list a "superintendent's scope of duties" which encompassed seventeen areas to illustrate the complexity of the superintendent's function. He included such duties as: personnel, instruction, buildings, financial, board of education, extra-curricular, community relations, health and safety, and transportation.\(^{60}\)

The Educational Policies Commission provided a similar list of tasks which it claimed the fulfillment of the superintendent's role demanded. In its report, the Commission listed such things as: "the instructional program of the schools," "the management aspects of administration," budget, "the solution of day-to-day problems," "the public's view," and "the morale of the staff as task areas that superintendents must consider.\(^{61}\)

In The School Superintendent, Griffiths identified the major functions of the superintendency. He concluded that "superintendent's job can be divided into four parts:" "... improving educational opportunity"

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\(^{58}\) The Eleventh Yearbook, Department of Superintendence, 1933, pp. 122-123.
\(^{59}\) Wilson, op. cit., p. 23.
\(^{60}\) Ibid., pp. 25-26.
### TABLE 1<sup>a</sup>

#### FUNCTIONS OF SUPERINTENDENTS

The Twelve Initiatory Functions Which Superintendents Ranked First in 1923, and the Ranks of These Same Functions in 1933.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Rank in 1923</th>
<th>Rank in 1933</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of principals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of new policies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissal of associates</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of subjects in curriculums</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of instructional supplies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of textbooks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of associates</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of budget</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of the content of subjects</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of non-educational supplies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of classroom instruction</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Twelve Functions to Execute Which Superintendents Ranked First in 1923, and the Ranks of These Same Functions in 1933.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Rank in 1923</th>
<th>Rank in 1933</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of instruction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of content of subjects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of subjects of curriculums</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of instructional supplies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of associates</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making routine rules</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of textbooks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement of attendance laws</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of non-educational supplies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of principals</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction of medical inspection</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ten Rights of Approval Mentioned Most Frequently by Superintendents in 1923, and the Ranks of These Same Items in 1933.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Rank in 1923</th>
<th>Rank in 1933</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase and sale of buildings and grounds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of plans</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of janitors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of buildings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of budget</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking census</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance-repairs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of attendance officers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction of medical inspection</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent of buildings and grounds</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>The Eleventh Yearbook, Department of Superintendence, 1933, pp. 122-23.
"... obtaining and developing personnel" "... maintaining effective relations with the community" "... providing and maintaining funds and facilities."^62

Such general descriptions of the superintendent's functions do not provide an adequate view of the ways that superintendents characterize their work. First, they do not necessarily reflect the view of superintendents themselves, but seem to represent the views of the specific author. This latter characteristic of the descriptions reviewed here raises serious questions regarding whether or not they are, in fact, descriptive or merely reflect the author's normative beliefs concerning administrative behavior. Nevertheless, certain themes recur throughout the various accountings of the functions of the superintendency. Concerns for instruction, personnel management, maintenance of school-community relations, maintenance of funds and facilities, and general operations are found throughout the literature. Perhaps, these are roughly suggestive of aspects of the ethos of superintendents.

More clearly descriptive accounts of superintendents' work are available in the reporting of two types of research: a case-study which focused on the behavior of superintendents in a specific settings and studies in which the day-to-day activities of superintendents were observed.

In Urban School Chiefs Under Fire, Larry Cuban analyzed the responses of three big-city superintendents — Benjamin Willis of Chicago, Carl Hansen of Washington, D.C., and Harold Spears of San Francisco — to external pressures.^63 Cuban concluded that these three men responded to crises in

similar ways. Upon a comparative analysis of events in the three districts, he posited four plausible explanations for this phenomenon. Model one suggested that the set of external forces (e.g. demographic shifts in the population, Supreme Court decisions, the growing self-awareness of underprivileged ethnic groups) that existed in each school district narrowed the possible actions that public officials could take. Model Two emphasized a political bargaining perspective, and suggested that perhaps:

... three superintendents, caught up in situations in which boards of education, taxpayers, and community continually made conflicting demands upon them, developed coalitions with those elements in each group that valued the chief resources they possessed: organizational authority and professional expertise. When outside pressure built up, these coalitions of support enabled school bosses to respond the way they did without getting bounced.

Model three emphasized the common bureaucratic structures and responses shared by the three large, urban school systems. As Cuban suggested:

Since there was a lack of control over the organization, decisions were more or less automatic, with the school chiefs usually following the traditional ways of reacting to outside pressure. In effect, the three superintendents' responses to demands were system solutions ...

The final model posited by Cuban focused upon the individual men who were serving as superintendents in the three school systems. To explain how three different people could respond in such similar ways, Cuban pointed to "factors that reduced the leaders' range of responses." He cited professional socialization and role expectations as possible examples of such factors. This last model has particular relevance to this investi-

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64 Ibid., p. 107.
65 Ibid., p. 108.
66 Idem
67 Ibid., p. 109.
gation of the superintendents' ethos. For, it reinforces the notion that incumbents of the superintendency share basic professional orientations and sentiments which are manifested in a common repertoire of behavioral responses.

Another view of superintendents' work is provided by studies based upon data collected by directly observing the day-to-day activities of superintendents.

The Midwest Administration Center conducted an investigation in 1958-59 that centered upon an application of Hemphill's concepts of "initiating structure" and "consideration" to the analysis of data collected by observing the behavior of five suburban school superintendents. Campbell and Cunningham reported that three-fourths of the superintendents' interactions recorded could not be clearly classified into the initiating-consideration structure scheme. The authors were quick to point out that their findings:

... should by no means be construed as a disparagement of the LBDQ dimensions, however, as they have proved to be of great heuristic value for insightful and fruitful research.

Campbell, et al. also sought to determine with whom superintendents interacted and for what purposes. They reported that the superintendents

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68 According to Andrew Halpin: "Initiating structure refers to the leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and members of the work group, and in endeavoring to establish well defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure. Consideration refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in the relationship between the leader and members of his staff. Andrew Halpin, The Leadership Behavior of School Superintendents, p. 4.

69 Roald F. Campbell and Luvern L. Cunningham, Observation of Administrator Behavior (Chicago: Midwest Administration Center - University of Chicago, 1959).

70 Campbell, op. cit., p. 48.

71 Idem.
they observed interacted with four major groups: community groups, professional groups, school boards, and members of the districts' staff. An analysis of 711 observed interactions showed that:

15 percent of them were with community groups, 3 percent with professional groups, 12 percent with the school board and 70 percent with the school organization.  

Henry Mintzberg studied the behavior of "managers" as a general type in *The Nature of Managerial Work*. One of his subjects for observation was the superintendent of a suburban school district. Like the study conducted by Campbell, et al., Mintzberg analyzed his subject's interactions and reported that 65 percent of his contacts were with subordinates, 11 percent with the school board, 3 percent with professional peers, 6 percent with clients, 10 percent with associates, and 4 percent with others. He also broke the interactions down according to medium for interaction (e.g. telephone calls, face to face meetings, etc.) and the number of individuals involved. Mintzberg's findings suggested that the superintendent's day was largely taken up by brief, informal contacts with one or two individuals within the confines of his own office. In comparing the behavior of the superintendent to that of managers of other types of organizations, Mintzberg further concluded that the superintendent's contacts were marked by a greater formality. He argued that this was a result of public organizations having to:

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72 Ibid., p. 103.
74 Ibid., p. 150.
75 Idem
Adopt formalized patterns of behavior because of the complex system of forces in which they find themselves.\textsuperscript{76}

Nancy J. Pitner applied the analytical approaches developed by Mintzberg for his study of manager behaviors to the study of three suburban school superintendents.\textsuperscript{77} Pitner concluded that:

The superintendent is someone who acts as an information manager within the social system of which his school is a part. By information manager, it is suggested that the superintendent controls the acquisition, retention, and dissemination of information. Information is taken to include facts, laws, rules, and concepts.\textsuperscript{78}

Expanding on this notion, Pitner suggested that superintendents employ several "devices" as managers of information:

The superintendent, then, is someone who in the performance of his role, interprets organizational history, interprets contemporary events, manages the meaning of crucial terms or concepts, and manages organizational myths.\textsuperscript{79}

These studies that focus on the observed behavior of superintendents provide, perhaps, the most powerful glimpses into the occupation's ethos available in the literature. They suggest that superintendents, while varying along a number of personal and organizational dimensions, do manifest common patterns in their day-to-day activities. For instance, superintendents appear to be fundamentally interactive. That is, they interact with people, both within the school system and in the system's environment to collect and to disseminate information. These behavioral patterns suggest that the notion of a superintendent's ethos, an undergirding belief

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., p. 263.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., p. 123.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., pp. 123-124.
system common to occupation members, may indeed have social scientific utility. However, these behaviorally-oriented investigations do not indicate that any attempts were made to have superintendents, themselves, verbally characterize their work.

**Sentiments Toward Work**

The third element in this study's approach to the description of the superintendents' ethos involves the identification of patterns in the meanings and sentiments that superintendents attach to their work. How do superintendents feel about the work they do?

Again, the search of the literature turned up little that was particularly instructive. Few researchers have asked superintendents how they feel about their work. The only studies that have even touched upon the affect of superintending, concentrated either on satisfaction levels or problem identification.

Gross, Mason, and McEachern collected data on the aspiration and satisfaction levels of 105 Massachusetts school superintendents in the course of a study of role expectations.\(^80\) Data from the study indicated that superintendents were generally satisfied with both their careers and their particular jobs. Specifically, a large majority of respondents indicated that they were either "very well satisfied" or "fairly well satisfied" to all twelve items on the job satisfaction instrument.\(^81\) These items dealt with such issues as: authority delegated by the school committee, progress toward personal goals, recognition from the community, salary, 

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\(^81\) Ibid., p. 353.
a majority of respondents indicated a generally high level of satisfaction on all twelve items of the career satisfaction instrument. Similarly, responses to the level of aspiration instrument provided insights to superintendents' attitudes toward their work. Respondents indicated that they were not inclined to obtaining a more prestigious superintendency, and they were split evenly on obtaining a superintendency that offered a higher salary. However, a distinct majority indicated that they "would like very much" to receive a higher salary in their present position. Superintendents were ambivalent about taking "a more important role in the activities of professional organizations," but showed a marked desire to "establish a good reputation" among professional colleagues. Finally, a large majority of respondents indicated that they either "have some desire" or "would very much like to" receive more recognition from the community.

Another way to get a feel for the affective terrain of an occupation is to get a sense for what its members view as problems. A study conducted by Goldhammer, Suttle, Aldridge, and Becker indicated that educational change, teacher militancy, administrative leadership, critical social issues, instruction, and finance were identified by superintendents as the most difficult issues they faced. Superintendents identified the acquisition...
of adequate information for making decisions in all phases of school administration as a critical problem.\textsuperscript{88} On a more general note, the superintendents in Goldhammer's sample did not see themselves as directors of their systems, but as the individual whose function it was to mediate between groups and to link the schools to the community.\textsuperscript{89}

Goldhammer, et al. also reported that the acceptance of federal monies by school districts often sent superintendents into "a near schizoid condition." Faced on the one hand with strong community sentiments against "federal subventions" and the feared loss of local control that such aid would bring and the necessity of accepting federal aid to implement congressionally mandated programs on the other, some superintendents felt obligated to publicly criticize federal guidelines which they privately admitted would provide "definite educational benefits."\textsuperscript{90}

From the findings of these two studies, it seems that superintendents are generally satisfied with their present jobs and with their careers although they can readily identify problem areas. Superintendents appear to be rather ambivalent about salary as an occupational reward. For, while they would like to earn more money, they would not be willing to change jobs to get it.

Both the Gross, et al. and Goldhammer, et al. studies indicated that superintendents are sensitive to pressures from the environment, particularly to community sentiments. Superintendents also showed an awareness of the importance of the management of information. Perhaps related to the previous point, is the finding that superintendents tend not to perceive of

\textsuperscript{88}Goldhammer, et al., Issues and Problems in Contemporary Educational Administration, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{89}Ibid., p. 135.
\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., p. 142.
themselves as captains guiding their ships from the helm, but as facilitators and mediators between frequently conflicting forces, some of which are external to and often beyond the control of the school system.

Summary

A search of the literature on the school superintendency revealed that little attention has been given to what superintendents have to say about their occupation or their work. Certainly no comprehensive, integrated study has been undertaken to describe the superintendents' ethos.

The literature does provide widely scattered and disparate glimpses into the three aspects of the superintendency which served as the foci for analysis in the present study's description of the occupation's ethos: the processes and structures that develop and sustain the occupation, superintendents' descriptions of their work, and the sentiments and meanings superintendents attach to that work.

As Carlson notes, knowledge surrounding the processes by which an individual moves from classroom teacher to the superintendency is limited. What have been described are the most obvious characteristics of those processes. For example, numerous studies indicate that the typical career ladder to the superintendency includes just two other rungs, teacher and school principal. Perhaps more important is the fact that most superintendents have spent a good part of their lives within the same institutional setting, first as students and then as professionals. Griffiths and Carlson agree that "entry into the occupation" is fairly open. And, yet, findings of surveys conducted by the N.E.A. and A.A.S.A., that superintenents share a number of personal and social attributes, suggest that selection of one sort or another is occurring.
As little as is known about the recruitment and socialization of superintendents, even less is known about the general occupational orientations that result when individuals undergo these processes. Tyack suggests in his tracing of the American school superintendency's history that the lifelong involvement in the school setting might contribute to the general conservatism of the operation of schools.

Similarly, no studies were found to focus upon superintendents' descriptions of their work. Investigations of superintendents' relationships with other elements of the school community explore the dimensions of these relationships but do not really indicate how superintendents, themselves, perceive and mentally structure their work world. Studies that describe the "functions" of the superintendency provide only sketchy descriptions that are of questionable reliability, as many are based upon data of questionable origin or apparently reflect only the author's perceptions. However, certain functions such as instruction, maintenance of school-community relations, and general administrative operations are found throughout this body of literature and, thus, might reflect a part of the superintendents' occupational reality. More clearly descriptive accounts of superintendents' work are provided by studies in which the day-to-day activities of superintendents were observed and analyzed. Such examinations of superintendent behaviors suggested that the management of information is an important part of superintendency, and that superintendents mediate between groups, both within and external to the school system as formally constituted. However, even these observational data do not provide direct access to superintendents' characterizations of that work.
Finally, the literature provides only very limited insights to the meanings and sentiments that superintendents attach to their work. A by-product of Gross, Mason, and McEachern's study of role expectations is a set of data which suggests that superintendents are generally satisfied, both with their jobs and careers. However, as Goldhammer, Suttle, Aldridge, and Becker found, superintendents can also readily identify problems. Many of the problem areas identified by superintendents (e.g. information management, mediation between interests, sensitivity to outside pressures) reflect some of the activity patterns described by studies of superintendents' day-to-day work.

In conclusion, the literature does not provide an integrated description of the superintendents' ethos. The disparate glimpses it does provide suggest that the notion of an ethos, as inferred from the occupations' orientations and sentiments, might well be useful for developing an improved understanding of the superintendency.
CHAPTER III
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In the two preceding chapters, the focus has been on the development and sharpening of the study's purpose. In Chapter One, the discussion centered upon the need for greater efforts toward the description of the school superintendency and the development of the conceptual bases for conducting an ethological analysis of that occupation. The following definition of occupational ethos was derived from the works of Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist, Herbert Blumer, an early proponent of the symbolic interactionist school of sociology, and Daniel Lortie, who described the ethos of schoolteachers:

An occupationally standardized set of emotions which gives meaning to things based upon past social interaction; a meaning which serves as

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the basis for occupation members' actions.

The work of occupational sociologists, Lortie's efforts to describe the occupational ethos of schoolteachers, and conceptualizations developed by W. Richard Scott, George Herbert Mead, and Robert Dubin provided the bases for the development of a two-dimensional approach to describe the occupational ethos of school superintendents.

The work of Everett C. Hughes, George Ritzer, and Ronald Pavalko to develop an occupational continuum suggested that the nature of an occupation's structure would provide insights to its ethos. In view of Scott's contention that social structures were those processes which maintained a system's existing form, it was inferred that themes which emerged from an analysis of an occupation's structure would suggest general orientations shared by members of that occupation.

In *Men and Their Work* Hughes suggested that a second occupational dimension, meanings that occupation group members attached to their work, would provide insights to the nature of an occupation. Dubin, in describing his notion of "central life interests", maintained that individuals in complex societies derived a sense of basic order by

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8Hughes, op. cit., p. 8.
focusing on a segment of their lives. Assuming that an occupation can be viewed as such a central interest, it was inferred that superintendents would share a particular order in describing their work reality. Further, it was inferred from George Herbert Mead's notions of meaning and mind that the meanings which superintendents attach to their work could be derived from their verbal descriptions of their work.

Thus, it was determined that the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents would be approached along two occupational dimensions — structures and meanings. These, in fact, were the same basic approaches taken by Lortie to describe the schoolteacher's occupational ethos.

In Chapter Two, the findings of a literature search were reported. Reports of empirical studies and other writings which focused on the superintendency were reviewed for contributions they offered to an understanding of the superintendents' occupational ethos. Structured upon the two dimensional approach adopted to describe the ethos, the review uncovered only scattered and disparate clues to the nature of the superintendents' ethos. Several studies found that superintendents tended to share a set of personal attributes, suggesting that some form of occupational recruitment was practiced. However, no

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studies were uncovered which described the formal educational preparation of superintendents, none were found to describe the nature of formal and informal socialization processes. The literature had even less to say about the reward structure of the superintendency. Only a platitudinous, non-empirical description of "advantages" and survey data reflecting superintendents' salary levels were uncovered. Thus, a review of the school superintendency literature uncovered little in the way of data based descriptions of the processes which develop and sustain the occupation of school superintendent.

Similarly, it was found that the literature did not deal specifically with the meanings and sentiments superintendents attach to their work. However, three themes found throughout the literature suggested that superintendents' work focused on: the instructional program, maintenance of positive school-community relations, and general administrative operations. Similarly, studies of the day-to-day activities of superintendents indicated that the management of information and mediation between groups both within and external to the formal organization of the school system were important functions of the superintendency. However, no studies were found to provide direct insights to the meanings and sentiments that superintendents attached to their work.

Thus, the literature on school superintendents did provide limited and disparate insights which suggested that patterns existed in the structural and meaning dimensions of the occupation. However, it did not provide an integrated description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents.
Based upon the conceptual base established in Chapter One and the findings of a review of the literature reported in Chapter Two, two approaches were taken to describe the occupational ethos of school superintendents. First, three of the occupation's structures — recruitment, socialization, rewards — were analyzed for patterns from which general orientations might stem. Second, superintendents' characterizations of their work were analyzed for patterns that suggested the order with which they saw that work and the sentiments they attached to it. The total process might best be characterized as one of analytic distillation. Two fundamental views of occupations reflected in the sociological-sociopsychological literature, structure and personal meanings, were analyzed for the essential orientations and sentiments which characterize school superintendents.

In the remainder of this chapter, the methods employed in conducting this study to collect data, select samples of respondents and analyze data are described.

Data Collection

Van Dalen noted that data collection was the first step that must be taken in conducting descriptive research. In the case of the present study, data were collected in two distinct phases, reflecting the dual approach which was utilized to describe the school superintendents' ethos. Stage one involved the collection of survey data which provided stable measures of the three occupational structures —

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recruitment, socialization and rewards. In stage two, data were collected by interviewing a sample of school superintendents to capture their personal characterizations of the superintendency.

**AASA Survey Data**

As Ritzer noted, the structural analysis of occupations focuses upon static characteristics. Survey research methods were employed to collect data on the three occupational structures of the superintendency studied in the present investigation. For, survey techniques lend themselves to the description of a stable, predetermined characteristics, and variables.

The survey data were taken from American Association of School Administrators (AASA) 1969-70 survey of American school superintendents. Data concerning the following, specific characteristics were drawn from the total AASA survey:

1. Age at entering first full-time position in public education.
2. Extra-curricular activities directed by superintendents in their first full-time positions in education.
3. Length of service as classroom teacher prior to entering administration or supervision.
4. Age at entering first administrative or supervisory position.
5. Types of educational positions held by superintendents.

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12 Ritzer, op. cit., p. 49.


14 Note that all measures are indicated here as identified, operationalized, and reported in Knezevich, The American School Superintendent.
6. Age at appointment to first superintendency.

7. Mean and median number of years spent in first, second, third, and fourth superintendency.

8. Mean and median starting salaries in first, second, third and fourth superintendency.

9. Highest degree earned.

10. Semesters devoted by superintendents to full-time graduate study in residence.

11. Superintendents' ranking of graduate courses.

12. Number of evenings superintendents devote to work in typical work week.

Characteristics 1-6 were studied as measures of the recruitment and selection structures of the superintendency. Characteristics 7 and 8 were utilized as measures of the occupational reward structure. And characteristics 2, 3, 5 and 9-11 were analyzed as indicators of the occupation's socialization structures. Finally, characteristic 12 was studied as part of the data on the work of school superintendents.

Elite Interviews

In the second phase of data collection, data were gathered through elite interviews of twenty individuals serving as superintendents in Ohio school districts during the 1978-79 school year. Dexter defined an "elite interview" as:

An interview with any interviewee -- a stress should be placed on the word "any" -- who in terms of the current purposes of the interviewer is given special, non-standardized treatment. By special, non-standardized treatment I mean:

1. stressing the individual's definition of the situation,
2. encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation,
3. letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent (an extent which will, of course, vary from project to project and interviewer to interviewer) his notions of what he regards as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator's notions of relevance.\textsuperscript{15}

The interviews were "intensive with an interview guide." That is, an interview guide (see Appendix A) was developed based upon a preliminary analysis of the AASA survey data, the research questions outlined in Chapter One, and pilot-interviews conducted with three school superintendents not included in the study sample. Due to the nature of the research problem, the questions in the interview guide were open-ended, thus allowing respondents to characterize their work in their own terms.\textsuperscript{16} All interviews were conducted in person. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed in their entirety in all but one case. In that case, the subject would not accede to a request to tape-record the interview. Written notes, however, were taken. The length of the interviews ranged from just one hour to one hour and forty-five minutes. All respondents were informed that their identities would remain confidential in any and all reporting of data or analysis. All interviews were conducted during the month of May, 1979 and the first week of June, 1979. Letters outlining this study's purposes were sent to each prospective interview subject (see Appendix B). This introductory letter was accompanied by a letter from the Executive


Director of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators that indicated his support for the study (Appendix C). This initial contact was followed by a phone call to establish an appointment for the interview and to answer any questions the interviewee might have about the study.

Sampling Procedure

A stratified random sample was employed in the collection of the AASA survey data. The sample was stratified into four major categories of superintendents according to the student enrollments of the districts in which they served.

- **Group A** - superintendents serving local districts with pupil enrollments of 25,000 or more.
- **Group B** - superintendents employed in school districts with pupil enrollments ranging from 3,000 to 24,999.
- **Group C** - superintendents in districts with pupil enrollments ranging from 300 to 2,999.
- **Group D** - superintendents in districts with pupil enrollments of less than 300.\(^{17}\)

Of the total universe of 14,848 American school superintendents in 1970, 7.5 percent or 1,128 were randomly selected within strata.\(^{18}\) The sample of respondents were described in the AASA report in the following way:

Only 183, or 1.2 percent of the 14,848 superintendents identified in 1969-70 were in Group A. All (a 100 percent sample) were sent questionnaires. The largest percentage of superintendents,

\(^{17}\)Knezevich, op. cit., p. 15.

\(^{18}\)Idem.
59.8 percent, were in Group C (pupil enrollments of 300 to 2,999). Of these 8,872 Group C superintendents, only 366, or a 4.1 percent sample, received questionnaires. The percentages of school executives in Groups B and D were about equal—19.5 percent in each case. The size of the sample needed in each stratum to obtain a stable reading of characteristics was determined by statisticians in the NEA Research Division, using small-sample techniques developed for other nationwide surveys in education.\(^{19}\)

The number and percentages of superintendents in each stratum who received the survey instrument and returned usable responses are indicated in Table 1 of Appendix C.

The AASA survey sample was drawn using a table of random numbers, and:

The number of returns received was large enough to insure a stability of responses about characteristics of the total universe.\(^{20}\)

**Interview Sample**

For the second phase of data collection, interview subjects were selected from the total universe of 616 individuals serving as superintendents of school districts in the state of Ohio during the 1978-79 school year. The use of intensive interviewing techniques for data collection and the limited resources (financial and time), available to this investigator, necessitated the use of a small sample of subjects. This, of course, severely limits the stability of the responses, the generability of findings, and the analysis of subgroups. However, these

\(^{19}\)Idem.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 17.
limitations are offset by the depth of understanding which the interviews will provide. As Lortie noted in reporting his study of classroom teachers:

Understanding the subjective world of people within a given field of work calls for long, detailed and open-ended interviews which are costly in time and money; the benefits of intensity are purchased at the cost of scope. Yet, it is surprising how much one can learn about an occupation without using complex measures ...\textsuperscript{21}

A total of twenty superintendents were interviewed. In order to provide some level of representativeness within the sampling limitations noted above, interviewees were selected from the five strata of Ohio public school districts developed by that state's Educational Review Committee. The strata are described as follows:

1. Central City Districts - Districts associated with cities having 1970 populations of at least 49,000.

2. Satellite City Districts - Urban area districts associated with satellite cities, cities which are near and dominated by a larger city. This includes bedroom suburbs, industrial enclaves, and balanced cities in vicinity of larger, central cities.

3. Independent Urban Districts - Associated with independent cities with 5,000-42,000 population in 1970. These are employment centers surrounded by rural areas.

4. Rural Districts - Districts without any city of over 5,000 population in 1970.

The final sample was selected so that the proportion of interviewees representing each stratum approximated the proportion of the state's school districts that fall within that stratum. Thus, of the twenty superintendents interviewed: two worked in large city school

\textsuperscript{21}Lortie, op. cit., p. ix.
districts, six in satellite city districts, four in independent city districts, and eight headed rural school districts. Care was also taken to select school districts located in all regions of the state. By dividing the state into quadrants, the sample included: six superintendents in the northwest, five in the southwest, five in the northeast, two in the southeast, and two which must be considered central.

Of the twenty superintendents originally contacted, nineteen agreed to be interviewed. One additional superintendent was then contacted who agreed to the interview.

**Analysis of Data**

Several methods of data analysis were employed in two stages to develop a unitary description of the occupational ethos of the school superintendency.

**Quantitative Summarization of Data**

The first stage of data analysis involved the simple quantitative summarization of both the survey and interview data. Data reflecting the twelve variables taken from the AASA survey of school superintendents were summarized by determining frequencies of response, proportions of the whole and by calculating appropriate measures of central tendency. For example, to summarize responses concerning characteristic number one, age at entering first full-time position in public education, frequencies of response and proportions are determined for each age category, and both mean and median ages were calculated. These figures were then placed in tabular form (see Table 3A).
TABLE 222
Sample

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<th>Age range</th>
<th>National Unweighted Profile for A, B, and C</th>
<th>Special Estimates for Group D</th>
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<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
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<td>Under 20 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean age in years: 23.6, 23.5
Median age in years: 23.0, 23.0

Similar procedures were followed to summarize and array data concerning each of the twelve characteristics or measures taken from the AASA survey.

The interview data were subjected to a sample frequency analysis to summarize responses to those interview guide items for which frequency of response is a useful and appropriate measure. For example, item nine asks, "What other occupation is most like the school superintendence?" The responses to this question can be easily and meaningfully summarized according to the frequency with which categories of responses are made. Since all the items on the guide are open-ended, the frequency analysis could not be based upon pre-existing response categories. The categories of responses emerged from the interview data themselves.

Qualitative Analysis

The second stage of analysis involved what Lofland has described as the "qualitative analysts" search "to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and patterns found among a set of participants."23 Here, the survey and interview data, including the quantitative summaries of data, were analyzed to identify patterns in the recruitment, socialization, and rewards of the superintendency, and in the ways that superintendents characterized their work. From patterns identified in this way, the general orientations characteristic of the occupation of the superintendency and the personal sentiments of

23Lofland, op. cit., p. 7.
occupation members for their work were inferred. Through this process, the occupational ethos of the school superintendency was distilled.

The final step in the analysis of data was summarized by Lofland in the following manner:

Having come this far, a final step to full sociological analysis may be suggested, although not insisted upon. The elements of the analytic or discovered among participants may themselves be sociologically categorized. Since, happily, sociological discourse, in particular, is an elaborated version of everyday discourse, little discontinuity may be necessary. This is, one can begin to work with sociological and participant categories...^24

Thus, the description of the occupational ethos distilled from the analysis of the structures and the meanings and sentiments of the superintendency was discussed within the framework of selected theoretical conceptualizations which focus on leadership and formal organizations.

Limitations of the Study

This study is characterized by a number of limitations. These generally stem from the nature of the study's purpose and from the research techniques employed toward that purpose.

The first limitation reflects a fundamental limitation of extant social scientific theories. The present conceptualization of the phenomenon which here has been labeled "ethos" is broad and extremely nebulous. What actually comprises its essential characteristics and dimensions remains largely a matter of conjecture. Naturally, then, the

^24Idem.
answers which this study provides are more a function of the questions which were asked, than a reflection of some clearly discernible entity. Thus, while the research questions which served to focus this investigation were based upon the findings of similar studies and are theoretically rooted, it is possible, if not entirely probable, that many dimensions of the ethos of school superintendents escaped undetected.

In keeping with the rather equivocal nature of ethos as a social scientific concept, research techniques were employed which facilitated the collection of a broad range of perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. Because of the great costs -- both in money and time -- incurred through the use of these techniques, a limited sample of superintendents was employed. This, of course, makes it impossible to statistically assess the generability of the findings.

Summary and Synthesis

By definition, an occupation's ethos permeates its every dimension. Thus, to describe the "basic system of emotion which accompany the activity of school superintendents" would ideally require exploration of the whole of the superintendency; and as Steinbeck has noted:

The whole is necessarily everything, the whole world of fact and fancy, body and psyche, physical fact and spiritual truth, individual and collective, life and death, macrocosm and microcosm. conscious and unconscious, subject and object. 25

However, such an undertaking was beyond this investigator's cognitive and physical resources. More importantly, it was and remains

beyond the reach of current social scientific knowledge. We simply cannot yet identify all of the dimensions of what has been referred to here as an occupation. However, as had been shown in this chapter, sociologists and social psychologists have developed at least two ways to view occupations, through their structures and through the meanings which occupation members derive from their work. These, then, were the two dimensions of the superintendency which were analytically distilled to describe its ethos.

The stability which conceptually characterizes social structures, lent itself to the use of survey data in developing a description of the essential characteristics of the recruitment, socialization, and reward structures of the school superintendency as an occupation. However, to capture the meanings and sentiments that superintendents derive from their work required a more open approach. Thus, a sample of twenty school superintendents were intensively interviewed to record their characterizations of superintendents' work. Both sets of data, survey and interview, were analyzed for patterns which suggested the basic orientations and sentiments of school superintendents. Through this distillation process, the occupational ethos of the school superintendency was described.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY - PART ONE

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURES AND ORIENTATIONS

What characterizes the occupational ethos of school superintendents? It was to this question that the present study sought an answer. One view of that answer is found in the research findings reported here.

In keeping with the two perspectives from which the occupation of school superintendent was studied, the findings are reported in the following segments: 1) occupational structures and orientations, 2) occupational meanings and work sentiments, and 3) the occupation's ethos. Each segment will be reported in a separate chapter.

In this chapter, patterns found in the interview and AASA survey data that bear upon three occupational structures -- recruitment, socialization, and rewards -- and the general occupational orientations which spring from these structures are described. In chapter five, patterns in superintendents' characterizations of the work they do and the sentiments they feel for that work are identified. In chapter six, the insights gained in studying the superintendency from these two perspectives are melded into a unitary description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents.
Introduction

For an occupation to develop and survive, members must be recruited, socialized, and rewarded. These three occupational structures function together to shape the nature of an occupation's membership. Each structure is related to and interacts with the other structures. Indeed, it is impossible to clearly determine where one begins and the others end. However, for purposes of expository clarity, certain arbitrary distinctions will be made and each structure will be discussed separately.

Recruitment

The first occupational structure that potential members of an occupation engage is recruitment. Recruitment consists of the processes and occupational characteristics that function to screen, woo, and eliminate individuals before a career actually starts.¹ Lortie noted that:

Occupations compete, consciously or not, for members and there is a largely silent struggle between occupations as individuals choose among alternative lines of work. Occupations proffer different advantages and disadvantages to those making choices and people vary in their dispositions and personal circumstances -- an occupation will attract some persons and repel others. Out of the combinations which ensue, an occupation will come to be staffed by people of particular dispositions and life circumstances.²


Occupational Attractions

Viewed as one choice in a pool of occupational choices, the school superintendency must offer a particular set of attractions to insure that its ranks will be filled by individuals suited to the occupation's work. That such attractions to the school superintendency exist is indicated in some measure by the intensity which characterizes the competition for available positions. What is it that attracts people to the occupation of school superintendent? What do these attractions suggest about the basic orientations of occupational members?

The service attraction. A primary occupational attraction is the service dimension which characterizes educational work in general. School superintendents consistently indicated their desire to serve the needs of the communities in which their school systems were located. This commitment to community service is apparent in the following excerpts from superintendents' interview accounts:

Well, I think I want people to feel ... that in the end, I contributed to that community because of being in the role of superintendent, make it a better community to live in. (Superintendent E)

Community-wise, you get close to the people. (Superintendent D)

Well, my chief concern as an educator was to inculcate, in the minds of young people, respect for their school, their community, God and country. And I could see ... that our moral status or standards were rapidly getting away from us as a nation. (Superintendent P)

Evidence to support the notion that the service dimension is basic to educational occupations is provided by Lortie's study of classroom teachers. He concluded that, "The idea that teaching is a
valuable service of a special moral worth is a theme in the talk of Five Town teachers. So, superintendents were attracted by the opportunities their occupation provided them to serve the public. However, this aspect of the superintendency also characterizes other education-related occupations. What, then, attracted them specifically to the superintendency?

The leadership attraction. One attraction which drew individuals specifically to the superintendency is its position at the top of a school system's administrative structure. Superintendents, to a person, expressed the desire to "be in charge". Some sought the freedom of not having to answer to a supervisor:

I wouldn't have to worry so much about who is checking on me. I would kind of be able to set my own time for myself ... Not having someone breathing down your neck; not worry about being fired. (Superintendent A)

Others suggested that their personal characteristics drew them to a position of leadership:

I became intrigued with the leadership aspect, and having been a coach and athlete, I feel my own personal ego led me to the point of where I wanted to be number one. I wanted to be the person that made the decisions, to be captain of the team, the individual who called the plays. (Superintendent P)

A theme which pervaded the talk of superintendents combined two occupational attractions: the opportunity to serve, and its position at the top of the administrative hierarchy. Superintendents consistently spoke of improving the instructional program and moving their

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3Ibid., p. 28.
systems toward the achievement of goals. They saw in the superintendency the chance to have a greater positive influence on education than they could have as a teacher in one classroom or a principal in one school. Note the tone of Superintendent R's description of an individual who helped shape his image of the superintendency:

I saw what gifted leadership could accomplish in the superintendency ... I saw that Mr. _______ was the unquestioned educational leader in ________, and saw that he was able to accomplish almost anything he wanted as a result of it. There was power; there was approbation; there was a sense of social usefulness.

Superintendent N's recollection of a major reason for his pursuing the superintendency reflected a view that is more representative of those held by his colleagues:

I had somewhere in the back of my mind of really trying to get in and work in the curriculum, teaching area, and changing some things that, at that point in time, I felt I was seeing that I didn't like ... Even though I could do it individually as a classroom teacher, the best way is at another level in the administrative structure. So you can really have some impact on what happens.

Superintendents, then, were attracted by the leadership role occupied by the superintendency, and were intent on exercising that leadership to guide schools toward what in their view was a better educational program.

The attraction of salary. As with many occupations in American society, salary was another consideration that attracted individuals to seek employment as superintendent. However, the attraction of salary is often bound by other occupational dimensions. For instance, an individual might seek the type of work that promises the greatest
salary among those that require similar levels of training, physical risk, and are available in a certain geographic location.

To school superintendents, the attraction of salary was a consideration only as it differentiated between occupations available in institutions of public education. Individuals were attracted by the salary commanded by superintendents because it was greater than the salaries earned by members of other school-related occupations (e.g. classroom teacher, counselor, principal). A comment made by Superintendent A illustrates this point:

And I guess to be honest, I came to the conclusion that in order to stay in education I can't survive being a teacher. I've got kids now, I have wants ... I wasn't making enough to pay bills, you know. I was going under. I wanted a lifestyle and live more than I could on a teacher's salary.

Salary, then, was apparently a secondary occupational attraction to school superintendents. The explanations superintendents offered for choosing their occupation suggested that a characteristic basic to education-related work, the aforementioned service dimension, was the primary attraction. The primacy of the opportunity to serve as an attraction over the attraction provided by salary is clearly indicated in Superintendent F's statement that:

I'm sure that finances had something to do with it, but I don't think they were the primary reason. I think because I probably would have taken some other avenue if it was strictly finance. So, I think there was a service commitment which I enjoy.

So, superintendents are attracted to educational occupations in general because of their service dimension, and to the superintendency, specifically, because it commands the greatest salary among educational
occupations.

Summary. Superintendents identified three characteristics of the superintendency that served as occupational attractions. They were fundamentally attracted by a characteristic basic to education-related work, its service dimension. Secondly, the superintendency's position at the top of an organizational hierarchy was an attraction. Beyond idiosyncratically based attractions to such a position of authority, superintendents generally believed that they would be able to exert the influence of their office to improve education on a broader scale than they could as classroom teachers or school principals. Thus, the service dimension of educational work served as an attraction to educational occupations in general, while perceived district-wide influence was a specific attraction to the school superintendency. Third, superintendents were attracted by the salary the occupation commanded. However, salary functioned as an attraction only to the extent that it differentiated among occupations involved in educational work. Again, superintendents were more fundamentally attracted by a general characteristic of educational work, its service dimension.

Patterns in the Recruitment Process

Another dimension of occupational recruitment is the system of patterns or structures which characterizes the processes by which occupational members are recruited and/or selected. Just as an occupation's attractions function to bring individuals with particular dispositions and orientations into its fold, the characteristics of an occupation's recruitment and selection processes can also shape the nature of its membership. Four patterns emerged in the recruitment
of school superintendents: the constrained pool from which superin-
tendents were recruited, the deferred occupational decision, the ele-
ment of chance, and the subjectivity of selection.

Unlike members of many other occupations, superintendents are
clearly not recruited from the general population but are drawn from
the ranks of other educational occupations -- teaching and building
level administration. An analysis of the AASA survey data indicated
that 95.7% of the superintendents polled had served as classroom
teachers and 70.6% as school principals (see table 2, appendix D).
Reinforcing these findings was the finding that the total sample of
interview subjects had worked as classroom teachers, and all but one
had some experience as a building level administrator or supervisor.

This pattern is so obvious that it seems unnecessary to have to
mention it. However, it has an important influence on the ethos of
school superintendents. Unlike many other occupations, superinten-
dents are not recruited from the general population. Instead, they
are drawn from occupations which are characterized by their own re-
cruitment, socialization and reward structures, work sentiments, and
ethos. The importance of this pattern in the recruitment of superin-
tendents is indicated by its emergence in subsequent descriptions of

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4 The Mershon Center of The Ohio State University conducted a
National Program for Educational Leadership (NPEL) in which 62 indivi-
duals recruited primarily from business, the military, law, social
services, health care, and the ministry were prepared for positions
of leadership in public school settings. However, due to credential-
ing difficulties, few of the NPEL Fellows were ever placed in leader-
ship positions in public school systems. See: Rodney Muth, "Insti-
tutional Leadership and Educational Problem Solving: A Clinical
Approach," Mershon Center Quarterly Report, Vol. 2, no. 4 (Summer,
attractions to the superintendency suggests the primacy of the service attraction, a characteristic basic to educational work in general.

The deferment of occupational choices is a second characteristic of the superintendency's recruitment process. Characteristically, individuals do not choose to pursue the superintendency as an occupational goal until they have already served for a time in another line of education-related work. It seems that children, adolescents, and even undergraduate students do not aspire to become school superintendents. To illustrate, twelve of the twenty superintendents interviewed did not consider the superintendency as an option until they already had worked at other levels of public school administration in positions ranging from assistant principal to assistant superintendent. The eight remaining superintendents recalled first aspiring to the superintendency as young teachers. Thus, the decision to seek entry to the occupation did not have to come and, indeed, did not come until relatively late in superintendents' careers. In fact, in many cases, individuals never made a conscious decision to seek a superintendency, but simply found themselves being offered the position in the school district where they were already serving in another administrative capacity:

I didn't seriously decide to become a superintendent until they came to see me. (Superintendent B)

Oh, I don't know that I really seriously considered it as such. As high school principal, it was one that was attractive and as does happen in small districts, it was kind of a natural progression, you know, of being successful and people seem to like what you're doing as principal. Then a superintendent retires or moves on to a new job; you kind of fall in line for it. (Superintendent G)
While this second statement suggests that the "falling" of the superintendency to the next-in-command is characteristic of small districts, the following comment made by the superintendent of a large city school district illustrates the possibility that it is a more general phenomenon:

I wasn't sure that I would go into the superintendency. In fact, I never planned a career as a superintendent nor as an assistant superintendent ... But when the former superintendent asked me to become an assistant superintendent, he sort of tailor made an assignment for me, and I accepted it. And then when he left, the board asked me to serve in this position. (Superintendent I)

This non-planned ascension to the superintendency is only one manifestation of a more general characteristic of the occupation's recruitment process, the influence of time and chance. Superintendents repeatedly recounted important episodes in their careers which they simply explained as chance occurrences. Even those who had consciously chosen the superintendency as a career goal and had moved more or less methodically towards its attainment were quick to acknowledge the importance of chance opportunities. For example, when asked at what point he became seriously interested in becoming a superintendent, Superintendent K responded:

1968, when I thought about going into the doctoral program.

He was an assistant principal at that time, and clearly had a career goal. In explaining how he finally came to be a superintendent, however, luck is the dominant theme.

I would say, offhand, just by sheer luck the high school principalship in Tennessee was a position that I just had not in any way at all imagined that I would be able to step into that
first full-time position (after graduate school). And had it not been for that, I would not have been in _______. Had it not been for my experience there, I wouldn't be here. And that's luck ... I've got a good friend who would like to be a superintendent, has not had district office experience. But I knew he had applied and he asked me if I would call on his behalf ... and I did. The county superintendent (who recommends candidates for local superintendencies) asked, "Has _____ been a superintendent?" I said, "No". He said, "He's not even in the running. We've got forty applicants from existing superintendents." So when I say luck, that's a definite part of it.

Similarly, Superintendent 0 credited luck for most of the progress he experienced in his career:

For some reason, and I have no idea why, my whole career seemed to have been a luck kind of thing ... So, you know the whole thing has been kind of a fluke. From the standpoint of even getting into teaching in the first place. Somehow, I always had myself prepared. But even those being prepared times were accidents, you know. The only reason I went to graduate school was because my wife had to study at night. It's kind of weird.

Thus, while many of the superintendents had, at least, informal career goals, they were very conscious of the impact timing and chance opportunities had on their careers.

Related to this perceived influence of chance on the recruitment process is a fifth characteristic, the apparent subjectivity with which individuals are selected into the occupation. Superintendents found it difficult to describe either the reasons they were selected for various administrative posts leading to their present positions, or their own criteria for selecting administrators.

I don't really know if I have a good answer. I suppose that the powers that be must have seen some hope in me ... I had done some things in the district in the way of organization and
participation in things. I was president of the teachers' organization one year, some things like that. (Superintendent T)

I normally pick people by instinct. I either like them or I don't. And if I like them I will do almost anything for them ... They have a spark -- I can't explain it any more than that. I can see it in them. They have a good background. They're neat, neat people. That sounds strange, but there's something I like about them ... And that's very unfair because it's unfair to many people who are talented. (Superintendent H)

The only criterion for selecting administrators at any level in a school system's structure which emerged consistently in the superintendents' talk was the subjective quality of being active. Explaining why he felt he was encouraged to pursue a career in school administration, Superintendent O noted that he was:

A doer, all the way ... you know, you name it, I was there. Always doing, always busy, always working.

Superintendent P cited similar reasons for initially singling out certain teachers for administrative responsibilities:

Any building principal will take advantage of an eager, energetic, enthusiastic individual on the staff who shows promise of being a leader ... If I have an individual who shows some enthusiasm and ability to cope with the problem or situation at hand, I will call on that individual more than I will call on someone else.

So, active participation in school-related activities was one determinant in the selection of individuals into administrative career lines culminating in the superintendency. However, only certain types of activities served this function. They were characterized by an involvement with school-related groups and a resulting visibility to school administrators and community.
I became involved with anything from the sale of tickets at ball games to helping with the extracurricular activities in the way of organizing such things. I suppose these things sort of tend to tell you, maybe, you would like to serve in some phase of administration. (Superintendent T)

Additional support for this observation is provided by AASA survey data which indicated that very nearly eight of ten (79.1%) school superintendents had coached school athletic teams and over one-quarter (28.9%) had served as class advisors (see table 3, appendix D).

On the other hand, activities directly related to a school teacher's primary responsibility, teaching classes, did not appear to significantly affect the processes of recruiting or selecting school administrators, including superintendents. As several authors have noted, such activities occur in relative isolation, an isolation which Lortie found teachers work to protect. Thus, it seems that superintendents are initially recruited out of the teaching ranks based not so much upon their performance as classroom teachers as it is on their involvement in schoolwide or system-wide activities.

This analysis of the process by which superintendents were recruited uncovered four characteristic patterns. First, unlike many

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6Lortie, op. cit., p. 100.
other occupations, the school superintendency draws its members from an existing occupational group. The recruitment of superintendents is also characterized by the deferment of occupational choices. Individuals who become school superintendents do not make the decision to pursue the superintendency until they are well into their educational careers. Some never consciously seek it, but have it "fall" to them. The third characteristic, then, of the recruitment of superintendents is the element of chance. Superintendents, even those who consciously map out their careers, ascribe a great deal of importance to the role that chance opportunities, timing, and luck play in determining who does and who does not become a superintendent. The final recruitment characteristic that emerges from the interview and survey data is the apparent subjectivity with which individuals are initially selected to be school administrators and finally chosen to be superintendents of schools. The only specific criterion that emerges is that an individual be actively involved in activities that are visible and that reach beyond a teacher's classroom.

By combining these four characteristics of the occupational recruitment process with the three occupational attractions identified earlier, a more complete view of the superintendency's occupational recruitment structure emerged. Superintendents are attracted by the occupation's salary and its leadership dimension, and by a characteristic it shares with other types of educational work, the opportunity to serve. The recruitment process is characterized by its drawing from an existing occupational group, the deferment of occupational choice, the influence of chance occurrences, and the subjectivity of selection.
General Themes Reflected in the Recruitment Structure

If, as Lortie suggested, recruitment structures determine, in large part, the orientations of persons who populate an occupation, then what do the patterns that characterize the recruitment of school superintendents suggest about superintendents' occupational orientations?

The patterns identified above in the recruitment of superintendents are characterized by four themes: a sensitivity for context, the accommodation of uncertainty, a conservative tendency, and an emphasis upon movement.

The contextual theme. The contextual theme concerns the special attention that superintendents pay to the conditions which are peculiar to the school districts they work within. This includes conditions which exist both within the formal organizational structure of the school system and in its environment. Several patterns identified in the occupational recruitment structure reflect this theme.

First, three patterns encourage superintendents to be aware of the operation of an entire school district. The most obvious of these is the attraction of the authoritative position of the superintendency. As has been noted, superintendents are attracted to their occupation by what they perceive to be an opportunity to influence the educational program of an entire school system. This clearly reflects a theme which emphasizes consideration of the entire organization over its several component parts.

Two other recruitment patterns -- the nature of the occupation's recruitment pool, and the deferment of occupational choice -- are also
consistent with this aspect of the contextual theme. The very fact that superintendents do not decide to seek the superintendency until they have already had experience as a classroom teacher and, in many cases, do not make that decision until they have also served as a school principal means that their experiences enable them to view the school system from various perspectives. This is exemplified by Superintendent I's observation:

I'm very fortunate that I've come up through the ranks. I've had a lot of good experiences with the jobs. When I go into a room now with staff people, I know a majority of them ... When I'm issuing a directive or whatever they say comes down from on high, I always think of how will the person to whom it's directed receive it? If I were the teacher, the principal, the supervisor, how would I react to it?

The recruitment structure also encourages superintendents to be sensitive to elements outside school systems' organizational structures. One pattern which reinforces this awareness of the environment is the attraction of the service aspects of educational work. As noted in the description of recruitment patterns, superintendents consistently mentioned a desire to serve the public. This indicates, if nothing else, that superintendents are concerned with the society which exists beyond the organizational boundaries of the school system.

The occupational attraction of the leadership position of the superintendency is also consistent with an awareness of the environmental context. For, superintendents expect that they will not only be perceived as leaders in the school system, but also as leaders within the community:
Prestige and all that. People looking up to you. And all of a sudden you're the man ...
(Superintendent A)

A figure in the community of some substance, I would say someone of authority and prestige ...
(Superintendent F)

Well, I think, first-of-all, it was the idea that you were someone in the field who had the ear of the community. (Superintendent N)

Five patterns which characterize the recruitment of superintendents reflect the contextual theme. Three patterns -- the attraction of an influential position, the recruitment pool, and deferred occupational choice -- are consistent with an awareness among occupational group members of the operation of an entire school system. And two patterns -- the attractions of service and an influential position -- reflect a tendency to be sensitive to elements in school systems' environments. In sum, these five recruitment patterns could be expected to populate the superintendency's ranks with individuals attentive to both organizational and environmental contexts.

The uncertainty theme. The second theme which characterizes the patterns in the occupational recruitment structure is the accommodation of uncertainty. Uncertainty is defined here as the extent to which an actor does not have knowledge of the causes of an event and, therefore, cannot control its occurrence. Uncertainty and its accommodation is an important theme in the recruitment of superintendents. Patterns in superintendents' descriptions of their recruitment into the occupation suggest two ways that they accommodate uncertainty -- a tendency to focus on identifiable outcomes and a tendency toward reactive behavior.
Two patterns in the occupation's recruitment structure are consistent with a tendency to focus upon identifiable outcomes over intent or technology, the process resulting in a given outcome. The emphasis that superintendents place upon the influence of chance and luck in their careers reflects a limited understanding of and control over their recruitment into the superintendency. It is not unreasonable for individuals with such a view of their occupational reality to deemphasize the planning and enactment of strategies to reach some pre-determined career objective, and to focus some attention on identifiable outcomes, being hired for a position with a higher station in a school system, for example. Superintendent H's response to a question concerning important events or turning points in his career is illustrative of such a focus:

There weren't any, really. It was very well planned. I went from teaching into the principalship and from the principalship into a very small superintendency. Then I went back (to a graduate school). Then I went to the superintendency in _______, then I went to ________, and then I came here.

Another recruitment pattern which lends itself to a tendency to focus on identifiable outcomes is the subjectivity of selection criteria. This goes back to the influence of limited knowledge concerning the way that occupational members are recruited. To say that selection is a subjective affair is to recognize, on the one hand, that a set of requisite skills, knowledge, and characteristics are not clearly defined by the occupation, and that the sorts of personal attributes which can only be judged subjectively (e.g. physical appearance, personal presence, social and cultural values) are important
factors in the selection of superintendents. In either case, the absence of control over key variables places occupation members in the position where identifiable outcomes are the only objective phenomena they can meaningfully point to in describing their recruitment into the profession. This tendency is evident in the way that Superintendent K chose to describe an individual whom he identified as having a major influence on his career:

He graduated from Kent ... around '64, '65. He had a superintendency of a small local here in Ohio ... Went to another district for two years. Moved from there to ______ ... Went to _______ for three years. He is know superintendent in a major city ... Knowing him both socially and professionally.

Superintendents, it seems, are known as much for the positions they have held -- identifiable career outcomes -- as for the special skills or characteristics they possess.

Strongly tied to this orientation towards identifiable outcomes is a tendency to react to events. Again, the element of chance in the superintendency's recruitment structure is an influential factor. Where recruitment into an occupation is understood to be largely a result of chance opportunities rather than systematic preparation procedures and selection criteria, aspirants to that occupation can be reasonably expected to be oriented less toward proactive behavior and more toward reacting. This, however, does not mean that proactive considerations are eliminated, but that much of the energy and time spent projecting to the future will focus on preparing for probable occurrences, still a fundamentally reactive stance. This, in fact, is the case in the recruitment of school superintendents. The
following accounts of the circumstances surrounding their entry into administrative work exemplify such a reactive orientation:

I guess I was there at a time when people looked and said, "Here's a man with his administrative certificate." That all fell in line, too, you know. And somebody felt I had some leadership and so, therefore, they said, "Would you like to be principal?" And you apply for the job and ... end up with the job. And in this case (the superintendency), maybe it fell in a little sooner. (Superintendent G)

I was here three years and then the high school was constructed, was to be opened ... I had, during that period of time, completed my master's right on time for the school to open ... so I became the assistant principal (Superintendent T)

Superintendents, then, are encouraged by their occupation's recruitment structure to emphasize identifiable outcomes and to react to existing opportunities or events. Both tendencies largely result from the perceived influence of chance or luck on superintendents' careers. This emphasis on chance apparently stems from the limited understanding superintendents have of the causes of their selection into the occupation. To accommodate such uncertainty, they place greater importance on outcomes rather than on causes, and they respond to uncontrollable events as they occur.

The movement theme. The third theme that is reflected in the patterns of the recruitment structure is movement. Movement is taken here to mean the perceived alteration of some condition or the action which results in such an alteration. An inherent aspect of this theme is a futuristic dimension since movement, however small or great, occurs over some span of time.
Five recruitment patterns are characterized by a sense of movement. Three reflect the career movement of individuals who gain admittance to the occupation. First, the nature of the recruitment pool from which superintendents are recruited makes it necessary for an individual to first serve as a teacher and, in most cases, also work as a principal before becoming a superintendent. Thus, individuals who enter the occupation's ranks do so by altering their occupation and, otherwise, moving from the classroom to the superintendent's office.

The occupational attractions of both the superintendency's position atop the organizational structure of school systems and the concomitant salary that position commands are consistent with the movement theme in superintendents' careers. Not only does the nature of the occupation's recruitment pool require career movement, but superintendents are actually attracted by movement up the organizational hierarchy and its associated movement up the salary scale.

Two additional recruitment patterns reflect another type of movement associated with the occupation of school superintendent. Superintendents, by and large, express a desire to improve the educational programs of their school systems. The service and authoritative attractions of the occupation converge at this point. For, superintendents believe that they can have a greater positive influence on education from their present positions than they would, had they remained teachers or principals. Movement, of course, is an inherent aspect of improvement since it involves the alteration of an educational program's existing state. This aspect of the movement
theme suggests that the efficacy of individual action is more a part of superintendents' occupational beliefs than the earlier descriptions of the perceived influence of chance on career patterns would lead one to expect.

So, patterns in the recruitment structure of the superintendency reflect two different types of movement. First, entry into the occupation involves movement upward through various positions in the formal organizational hierarchy of school systems and a concomitant move upward in salary and perceived influence. Secondly, they seek to become school superintendents so that they will be able to exert a greater influence for the improvement of education.

Conservatism. Conservatism is the final theme which characterizes the patterns identified in the occupational recruitment structure. Conservatism is taken here to be the degree to which a social actor tends toward the maintenance of existing social states. Interestingly, several of the recruitment patterns which reflect the movement theme, also reflect conservative tendencies among members of the occupational group. The requirement that individuals first work as members of other education-related occupations before becoming superintendents and the attractions to the authoritative position and salary that characterize the superintendency emphasize career movement. However, these patterns also reflect a basic commitment to existing institutional structures in public education.

Individuals who spend most, if not all, of their working lives in one institutional setting, as superintendents must to move through all the necessary occupational steps, will in all likelihood be positively
disposed to that institution's existing form. Furthermore, the attraction of superintendents to movement upward through the administrative hierarchy suggests a basic commitment to that hierarchy and to its maintenance.

In view of the definition of social structure as the social processes which maintain existing states, the identification of a conservative theme in an occupation's recruitment structure might be viewed as a tautology. That, indeed, would be the case if the conservatism described here involved a tendency toward the maintenance of the occupational structure. However, the conservative theme identified in the recruitment patterns of the superintendency are concerned primarily with the preservation of existing organizational structures and institutional forms.

**Summary.** Four basic themes characterize the pattern identified in the recruitment structure of the occupation of school superintendent. First, several patterns are consistent with the theme which emphasizes attentiveness to the contexts within which superintendents work. Specifically, the attraction of the authoritative position of superintendents in school systems' organizational hierarchies and the recruitment pool and deferred occupational decision characteristics of the recruitment process encourage an awareness of the operation of the entire school system. Similarly, the attractions of the service dimension of education-related occupations and the authoritative position of the superintendency encourage a sensitivity to school districts' organizational environments.
The second theme is uncertainty and its accommodation. The selection of individuals into the superintendency is fraught with uncertainty. That is, superintendents lack knowledge of both the process by which they were selected and the reasons for their selection. They tend to identify luck or chance as an important factor in their careers. To function in the face of such uncertainty, superintendents tend to focus on identifiable outcomes and maintain a fundamentally reactive posture. Since causes are not understood, they attach importance to outcomes and respond to events as they occur.

Movement is the third theme reflected in the recruitment structure. The nature of the occupation's recruitment pool, and the attractions of the superintendency's authoritative position in school systems and salary suggest that superintendents are prone to career movement. They move both up the organizational hierarchy from teacher to superintendent and up the concomitant salary scale. Superintendents also emphasize the improvement of their school systems. In fact, they indicate that one attraction of the superintendency is the influence they are to be able to exert from that position to improve education. Improvement, of course, connotes alteration of an existing state, movement.

The fourth and final theme which characterizes the patterns identified in the recruitment structure is conservatism. The nature of the superintendency's recruitment pool and the attraction of its authoritative position contribute to the population of the occupation by individuals positively disposed to existing organizational structures and institutional forms.
The recruitment structure of the occupation of school superintendent is characterized by themes which emphasize: context, uncertainty and its accommodation, movement, and conservatism.

Socialization

A second structure which influences the composition of an occupation's membership is socialization. In his study of the medical professional, Merton provided a definition of socialization which suggested the importance of this structure in shaping the orientations of occupation members:

The process by which people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills and knowledge — in short, the culture — current in groups to which they are, or seek to become a member. It refers to the learning of social roles.\(^6\)

The characteristics of the socialization of superintendents, then, should provide insights useful to the description of the occupation's basic orientations. The analysis of the socialization structure was guided by two notions which appear in the sociological literature on occupations. Sociologists have observed that occupational socialization occurs in two distinct realms — formal training programs, and on-the-job experience.\(^7\) They have also noted that training occurs on two levels — formal and informal.\(^8\) The formal level is primarily concerned with the transmission of skills and knowledge, while the informal level is concerned with the transmission of norms and values.\(^9\) These two


\(^8\) Ritzer, op. cit., p. 70.

\(^9\) Idem.
socialization dimensions are combined in the following matrix which provides a general framework for the analysis of an occupation's socialization structure.

**Figure 4A**

**Occupational Socialization**

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<td><strong>G</strong></td>
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The search for patterns in the occupational socialization of school superintendents focused upon the four types of socialization depicted in the socialization matrix: Formal Program/Formal Level, Formal Program/Informal Level, On-the Job/Formal Level, and On-the Job/Informal Level. General patterns were identified in each of these four dimensions.

**Formal Training Programs**

*Formal level socialization.* Of the twenty superintendents interviewed, eight held earned doctorates in educational administration; one had only to complete a dissertation to earn a doctorate in educational administration. Similarly, an analysis of the AASA survey data showed that 65.7% held Master's degrees, 16.3% held specialist certificates, and 12.5% held doctorates (See Appendix D, Table 4.) Thus, like the members of many other occupational groups, school superintendents receive their formal training in programs of graduate study offered by the nation's colleges and universities.
Characteristics of the formal level socialization that occurs in graduate training programs are indicated, in very general terms, by the types of courses superintendents take. Although the AASA sought to determine how superintendents ranked the importance of various courses, the findings of its survey could also serve to indicate simply what courses superintendents took. As would be expected, most of the courses listed dealt with areas directly pertinent to the practice of educational administration. For example, 74.0 to 89 percent of the superintendents identified courses on the following topics as important: school finance (89%), personnel administration (89%), public relations (87.9%), business management (86.8%), school law (82.1%), plant planning (80.7%), principal-ship (75.4%), and administrative theory (74.0%). The AASA survey findings also listed eleven other courses which between 64 and 93 percent of the superintendents viewed as important. Of these, six dealt with topics directly related to the practice of educational administration: school surveys (84.2%), administrative internship (75.0%), operations research (65.7%), and PPBS (64.1%). The five remaining courses were split between courses in the social sciences (i.e. economics and political science) and courses which focused on various educational issues (i.e. child growth and development, philosophy of education, and adult education). (See Table 5, Appendix D).

Two distinct patterns are evident in this list of courses. First, much of the coursework aims at preparing individuals to manage various elements of the organization's operation. Courses are aimed at providing superintendents with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage a school system's finances, personnel, business functions, physical plant, and
educational program. Secondly, these courses focus on structures in a school district's environment which impinge upon its operation. For instance, courses are aimed at providing superintendents with the knowledge and skills to operate a school system within the law, secure the resources necessary to operate (e.g. money, materials, and personnel), develop a positive relationship between the school district and the community of people it serves, assess the educational needs of a community, and monitor and manage a community's political forces.

These patterns indicate that the formal training of superintendents does not emphasize the instructional aspects of a school system's operation, but does emphasize the management and maintenance of structures which, given existing institutional forms, are needed to support educational activity.

The interview data provided a slightly different view of formal training programs. Superintendents generally described their graduate school experiences as being of only limited value in preparing for the responsibilities of their occupation. For instance, when asked to what extent formal training contributed to his acquisition of administrative skills, one superintendent responded:

I'm sure it did, but I couldn't say to what degree. I'm sure it had something to do with it. (It) verified or even justified what I felt. (Superintendent M)

Another noted that:

My college work (was helpful) to the extent of providing some credentials, some academic ... respectability, the union card if you will. In terms of education, I think that was helpful. However, it was theoretical, and I don't know how else it can be ... I was good in terms of field studies ... I think it's helpful to a degree but only to a small degree. (Superintendent F)
When asked to specify how formal training programs were useful in preparing for the superintendency, superintendents responded in two ways. The first identified some general benefit which was accrued. For example, Superintendent C felt that his experiences in graduate school caused him to "think" about various issues, while Superintendent S noted that formal coursework in educational administration provided:

... That knowledge base that constitutes the institutional framework within which you've got to operate.

The second type of response identified specific courses which superintendents found to provide useful knowledge or skills. The most commonly mentioned were courses in which professors recounted their own experiences as school administrators. The following excerpts from superintendents' talk are illustrative:

A couple of professors I had were men who would relate, rather than going by the textbook, rather than being all theory, they would relate incidents they'd had. They would tell personal stories about things that happened to them, and how they had responded or reacted to them. That was helpful ... (Superintendent A)

I had good people. I think, in some instances, better people than are on the faculty at the present time at ________. Oh, I can't think of it ... That type of person who had sufficient experience. (Superintendent H)

Superintendents also reported that courses focused on the following topics were useful in preparing for the work they did: public realtions, school finance, business management, instructional supervision, and research/statistics.

Informal level socialization for occupational membership in formal training settings goes beyond the transmission of occupational skills and knowledge. Ritzer indicated that:
The informal system in the professional school serves to communicate the norms and values of the profession and, in the process, generally changes initial idealism into a more realistic view.10

Several studies have shown that characteristics of formal training programs function to at least partially imbue students with the orientations of the occupation for which they are being prepared.11 This suggests that patterns in the informal level training of superintendents in graduate school programs result in the development of orientations which coincide with their work realities.

Perhaps the most obvious pattern in the university training of superintendents is that it is conducted on a part-time basis. A majority of the superintendents interviewed received all of their university-based training in school administration on a part-time basis. The remaining eight superintendents spent at least one year as full-time students while pursuing their doctoral degrees in educational administration. However, they too pursued master's degrees as part-time students. This part-time involvement in training programs allowed all of the superintendents to continue their full-time employment as teachers in public school systems.

An analysis of the AASA survey data corroborates these interview findings. A majority (65.7%) of superintendents in the United States

10 Idem.
held a master's degree, while 16.3% held specialist certificates and another 12.5% held doctorates (See Table 4, Appendix D). Superintendents spent an average (mean) of 4.4 years studying toward their Master's degrees (See Table 9, Appendix D) with one year or two semesters of that time spent as full-time students. On the average, then, most superintendents spent only one-fourth of their formal preparation for the occupation as full-time students.

A second pattern in the preparation of superintendents in formal settings is that formal, occupational certification results from the successful completion of these preparatory programs. This is illustrated by Superintendent F's observation that:

My college work (was useful) I think to the extent of providing some credentials ... the union card if you will.

A corollary to this certification function is the instrumental completion of required courses. As the earlier discussion of the typical coursework completed by superintendents indicated, the various organizational and environmental elements which school administrators must manage and sustain are compartmentalized and dealt with in separate courses. That these courses and their substantive content are not viewed as having significant intrinsic value is suggested by the lack of importance superintendents generally attached to such coursework. Thus, completion of the courses necessary for certification is viewed as the major outcome of coursework rather than the mastery of course content.

Another important characteristic of school administration training programs is uncertainty. As has already been indicated, superintendents were generally of the opinion that their formal training did little to
prepare them for the work they do. Most who felt this way believed that the content of training programs was too "theoretical" and not sufficiently "practical." In an interesting contrast to this appraisal, superintendents who reported that their formal training experiences were helpful cited the broadening effects that resulted from exposure to varying perspectives and the conceptual bases for administrative practice. On the one hand, there was the emphasis on practicality exemplified by the following comments:

The coursework wasn't useful in terms of the points I've mentioned. Now, most of school finance changes so quickly. Believe it or not, you could have had a course two years ago and be completely outdated. Now, you know what the elements are, but you don't know the process by which they're going to come to it. Most school finance courses ... are historical and conceptualized approaches ... (Superintendent K)

You get the theory in the formal training classes of education. But being able to meld the theoretical application into the practical application is very difficult sometimes ... The person that has the more thorough knowledge may not be the person who can do the job because he doesn't have the practicality of application. (Superintendent P)

While on the other, there was an appreciation for the range of perspectives and the conceptual framework that graduate training provided:

I would say that probably I got calmed down and taught to be a little more analytical ... in the doctoral program ... They had people there from everywhere and it put things in a much different perspective. When you stay localized, you have a tendency to go with the heat of the local situation rather than a more cosmopolitan overview ... (Superintendent O)

They (courses in educational administration) are very important because ... down through the years, the decades, and really centuries, the
American people have made institutional provisions for education ... There is that knowledge base that constitutes the institutional framework within which you've got to operate. I don't know any more efficient or any more effective way of schooling the prospective superintendent on what is the institutional framework than through courses on school law, school finance ... (Superintendent S)

Although these two views clearly differ in their estimation of the general value of training programs, it is just as apparent that they agree that such programs emphasize the transmission of concepts and theories. Therein lies the source for much of the uncertainty in educational administration training programs. Those superintendents who felt they had gained little from their graduate school training pointed out that concepts and theories did not provide them with the specific methods or procedures for carrying out their work. They were frustrated by the uncertainty that stemmed from the realization that their occupation's knowledge base was incomplete, that it could not provide all the answers.

Another aspect of the uncertainty which results from the exposure of future superintendents to their occupation's knowledge base concerns the limitations of the human mind. As incomplete as the knowledge-base was, students learned that they could not completely master it. As Superintendent S noted:

\[12\]

In a study of medical education, Renee Fox found that medical students were formally and informally exposed to uncertainty to prepare them for the uncertainty in their occupation's work. Fox observed that occupational uncertainty stemmed from two sources: incomplete scientific knowledge, and physicians' limited command of existing knowledge. See: Renee Fox, "Training for Uncertainty."
He (the superintendents) better have as much knowledge of it as he can. But the interesting thing is that it will fill ... shelves in a library. But the more knowledge that the individual has of what is on those shelves, the better off he is.

Summary. In summary, the socialization of superintendents in formal settings was found to be characterized by several patterns. One general and very obvious pattern is that superintendents are trained in programs of graduate study offered by a college or university. In terms of the formal level training of superintendents -- the transmission of skills and knowledge -- an analysis of the courses taken by superintendents revealed three patterns. The first two reflect the major foci of the coursework. A great majority of the courses emphasize elements either internal (e.g. personnel, allocation of resources) or external (e.g. relevant laws, acquisition of resources, the community) to the formal organizational structure of a school district which must be sustained and/or managed by school administrators. The third pattern reflects the meanings superintendents attach to their training. Most find the coursework on the whole to be unimportant in their preparation for the superintendency. However, superintendents generally favor classes in which professors share relevant experiences from their own backgrounds as school administrators.

Three additional patterns were identified in the informal level socialization of superintendents in programs of graduate study. First, most superintendents are involved in their graduate training on a part-time basis. This allows them to maintain full-time employment in a nearby school system. Secondly, the successful completion of a training program usually results in official, occupational certification.
Coursework, then, is viewed as having instrumental rather than intrinsic value. Required courses are taken as so many steps leading to certification. Finally, training programs, particularly the substantive content of much of the coursework, are perceived as being characterized by uncertainty.

**Socialization in Non-formal Settings**

Pavalko observed that occupational socialization occurs "in two distinct settings — in formal training situations and in the actual performance of occupation."¹³ In the previous section of this chapter, characteristic patterns of the socialization of superintendents in "formal training situations" were described. Here the focus moves to the occupational socialization of superintendents which occurs in other settings.

**Vicarious initiation.** A most significant characteristic of the occupational socialization of school superintendents in non-formal training situations is that, unlike many other occupations, it begins long before an individual becomes a working member of the occupational group. As noted in the earlier description of the superintendency's recruitment structure, superintendents are drawn from a pool comprised almost entirely of members of other occupational groups involved in educational work. All but a few were classroom teachers at some point in their careers, and most served as school principals. As members of these other occupations, superintendents-to-be share certain organizational spheres with superintendents. This provides them with opportunities to

¹³Pavalko, loc. cit.
develop a special sensitivity for the many elements that make up a school system, observe superintendents at work, and develop skills as a teacher or principal which will be useful to them as superintendents.

The experiences superintendents have as members of other educational occupations can prove to be most useful in their management of school systems. Superintendent I's comments are most instructive in this regard:

I'm very fortunate that I've come up through the ranks. I've had a lot of good experiences with the jobs ... when I'm issuing a directive or an order or whatever they say comes down from on high, I always think of how will the person to whom it's directed receive it? If I were the teacher, the principal, the supervisor, how would I react to it? So, I think that having perceptions and good human interactions with other people, perceptions of what other people want, how to get them to move, is very important.

The opportunities that superintendents have, while working as teachers and principals, to observe superintendents at work is a significant part of their occupational socialization. According to superintendents' own recollections, these experiences influenced them in three very different ways. First, many superintendents were initially exposed to what superintendents did and how they did it by watching superintendents with whom they worked.

I learned by watching and working with several superintendents because each has his own techniques for handling the hidden and open pressures of the job. (Superintendent C)

I remember this one guy I worked for. He used to like to take the cabinet meeting and he'd never give his opinion. He'd get all the guys in there and he'd throw out something ... We'd go at it ... He'd listen ... He wanted the pros and the cons ... He would spend the day listening to you ... and
then he'd make up his mind. I think that was fantastic. (Superintendent O)

I got my internship in the ... superintendency at age twenty-six. I began to get that when Mr. _______ brought me here as his assistant ... because the door between his office and my office ... was open except when he had a confidential conference. And I knew what was going on in the ... superintendent's office at age twenty-six. (Superintendent S)

The exposure of future superintendents to superintendents at work also seems to serve as a rather curious attraction to the occupation. Several superintendents indicated that their early exposure to superintendents convinced them that the job was not beyond their capabilities.

I saw at the time ... some people in administration as administrators. I thought, my God, I can do it better than them. (Superintendent A)

I saw some superintendents that I worked for that I just felt I had more on the ball and could do a better job. If somebody like that can be superintendent, I can too. (Superintendent L)

Conversely, a number of superintendents indicated that they developed a great deal of respect for the occupation as a result of observing and working with superintendents, and in many cases consciously attempted to emulate those they particularly admired.

I'd say those people (superintendents) in my career, as I said, I owe a lot to them and I learned a lot from them. I think, most importantly, I admired them ... So, I think as I moved along, the people I worked for ... made a great impression on me as a young person coming along. I'd say that they had traits and qualities which, in a lot of ways, I've tried to emulate. (Superintendent F)

I was fascinated by individuals who were in the superintendency at that time, very powerful personalities. And I was, of course, heavily influenced by Mr. _______ because I worked very closely with him. And I think it was probably personal, the magnetism of some very dominant personalities. (Superintendent S)
There were a couple of administrators ... that I really kind of respected. I liked their style and kind of wanted to emulate them ... Gee, these people are administrators, and I really dig their style. Maybe that is what I'm cut out for ... (Superintendent A)

Several individuals also suggested that they learned skills as teachers and principals that were useful to them in their present positions as superintendents. Several noted that they developed skills in the area of curriculum development and instructional supervision as teachers, principals, and supervisors.

When I was at _______ ... we could try new approaches and do anything that we wanted to do ... As a high school principal, we had basic classes and some honors classes. We did some team teaching and went through quite a bit of that ... I thought I got quite adept at figuring about how it's going to work and working with teachers. (Superintendent J)

I think I gained an awful lot in just the teaching experience I had and the work I had to do in teaching regular classes, slower classes, junior high school, senior high school, the honors, the advanced placement. (Superintendent I)

Superintendents also reported that their experiences working in other education-related occupations prepared them for working and communicating with different groups and types of people. As teachers, they learned to work with individuals; and as principals, they developed skills to work with the community:

In terms of backing up and managing, I think really came from the classroom. Working with kids, you know that with this kid you can be heavy handed, with this one, you've got to be light handed in order to get them to work. And ... I realized one day ... that professional staff are the same way. They respond to different approaches. (Superintendent K)

Well, there was some carry over ... with the public relations skills from the principalship. (Superintendent L)
As principal to get some feel, in the beginning to get some feel for the principalship and working with staff and students ... (Superintendent F)

Several superintendents indicated that experience as the coach of school athletic teams was especially good preparation for the rigors of the superintendency. They suggested that coaches and superintendents were exposed to many similar pressures. For instance, both coaches and superintendents must work with varied segments of the community, cope with harsh public criticism and constant public attention, and show tangible results for their labors. This view of coaching as the training ground for superintendents is reinforced by AASA survey findings that nearly eight of ten (79.1%) superintendents served as coaches in their first full-time position in education (See Table 3, Appendix D). Similarly, half of the superintendents interviewed had worked as athletic coaches. The following excerpt from Superintendent M's comments provide an insightful description of this relationship.

That (coaching) was excellent training for me because I did have an awful lot of opportunity to meet with the people of the community at the booster's clubs all kinds of other functions. And the coach is in the center of lots of activities. And he does a lot of running when he's losing and he's very visible when he's winning. But seriously, I think it was good training in terms of meeting all of the community in both pleasant and unpleasant situations. And you had to learn to take criticism, to learn to communicate.

On-The-Job. Superintendents generally agreed that while formal training programs and experiences in other education-related occupations contributed to their preparation for the superintendency, the most important part of their occupational training occurred on the job.
Oh, I think practical experience by far (is the most important). You get theory in the formal training classes ... but being able to meld the theoretical application into the practical application is very difficult ... (Superintendent P)

I think some of the professional courses I had, especially in the doctoral program helped me a great deal, but my own actual experience is the thing that helped me most. (Superintendent I)

The analysis of interview data resulted in the identification of two other general patterns in the on-the-job socialization of superintendents: a sink-or-swim character and familiarization with existing organizational and environmental structures.

Superintendents consistently characterized their on-the-job training as a sink-or-swim affair:

Well, I think there is a sink-or-swim aspect to it. Believe me, when you are superintendent, you either sink or swim and your career is right out there on the line. And I do think you learn a lot of things you need to know that way. (Superintendent J)

I think some of them you just learn to do. If you don't, you don't survive ... Some of those are just commonsense type things ... You do it and it's successful, so you do it again, in another situation ... Hopefully, it isn't all trial and error. (Superintendent G)

Superintendents develop responses as situations arise. This is consistent with the point made earlier that formal training programs did not play an important part in preparing superintendents for their work. The following comments underscore this point:

I don't think there is any college class that can teach finance. I don't think you can learn until you get into it. They can talk about it and get some basic understandings but until you're really in the situation and have to know what's going on, I think it's impossible to understand ... (Superintendent L)
Experience and it has to be through experience
because no class, there is no teacher that can
-- because every school system is different.
(Superintendent Q)

Superintendents, then, learn about or develop structures within the
school system and in the community which affect the school system's
ability to respond to particular types of situations. In terms of the
community this includes: the tax base and the power structure. As two
superintendents noted:

You can have all the fine ideas in the world but
if you don't have the dollars to buy textbooks,
to hire the people ... This is a penny pinching
operation ... It's not the local people's fault.
There's no tax base here and the money's just
not there. (Superintendent O)

This is absolutely critical. The power structure
in any community enables me to know what my limits
are as far as operating. (Superintendent H)

It also includes structures within the organization itself such as:
personnel, administrative structure, communications, and resource allo-
cation patterns.

For example, when I came here, I went through a
traumatic six week period because I simply did
not have the expertise on the staff in a variety
of areas ... But we're organized (now) ...
(Superintendent H)

Until a superintendent learns about structures that consistently
impinge upon the school system's operation and becomes familiar with
or devises systematic responses to situations that consistently arise,
life could indeed seem a sink-or-swim proposition. The existence of
such a familiarization period might account for superintendents' comments
that the first year in a superintendency is the most challenging. One
superintendent, who could hardly be considered a neophyte having first
became a superintendent in 1959 and having served as superintendent in four school districts, noted that the first one and one-half months in his recent position were trying. Other superintendents similarly commented:

Well, I tend to think that I'm a much better superintendent than I was the first year I was superintendent. And I think certainly one grows in the position. (Superintendent T)

That first year is the big year. And then I think just starting in a good system. I really believe you can start so low you can never get out of it. (Superintendent D)

Much of the responsibility for familiarizing superintendents with existing structures falls to subordinate staff members. Faced with situations that demand responses, superintendents turn to subordinates for advice and information. Subordinates often have extensive experience in a school system, experience which enables them to provide the superintendent with information about the internal operation of the school system, as well as the social, economic, and political structures which exist in the community. The following excerpts from the interview data indicate the wide range of topics on which superintendents were schooled by their staffs:

There is no course in America that can teach a superintendent how to stop a leak in the roof. It's just something you are taught by your bus supervisor. (Superintendent R)

Every school system is different based on the tax structure that you have to work with. You have to start from the bottom and you have to learn. And you'd better hope in your first assignment that you've got a good clerk treasurer or clerk. You'd better hope you've got a good one, some backing from somebody knowledgeable enough to teach it to you. (Superintendent Q)
who is the deputy superintendent in charge of personnel, ... represents the old line of this community. I often want his opinion, particularly on political issues. (Superintendent H)

The analysis of superintendents' interview accounts showed that they described on-the-job socialization as the most important aspect of their occupational preparation, and characterized it as a largely sink-or-swim affair. These two patterns underscore the apparent importance of the familiarization of superintendents with school systems' existing response structures and with environmental structures which affect the operation and management of the school system.

Innate Characteristics and Early Socialization

The sociological literature on occupations identifies two settings in which the socialization of members and potential members of an occupational group occurs -- "formal training situations" and "the actual performance of the occupation." Thus, the search for patterns in the occupational socialization of school superintendents was initially confined to graduate-school training programs and work experience in the superintendency and other education-related occupations. However, superintendents repeatedly identified innate characteristics and early developmental experiences as important sources of necessary occupational attributes and skills. For this reason, they have been included in the description of patterns in the occupational socialization of school superintendents.

When superintendents identified the sources of skills essential to their occupation, they consistently named innate qualities and childhood

14 Idem.
experiences. In every case, superintendents linked these sources to their ability or propensity to work with people. In most cases, superintendents seemed to have difficulty differentiating both between the effects of innate ability and early socialization and between ability and propensity for working with people. The comments of two superintendents are especially illustrative:

I guess it's inherent. I like people. I always have liked people and was fortunate enough to grow up in an area where I came in contact with people from all socio-economic backgrounds and was able to get along with them. And having participated in athletics, class plays, and all other kinds of school functions, I was thrown in a very desirable way and contributed to this liking of people. But I think it's innate; it's inborn. I think you can develop it, but I was lucky enough to have it from the beginning. (Superintendent M)

I won't say that some of it you're born with. That sounds really way out there. But I do believe that some people have a certain kind of -- let's say -- personality that comes from somewhere back in the experience, their upbringing or whatever ... I've always believed I've gotten along well with people. I've enjoyed people. Now, where that came from, it would be hard for me to tell you ... But I think that is something that plays an important part ... in this whole job because you are a public figure ... So, I think just somebody's innate personality probably has something to do with that success. I do think past experiences have a great deal to do with this. I think you can learn as you come through. (Superintendent N)

Summary

The occupational socialization of school superintendents was found to be characterized by several important patterns. Three patterns were identified in the formal level training which occurs in formal preparation programs. The first two reflect the major foci of the coursework
offered in such programs. A great majority of the courses emphasize elements both internal and external to the formal organizational structure of school systems which must be managed and sustained by school administrators to support the system and its instructional program. The third pattern reflects the meanings superintendents attach to this training. Most find the coursework to be relatively unimportant in their preparation for the superintendency, although there is a tendency to favor courses in which professors recount relevant episodes from their own experience as school administrators.

Three additional patterns were identified in the informal level socialization of superintendents in formal preparation programs. First, most superintendents attend graduate school on a part-time basis, thus allowing them to maintain full-time employment as teachers in nearby school systems. Secondly, the successful completion of the program results in official, occupational certification. Coursework, then, is viewed instrumentally. Courses are largely taken and completed to merely fulfill certification requirements. Third, training programs, particularly the content of much of the coursework, are characterized by uncertainty.

The occupational socialization of superintendents in non-formal settings was found to begin long before entry into the occupation. As members of other education-related occupations -- teacher and school principal -- prospective superintendents begin their preparation for the superintendency along three dimensions. First, by observing superintendents at work they receive a vicarious initiation to the occupation. Secondly, exposure to superintendents provides two rather anomalous attractions to the occupation. By observing unimpressive superintendents, some individuals discover that the job is not beyond their capabilities, while those who are impressed by the superintendents they observe, wish
to emulate them. Third, individuals often learn skills as teachers, coaches, and principals which prove useful to them as superintendents. Of particular note here is the observation by several superintendents that coaching is especially useful training in that it provides experience in coping with public criticism and working with varied segments of a community.

The occupational socialization which occurs in performing the actual work of the superintendency is generally viewed by superintendents as the most important part of their training. More important than that which occurs in other settings. Such on-the-job training is found to be characterized by two patterns. First, it is basically viewed as a sink-or-swim situation. Superintendents are often left to their own devices to handle situations which arise. Much of this apparently results from superintendents' lack of familiarity with structures in a school system and its environment which affect the system's ability to respond to various situations. Much of the on-the-job socialization of superintendents, then, involves learning about such structures and developing strategies for managing them. This is the second pattern. In gaining such familiarity, superintendents often depend upon subordinate staff members with prior experience in the school system for information about everything from patching roofs to the community's political network.

A final pattern in superintendents' occupational preparation is the importance of factors beyond either formal training situations or nonformal, on-the-job experiences. Superintendents ascribe much of their ability and affinity for working with people, an important aspect of their work, to innate characteristics, and childhood and adolescent experiences.
General Themes Reflected in the Socialization Structure

The sociological literature on occupations indicates that occupational socialization imbues individuals with the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values peculiar to their future occupations. From this view, socialization clearly contributes to shaping the general orientations held by members of an occupational group. In the case of school superintendents the question then is, what do the patterns that characterize their socialization suggest about their occupational orientations?

It was found that the basic themes reflected in the occupational socialization patterns are fundamentally consistent with the recruitment themes described earlier. Just as the recruitment structure attracts and selects individuals oriented toward contexuality, uncertainty, movement, and conservatism; the socialization of superintendents facilitates and encourages the development of these same orientations.

Contextual Theme. The contextual theme concerns the special attention superintendents pay to the conditions which are peculiar to the school systems in which they work. This sensitivity to local conditions which affect the operation of school systems is reflected in the several occupational socialization patterns which emphasize the primacy of experiences in non-formal training settings. The first indication of such an emphasis emerges in superintendents' characterizations of their formal training as being of little importance in their preparation for the superintendency. Further, prospective superintendents by-and-large were involved in formal training programs on a part-time basis. This allowed them to maintain full-time employment as teachers in school systems.
These two patterns, together, suggest that continuous involvement with a school system is a more important component of superintendents' occupational socialization than is the formal training provided by programs of graduate study.

Several patterns that characterize the socialization of superintendents in informal settings are also consistent with this theme. First of all, superintendents identify on-the-job experience as the most important aspect of their socialization. A major part of this on-the-job socialization involves becoming familiar with the structures which exist in a school system and its environment, and which affect the system's ability to respond to various situations. This familiarization is often facilitated by subordinate staff members whose experiences in the system enable them to provide the superintendent with information about operational details as well as an analysis of the social, political and economic structure of the system's environment.

Another on-the-job socialization pattern which reflects the contextual theme is the experience that nearly all superintendents have as classroom teachers and in most instances as school principals. Not only does such experience insure that superintendents are familiar with the operation of a school system at all organizational levels, but also provides superintendents with the opportunity to develop skills for working and communicating with various groups of people. Of particular note is the experience most superintendents have as coaches of school athletic teams. Coaching, it seems, provides prospective superintendents with an opportunity to work with diverse groups in a school's community, and more importantly, to develop the ability to cope with public attention and criticism.
Thus, the informal patterns in the socialization of school superintendents emphasize the understanding of conditions in a school system and its environment which affect the operation and, therefore, the management of the system. Superintendents are socialized to respond to situations within the parameters which are set by those local conditions. Perhaps, for that reason, many superintendents discount the utility of the "concepts" and "theories" they are exposed to in formal training programs, and value the anecdotal accounts of past exploits passed on by individuals with extensive administrative experience. But as Superintendent G hastened to add:

... And you say, "Okay, can I adapt that to my situation?" I think you'd be foolish to take it verbatim and say, "Hey, it's worked there, it's going to work for me in my district." Things in X aren't going to work in Y ...

Superintendents are socialized to carefully consider the special nature of the contexts in which they work.

Uncertainty Theme. Uncertainty is the second theme reflected in several patterns of the occupational socialization of school superintendents. Uncertainty, it will be recalled, concerns the degree to which superintendents lack an understanding of or control over causes of events relevant to their work. Patterns in the socialization structure suggest that the preparation of superintendents in both formal and informal settings encourages the development of an orientation conducive to coping with uncertainty.

The socialization which occurs in formal training programs is characterized by patterns which reflect various manifestations of uncertainty with which prospective superintendents must cope. First, it was found that the course work which superintendents took in formal
school administrator training programs covered a wide range of topics. For example, course topics as varied as personnel administration, finance systems, school plant planning, and child growth and development were each judged important by over 80 percent of the AASA survey sample. It is unlikely that very many, if any, students could master the total range of topics covered in the typical training program. This suggests one form of uncertainty which prospective superintendents must come to grips with, the inability to master all knowledge conventionally acknowledged to be relevant to the management of school systems. Most superintendents implied in their interview responses that they have strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others.

One is the whole area of financial planning. I see myself very much involved in that. That is not the strongest area for me ... (Superintendent N)

I wish I had more work in school law. (Superintendent K)

Well, in my own case, I had accounting, bookkeeping background. I started out to be a CPA. So, that was one of my strongest areas ... (Superintendent E)

A second pattern of formal training programs which suggests yet another type of uncertainty is the lack of importance superintendents attach to coursework as preparation for the work they do. Superintendents tended to indicate that the information provided in their courses was generally too "conceptual" or "theoretical" to be of much use to them in handling actual situations which arose in their work. This view of formal course work was underscored by a tendency among superintendents to value courses in which professors recounted specific episodes from their experiences as school administrators. Superintendents found it helpful to hear how others had handled actual situations. But they
generally found their formal training to have very limited application to the actual work they performed. This suggests that the limitations of the occupational knowledge-base itself are a source of uncertainty for superintendents. Quite simply, what is reliably known about the administration of school systems does not provide well defined prescriptions which individuals can apply to specific situations they confront as superintendents. Thus, patterns in the formal training experiences of superintendents informally prepare them to cope with uncertainties which stem from both their inability to master all available knowledge and the incomplete nature of the knowledge base, itself.

Two patterns identified in the socialization of superintendents in non-formal settings are also consistent with the development of an orientation which accommodates uncertainty. The first is closely related to the uncertainty which stems from the limitations of the occupational knowledge-base transmitted in formal training programs. Superintendents indicated that their most important training occurred on-the-job. They further characterized this aspect of their socialization as a sink-or-swim proposition. Since, as indicated above, the occupation's knowledge base is not developed to the point of prescribing specific procedures which superintendents can apply to specific situations, occupation members largely learn by doing. They respond to situations as they arise. As Superintendent G observed, much is learned by trial and error. The socialization of superintendents which occurs in the actual performance of the occupation, then, reinforces the development of an orientation which accommodates uncertainty — a lack of reliable knowledge of and control over the causes of relevant events. The manner in which uncertainty is accommodated in the on-the-job socialization of superintendents suggests that occupational uncertainty results in superintendents developing
reactive rather than proactive tendencies.

A second pattern in the non-formal occupational socialization process which is consistent with an orientation toward the accommodation of uncertainty is the tendency among superintendents to credit unexplainable or uncontrollable causes for the existence of occupational skills. They identified innate characteristics and childhood experiences as the sources for much of their ability to interact with people, something superintendents identified as an important part of their work. This acceptance of poorly understood and, thus, uncertain bases for important occupational skills would certainly orient superintendents to the accommodation of uncertainty in their occupational life.

Movement Theme. Patterns in the occupational socialization of superintendents are also characterized by a movement theme. Movement involves the perceived, willful alteration of some condition. Implicit in this theme is a time dimension since any movement, however small or great, occurs over some span of time-elapsed.

One place in the occupational socialization of superintendents where movement is emphasized is in formal training programs. The successful completion of the required coursework in such programs usually results in formal, occupational certification. Since superintendents find such coursework contributes little to their occupational preparation, it might be safely assumed that the completion of courses holds little intrinsic value. However, as the completion of the total set of prescribed courses results in occupational licensure, the courses can be expected to have an instrumental value. That is, they will be viewed as steps which must be taken to gain certification. Movement towards an externally defined goal is emphasized.
Movement is also apparent in the socialization of superintendents in non-formal settings. Superintendents characteristically don't become superintendents until they have worked in other education-related occupations. Given superintendents' perceptions of the superintendency as the "top" position in the administrative hierarchy of school systems, selection into the occupation is viewed as a "move up." Superintendent F referred to his entire career as "moving up" through several "phases," while Superintendent J spoke of moving to "the top seat." The informal socialization of superintendents exposes them to a world in which movement is valued.

Apparent in these two socialization patterns which reflect the movement theme is a futuristic tendency. In both cases, prospective superintendents encounter a world where the present — completing a course, or working as a teacher or principal — has meaning in terms of its relationship to objectives which lie in the future — certification or the superintendency.

Thus, socialization patterns in both formal and non-formal settings indicate that movement, especially in the sense of progressing towards something, is an orientation which characterizes the occupation of school superintendent.

Conservatism is the final theme which emerged from patterns found in the socialization of school superintendents. The formal training of superintendents emphasizes the maintenance of various organizational elements such as finance, personnel, and buildings. Not once did a superintendent identify as useful a course which dealt with changing schools in a fundamental way. On the other hand, superintendents did
tend to favor courses in which professors recounted specific episodes from their own experiences as administrators. Superintendents found the information provided in these accounts to be practical and useful. Such exposure of prospective superintendents to past superintendents lends itself to maintaining continuity in the practice of the occupation.

Conservatism is also reinforced by patterns in the socialization of superintendents in non-formal settings. Prospective superintendents, while working as teachers and principals, are provided with opportunities to observe superintendents at work. This exposure, much like the accounts shared by ex-superintendent/professors, functions to preserve continuity in the occupational practice from one generation of superintendents to the next. Additionally, individuals who spend their entire working lives in one institutional setting, as superintendents do, and aspire to and attain positions of leadership in that setting will likely be positively disposed toward existing institutional structures and practices.

A final indication of the conservative orientation among superintendents lies in their identification of innate characteristics as a major source of occupational skills. The citing of irreversible, inbred characteristics to explain a poorly understood phenomenon (i.e. the sources or causes of occupational skills) exposes a possible tendency among superintendents to view major portions of their occupational reality as non-malleable or irreversible.

Summary. Four themes are apparent in the patterns which characterize the occupational socialization structure of the school superintendency: 1. a sensitivity to the context in which an individual functions; 2. an accommodation of uncertainty; 3. a tendency towards movement, and;
4. conservatism. These same themes exist in the recruitment of occupational members. These general themes which emerge consistently across occupational structures suggest basic orientations which individuals are encouraged to sustain or develop as they are first recruited and then socialized for occupational membership.

Occupational Rewards

In modern industrial societies, occupational rewards are very often measured in terms of the money and prestige afforded members of a given occupational group. However, Lortie has demonstrated the importance of considering both monetary and non-monetary rewards which individuals "derive from their work" to develop a more complete understanding of an occupation. The description of the occupational rewards of the school superintendency, then, will focus upon both types.

Monetary Rewards

Since superintendents tended to identify the salary commanded by their occupation as an attraction, it is not at all surprising that they identified the same as an occupational reward. And, as was the case with salary as an attraction, superintendents' feelings about salary as a reward are tinged with ambivalence. They suggested that salary could not seriously be viewed as a reward, considering how poorly their salaries compared with occupations outside of public education. On the other hand, they viewed it as a reward because it compared favorably with the salaries

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16 Lortie, op. cit., p. 82.
paid to all other education-related occupations. Superintendent T's comments illustrate this predicament:

I'm sure that it (salary) plays a role, and it's sort of like when I went to work on my master's and somebody says more opportunities for more dollars, and I'm sure as I've moved from one position to another ... Now there are many superintendents that are there solely because they can make twice as much as they did as teachers, or at least a high percentage. And, in my case, that was not the significant factor. But I also know that, at the time, back ten years ago, with three boys I could hopefully send to school some time, that it probably played a bigger factor than I remember it playing right now. I'm not answering your question very well; but it does, it definitely plays a role. It's sort of a known fact that if one remains a teacher in this state, or in most states, you are never going to get far ahead, or accumulate very much wealth ... 

Despite this ambivalence, it is apparent that within the context of their careers in public education, superintendents do view salary as a reward. That being the case, a pattern in the occupational reward structure of superintendents is a focus on the future. The monetary reward of educational work increases as an individual moves through a career line which includes teaching, administrative work and culminates in the superintendency. This conclusion is reinforced by findings resulting from an analysis of AASA survey data. It was found that superintendents began their educational careers, most probably as teachers, at the mean age of 24 (see Table 6, Appendix D), entered their first administrative position at the average age of 30.4 years (see Table 10, Appendix D), and were appointed to their first superintendency at the average age of 36.7 (see Table 11, Appendix D). This suggests that superintendents, on the whole, moved in roughly six year cycles to new, better paying positions in public education. Thus, the occupational
reward structure for superintendents is characterized by a futuristic tendency.

However, the future no longer holds much promise for an increase in salary once an individual reaches the superintendency. An analysis of AASA survey data found that superintendents remained an average of 6.4 years in their first superintendency, 5.9 years in their second, 5.9 years in their third, and 6.7 years in their fourth. Analysis of other data collected by the AASA survey of school superintendents found that salary increases for each succeeding superintendency amounted to: 18.8% in the second superintendency, 1.4% in the third and 12.4% in the fourth (see Table 7, Appendix D). Thus, while superintendents' salaries did increase as they moved from superintendency to superintendency, such increases were insignificant, given the number of years spent in each job and given the rate of economic growth in the United States since the 1940s.

So, it seems that the monetary reward structure for the occupation of school superintendent is somewhat, but not totally characterized by a futuristic tendency. As individuals move from teaching to the superintendency, they cannot and, perhaps do not look forward to substantial increases as they move from the superintendency in one school system to the same positions in other systems.

Non-monetary Rewards

According to superintendents' interview accounts, monetary rewards were not viewed as the most important aspect of their occupation's reward structure. They explained that the most important reward was the sense of personal gratification which came with the successful accomplishment of important organizational goals. This view is evident in Superintendent M's comment:
Well, it has to be personal gratification ... What I'm saying (is) you're not going to get any credit ... you're totally a background type person. So, you know, you have to look at that situation from your own personal gratification. I got that thing done.

Thus, an important pattern in the occupational reward structure of the school superintendency is the primacy of intrinsic rewards.

Superintendents identified three types of accomplishments which were particularly rewarding: the recognition of successful students, the recognition of successful staff members, and the completion of an organizational project.

Superintendents reported that they felt particularly gratified when they were made aware of a student or alumni of their school systems who had achieved a measure of success. The following comments are illustrative:

... seeing students graduate and go on and master other things in all walks of life ... see kids go on and do good. (Superintendent D)

When you see students that have gone through your system that have become successful. Maybe a doctor, or a lawyer, or a research specialist ... or just, you know, the local garage man whose got a successful business. (Superintendent G)

Getting something done and accomplished from the standpoint of helping kids and, at the same time, helping, or, indirectly helping, the community. (Superintendent K)

The last of these statements points up three dimensions of this occupational reward which deserve attention. First, it indicates that by having a hand in producing students who go on to lead successful and productive lives, superintendents believe they are contributing to the welfare of the community-at-large. As Superintendent E suggested:
It's seeing some of these students that come back and make a success of their life once they become married and have children of their own. You find that to be building a better community in which you live and the schools exist. Making it a better place for people.

A second dimension is an apparent tendency among superintendents to emphasize the achievement of individuals. With all that is involved in managing a school system, superintendents identified the gratification which comes from the achievement of personal success by individual students and alumni as one of the basic rewards available to occupational members. Despite the limited contact superintendents have with students, "helping kids" is still apparently very much on their minds. This concern is expressed by superintendents in many guises, as the following comments illustrate:

... Knowing that I'm now placing emphasis on actual instruction in the classroom is most rewarding ... (Later in the interview) when I see our kids or teachers stepping out into the limelight and really showing that good things are happening in the schools, that's the greatest feeling as superintendent. (Superintendent I)

Well, I have some rather strong feelings about the fact that schools are for educating youngsters and so I wanted very much to have youngsters have many learning opportunities and options. (Superintendent J)

I think everyone should have experience at the elementary level so that they are familiar with the whole area of growth and development of children. (Superintendent C)

While these statements concern the education of all students, superintendents derive a special sense of gratification from the achievement of individual students.

A third dimension of the gratification which comes from seeing students succeed concerns an inherent uncertainty that is exposed. Given
the multiplicity of factors which affect student performance, adult success, or community well-being, it is impossible to determine just how much any one individual, especially one as impersonally associated with the instruction of students as a superintendent, has contributed to the lives of individuals or the quality of life in a community. Note that Superintendent K used the term "indirectly" to describe his contribution. The following comment further captures the ambiguity of this relationship and also indicates how superintendents explain their contribution:

You think, "Golly, I may not have had direct bearing, but, at least, I was able to communicate to the public to the degree that they support the school so he could have an education." The way I contributed may not be directly with his day-to-day activity ...
(Superintendent M)

In much the same way that superintendents reported being rewarded by the success of individual students and alumni, they also reported that the personal gratification which came from seeing individual staff members succeed professionally served as an occupational reward. Some superintendents noted only that they derived a general sense of gratification when members of their staffs achieved a measure of success. Superintendent I's comment is illustrative:

17 Downs has noted that "it is often hard to evaluate a given man's performance solely with reference to markets," even in profit-making organizations. He noted that the performance of a plant manager cannot be judged fairly by market results given the many events over which he/she has no control that affect the organization's profit. Similarly, superintendents of schools cannot specifically identify their contribution to the education of students in their school system. See: Anthony Downs, Inside Bureaucracy (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967, pp. 24-31.
When I see our kids and teachers stepping out into the limelight and really showing that good things are happening in the schools — to me, that's the greatest feeling as a superintendent. It gives me a feeling of joy and pride.

Other superintendents, especially those working in smaller districts, were more specific in describing their relationship to the success enjoyed by staff members. The predominant theme among these superintendents was that an employee's performance was the test of their decision to hire that individual.

Seeing people you go out and recruit; you hire them; you bring them in and they do a fantastic job. (Superintendent O)

When you know you selected the right person for the right job. (Superintendent C)

Even those superintendents who emphasized the development of staff members focused on the importance of their part in the decision to hire successful staff members:

I think that the thing I like best about it (the superintendency) is the ability to develop people. That, I enjoy ... I do enjoy, for example, the new people we bring in, and I normally pick people by instinct. I either like them or I don't. And if I like them, I will do most anything for them to get them where we want to get them. That's fun. I enjoy the people part of it. I think that's very rewarding. (Superintendent H)

... Seeing teachers turn into master teachers. Since I've been here, I've moved three teachers into principalships and seen them succeed on their own and felt my decision to move them in that area ... was right. I could have been totally wrong, but pat myself on the back — smart move. (Superintendent R)

The reward which comes to superintendents from the success of staff members is characterized by two dimensions: a focus on individual achievement and uncertainty regarding the superintendent's contribution. Both
patterns were also found in the occupational reward linked to student achievement.

Although superintendents manage organizations comprised of anywhere from a handful to thousands of employees, they find the success of a few of these staff members gratifying. As some of the excerpts from superintendents' talk noted, this might be accounted for by the tendency for superintendents to assess the wisdom of their own decisions by focusing on the performance of staff members they had a direct hand in selecting. However, Superintendent I's comment, which noted his exhilaration over seeing "teachers stepping out into the limelight," suggests that seeking gratification by focusing on a few outstanding members of a staff has a more general basis among occupational members. The data, however, provide no direct indication of what that basis might be.

A second aspect of this reward is its ambiguity. Certainly, for a member of an occupation to derive some reward from an event, a connection must be perceived between the work of the occupation and that event. In this case, superintendents must believe that they contribute to the success enjoyed by an employee. However, given the complex and, to this point, poorly understood set of factors which affect the performance of a teacher or principal in a given setting, it is impossible to assess the extent to which a superintendent can affect the performance of a staff member. Thus, the occupational reward a superintendent derives from the success of staff members, like that derived from the success of students and alumni, is not related to any objective assessment of personal efficacy.

In the case of staff members, superintendents, particularly in
smaller districts and to a lesser extent in larger ones, are either responsible for, or directly involved, in their selection and assignment. Thus, it is not surprising that, as the above excerpts from the interview data indicate, superintendents tend to derive meaning from the successful performance of staff members whom they had a hand in hiring. However, the selection of personnel is fraught with uncertainty for much the same reason that it is difficult to assess the contribution made by a superintendent to the success of a subordinate staff member. How does one rationally select a classroom teacher, for example, in the face of incomplete knowledge regarding the skills, knowledge, and personal attributes required for competence in that line of work, and limited information about candidates? The uncertainty of personnel selection is apparent in Superintendent H's comment that he, "normally picks people by instinct," and in Superintendent R's expressed fear that he, "could have been totally wrong." In the face of this ambiguity, superintendents tend to approach personnel decisions on a pragmatic basis. When a particular position is open, an attempt is made to fill it with a person whose known attributes match up with the known expectations for that position. As Superintendent C noted, he attempted to, "select the right person for the right job."

Superintendents also reported that they were rewarded by the feeling of accomplishment which came from the completion of an organizational project.

Basically, what I really enjoy in terms of seeing projects undertaken and accomplished, in terms of seeing a school system really growing ...
(Superintendent F)

The satisfaction of seeing a job completed.
(Superintendent P)
These projects concern various aspects of a school system’s operation, as the following comments illustrate:

I enjoy the fact that when I came here ... no one had ever built a football field ... So, here was that chance to accept a challenge and, in eleven months, we had raised sixty-thousand dollars ... and had completed a new football field, track stadium, baseball diamond ... the whole thing. (Superintendent B)

Definitely, it's come next September or the middle of next year when I go in and see what the fifth and sixth grade honors program is doing. That's rewarding. (Superintendent L)

Well, you look out the window ... toward the other building. I was involved from the time that the consolidation took place until seven years later when we finally put kids together. Seven years later, we finally passed a bond issue and built a new high school building ... Passing the bond issue, and building a new high school, and getting over half of the kids in the district in one location has been the most satisfying thing that has happened to me ... (Superintendent Q)

In Ohio, because of our method of financing, we ran a levy campaign last Fall. In a time when about half of them were going down to defeat, we were successful. That's very rewarding. (Superintendent K)

Each of the projects identified by superintendents as providing a rewarding sense of gratification upon their completion resulted in an identifiable outcome. The most obvious example is the construction of a new facility. Although the nation's public schools are faced with declining student enrollments and resulting school closings, nearly half of the superintendents interviewed noted that the construction of a new school or other district facility was a rewarding experience.

New or revised instructional program components were a second example of identifiable, project outcomes which superintendents tended to describe as providing a sense of gratification. Over one-half of the superintendents in the interview sample indicated that changing
their districts' instructional program was a rewarding experience. These changes included the adoption of: an honors program for fifth and sixth graders (Superintendent L), an individualized instructional program for elementary grades (Superintendent N), a textbook centered curriculum (Superintendent A), and a high school graphic arts program (Superintendent B). While curricular changes such as these certainly are not as concretely tangible as newly constructed buildings, they do represent identifiable changes in the structure of a school system's instructional program which can be recognized by staff and community members, alike.18

Summary

The occupational reward structure of the school superintendency is comprised of both monetary and non-monetary rewards.

Because superintendents perceive their salaries to be relatively greater than those earned by teachers and principals, but lower than those earned by members of occupations of similar status and responsibility outside of public education, they are somewhat ambivalent about salary as an occupational reward. Despite this ambivalence, superintendents do tend to view their salaries, which are greater than those of other education-related occupations, as a reward for working as the chief administrative

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18 Meyer and Rowan described the structure of educational organizations as the "blue print" for organizational activity. Structure is comprised of the formal categories which identify offices, departments, positions, programs, and participants. They suggested that such structure is erected to mirror institutional rules in the organization's environment. From this perspective, the curricular changes identified by superintendents can be viewed as tangible alterations in the structure of their school systems. See: John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organizations" in Marshall Meyer (ed.) Environments and Organizations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1978), pp. 78-109.
officers of their school systems. Because nearly all superintendents worked as members of these other education-related occupations prior to becoming superintendents, the monetary reward structure is characterized by a futuristic tendency. However, as the probability is low that an individual will enjoy substantial salary increases over a career as superintendent, the monetary reward structure of the school superintendent is only partially futuristic.

Although superintendents admit that money serves as an occupational reward, they tend to emphasize the greater importance of non-monetary, intrinsic rewards. Three types of events provide them with a rewarding sense of gratification.

First, superintendents are rewarded by the recognition of students who achieve a measure of success. Superintendents perceive these graduates to be the school system's contribution to the community-at-large. Because it is impossible to assess the superintendent's contribution to student achievement, let alone community well being, the rewarding event is characterized by an inherent uncertainty.

Similarly, superintendents are rewarded when they find that a member of the school system's staff is doing outstanding work. This event, too, is shrouded in uncertainty. It is no more apparent how a superintendent contributes to the success of students than it is how he/she contributes to the success of staff members. In districts where superintendents are directly involved in hiring personnel (this includes most superintendents interviewed), they tend to focus on the performance of individuals whom they hired.

The third type of event that superintendents find gratifying is the
completion of project, particularly those which result in tangible outcomes. Superintendents tend to emphasize the construction of new facilities and the adoption of new curricular components, both of which are viewed as tangible accomplishments.

**General Themes Reflected in the Reward Structure**

The four general themes which are reflected in the patterns of both the recruitment and socialization structures are also apparent in the patterns of the occupational reward structure. The four recurrent themes are: a sensitivity to context, an emphasis on movement, the accommodation of uncertainty, and a conservative tendency.

**Contextual Theme.** Three patterns of the superintendency's occupational reward structure reflect the sensitivity to contextual conditions which is evident in the patterns of both the recruitment and socialization structure. The first is the belief among superintendents that school systems ultimately benefit their communities by producing graduates who lead productive, adult lives. This suggests that school officials must be aware of the norms and needs of the community to insure that what the school system produces -- graduates -- will coincide with what a community needs or wants. This pattern emphasizes the social context within which superintendents manage their school systems.

The occupation's strong emphasis upon intrinsic rewards seems consistent with the service aspect of the contextual theme. Because superintendents are paid salaries substantially lower than those received by members of many other professions, they can lay claim to the image of the
selfless community servant. As Superintendent F observed:

I think ... I probably would have taken some other avenue if it was strictly finance. So, I think that there was a service, public service commitment which I enjoy.

As noted above, a service orientation is fundamentally bound by contextual conditions as individuals must understand the people of a community before they can know how to serve them.

The third pattern which reflects the contextual theme emphasizes the institutional context in which superintendents work. Superintendents tend to view the monetary rewards of their occupation with ambivalence. On the one hand, they believe that their salaries do not compare favorably with salaries earned by members of occupations with similar responsibilities and stature outside of public education. While on the other, they acknowledge that it is of some importance to them that their salaries are greater than those earned by members of any other occupational group employed by public school systems. This pattern suggests that superintendents will have developed a strong commitment to public education since it is within that institutional context that they are monetarily rewarded.

Therefore, the occupational reward structure is consistent with the maintenance of a tendency among superintendents to be responsive to the interests of both the people who work within the institutional context of the school system as well as those who live in the community served by that system.

Movement Theme. An emphasis on movement is a dominant theme of the patterns that characterize the occupational reward of the superintendency. In fact, each of the patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of their occupation's reward structure reflect the movement theme. The
futuristic aspect of the monetary reward structure involves the passage of an individual through a career line which leads from teaching to administrative work and culminates in the superintendency. The sense of movement is quite apparent in this pattern.

The movement theme is not as obvious in the reward patterns which focus upon the success of students and staff members. In both cases, interview data suggest that superintendents are gratified by the success of others because such success is viewed as the result of processes to which superintendents believe they contribute. Thus, the success of students and staff members which brings gratification to superintendents is seen as the culmination of the movement of students through the school system's educational program and of staff members through the hiring process and in-service training, all of which superintendents believe they directly or indirectly affect. Thus, movement again emerges as a basic theme.

Finally, the tendency among superintendents to derive gratification from the completion of organizational projects is characterized by movement on two levels. First, to superintendents the completion of a project is viewed as movement towards and the final attainment of such tangible goals as: passage of a levy to increase taxes, construction of a new building, or the implementation of a new curricular component. Second, completion of such projects is viewed as movement on a higher level. Superintendents tend to see the outcomes to which these projects are directed as improvements in the school system. Thus, the completion of one project, the attainment of one more goal, is perceived as moving the district a step further along the road of improvement.
Thus, each of the patterns identified in the reward structure of the school superintendency reflects an emphasis on movement. An inherent aspect of the movement theme is a future-time dimension which also characterizes each of the reward patterns. As already noted, the monetary reward structure lends itself to a futuristic tendency among superintendents. Similarly, the patterns which indicate that superintendents view the success achieved by students and teachers and the completion of projects as rewarding events suggest that the occupation is characterized by a tendency to focus on the culmination of processes which occur over some span of time.

Conservative Theme. Conservatism is the third theme which is evident in the patterns that characterize the superintendency's rewards structure. Interestingly, some of the patterns that reflect the movement theme reflect the conservative theme as well. For instance, the monetary aspect of the reward structure suggests movement because as an individual moves from teacher to superintendent, he/she can expect to earn an increasingly greater salary. However, that reward pattern is based upon an apparently congruent hierarchical structure -- the higher the position is, the greater the salary it commands. This suggests that superintendents, being in the position that benefits most from such an arrangement, would be positively disposed to the maintenance of the existing structure, clearly a conservative stance.

Similarly, the tendency among superintendents to derive gratification from the success enjoyed by students is at once characterized by both movement and conservative themes. As noted earlier, the success which comes to students is viewed as an outcome of their movement through the school system's educational program. However, it is also consistent with the conservative theme, since superintendents tend to measure success
by standards which reflect existing social norms of the communities in which they work. For example, students who enter professions that place them at the upper end of the class structure or who otherwise fit into community-life are considered particularly successful.

So, the conservative theme is reflected in the occupational reward structure side-by-side with an apparent occupational emphasis on movement. This suggests that superintendents might well tend towards movement which reinforces existing values in the social environment, a notion which will be discussed later in the description of the occupational ethos of the school superintendency.

Uncertainty Theme. The final theme which patterns in the occupational reward structure reflect is the accommodation of uncertainty. Two patterns in superintendents' descriptions of their occupation's reward structure suggest that they find their work rewarding in spite of limited knowledge concerning the extent of their contribution to events which provide occupational gratification.

An important source of gratification for superintendents is the recognition of the success enjoyed by individual students, alumni, and staff members. Superintendents believe that they contribute to such success in the course of performing their occupation's work. However, it is not clear just what that contribution is.

The extent and form of a superintendent's contribution to a student's or staff member's success is uncertain. As Downs noted, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of managers even in profit making organizations because of the effects of factors over which a manager has no control.¹⁹

¹⁹Downs, loc. cit.
In an enterprise such as education, where even the basic technology, teaching, is not clearly understood and where the standard for organizational assessment is open to debate, it is even more difficult to assess the contribution of managerial personnel like a superintendent. In spite of this uncertainty, superintendents derive an important sense of gratification from the recognition of students and staff who have achieved some measure of success. This suggests that for superintendents to be able to receive an important occupational reward, they must be able to accommodate a high degree of uncertainty regarding their personal contribution to important organizational products.

In the case of the success enjoyed by staff members, superintendents do identify one concrete contribution they make. They indicate that the success of a staff member bears out their decision to hire that individual. However, even such decisions are fraught with uncertainty as the specific pattern of skills, attributes, and knowledge that enable an individual to work effectively as a teacher or principal has yet to be identified. Superintendents' descriptions of the strategy they employ to select staff indicate one way they respond to decisional uncertainty. They employ a situational approach. When a particular position opens, they seek to fill it with an individual from the pool of applicants whose known attributes or skills match best the known expectations for that position. Superintendent 0 summed up this approach when he explained that he, "got the right person in the right place at the right time."

Summary. Like the recruitment and socialization structures, the patterns in superintendents' descriptions of their occupation's reward structure reflect four basic themes: a sensitivity to context, an emphasis
on movement, conservatism, and the accommodation of uncertainty. The patterns which emphasize service to the community and salary as a reward only within the institutional context of public education are consistent with a commitment among occupational members to respond to contextual elements, both within and external to formal educational organizations. Superintendents are rewarded by salary and receive gratification from the success achieved by students and staff members, as well as from the completion of organizational projects. These reward patterns seem to reflect an occupational emphasis on movement through processes to reach outcomes. However, the same monetary reward pattern and focus upon the achievement of students are consistent with a conservative outlook. Finally, the difficulty of assessing a superintendent's contributions to the outcomes which they identify as gratifying exposes an occupational accommodation of uncertainty.

**Occupational Orientations**

As indicated in Chapter One, the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents was approached from two perspectives. The first involved the identification of the basic orientations of occupational group members based upon an analysis of occupational structures. The analysis of interview and survey data concerning three structures — recruitment, socialization, and reward — has resulted in the identification of four general themes which characterized the patterns in these structures. Those themes are: a sensitivity to context, uncertainty and its accommodation, an emphasis on movement, and a tendency towards conservatism.
If social structures are viewed as processes which maintain a system's existing form, then these themes which persist across occupational structures can reasonably be inferred to reflect occupational tendencies which are most consistently reinforced and are, therefore, the dominant orientations shared by occupational members.

Thus, a general finding of this study is that the occupation of school superintendent is characterized by contextual, quasi-fatalistic, movement, and conservative orientations.

Superintendents tend to be sensitive to the contexts within which they work. They pay special attention to both organizational and environmental conditions and events. Patterns in occupational recruitment, socialization, and reward structures suggest that superintendents are keenly aware of the nature of the work done by teachers and principals. Other patterns indicate that superintendents are motivated to serve their communities and are consequently sensitive to community needs and opinions.

Superintendents also have only limited understandings of the causes of occupational events. They tend to credit luck for their recruitment into the occupation. Their socialization exposes them to the limits of occupational knowledge, as well as their own limitations in mastering what knowledge exists. Even the occupation's rewards are not often clearly tied to occupational performance. Thus, in the face of limited understandings of and a lack of control over relevant events, superintendents tend toward an almost fatalistic orientation.

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Patterns in all three occupational structures indicate that superintendents respond to occupational uncertainty in two distinct ways. First, they emphasize identifiable outcomes. Since causes are often not understood and, therefore, not controllable, superintendents can point only to outcomes as tangible evidence of their work. Secondly, superintendents tend to operate reactively rather than proactively. When causes are poorly understood, reaction to events as they occur is a likely response. So, superintendents are characterized by a quasi-fatalistic orientation. Much but not all of their occupational life is fraught with uncertainty. And the uncertainty is accommodated by emphasizing outcomes and reactivity.

An emphasis on movement characterizes the third occupational orientation of school superintendents. Several dimensions of superintendents' careers reflect this orientation. Patterns in the three occupational structures indicate that superintendents tend to move occupationally from teacher to principal to superintendent. Superintendents associate this career movement with increases in personal authority and salary.

Superintendents also emphasize movement of another kind. They are committed to the improvement of their school systems in general and their educational programs specifically. As movement is taken to mean the alteration of a given condition or the action resulting in such alteration, improvement is clearly an example of movement as it involves the positive alteration of some existing state.

A conservative orientation is the fourth which characterizes the occupation of school superintendent. Patterns in the occupation's recruitment, socialization, and reward structures indicate a tendency among
occupational members to be positively disposed toward existing organizational structures and present institutional forms. The structural patterns which contribute most to this orientation are superintendents' career long commitments and exposure to a single institutional setting, and the attraction of the superintendency's position atop the administrative hierarchy.

The recruitment, socialization, and reward structures of the school superintendent occupation reflect four basic occupational orientations: contextual, quasi-fatalistic, movement, and conservative. At the risk of oversimplification, it appears that individuals who tend towards these orientations are recruited into the occupation; members and prospective members are socialized to adopt or strengthen their attachment to them; finally, these orientations are reinforced as occupational members go about the day-to-day work of the superintendency.

This completes the first phase leading to the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents. The second and final phase involves the analysis of superintendents' descriptions of their day-to-day tasks and the meanings they attach to them. The findings which resulted from that analysis are described in the following chapter, Chapter Five.
The description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents was approached along two dimensions. In the preceding chapter data which reflected upon three occupational structures were analyzed for themes which suggested basic orientations shared by members of that occupational group. The second occupational dimension involves the meanings and sentiments which occupational members attach to and generate from the actual tasks which characterize the work of an occupation. In this chapter, then, this second dimension of the occupation of school superintendents will be probed. The findings which resulted from an analysis of superintendents' descriptions of four aspects of their work are reported. These four are: tasks and roles; necessary attributes, skills, and knowledge; assessment; and satisfaction. The analysis of each of these aspects of superintendents' work proceeded in two phases. In the first phase, patterns which emerged from superintendents' responses in interview sessions were identified. Phase
two involved the description of basic themes reflected in the patterns identified in phase one of the analysis.

In the fifth and final section of this chapter, the findings from the analyses of the four aspects of the work of superintendents will be synthesized in a description of the meanings and sentiments which characterize that occupation.

**Occupational Tasks and Roles**

Like the members of any occupation, superintendents of schools are involved in a set of tasks and activities which is peculiar to their occupation. While it is true that each discrete task which superintendents attend to will in all probability be found in the repertoires of any number of occupations, the interest here is in general characteristics of that combination of tasks which characterizes the work of superintendents.

The work of superintendents was analyzed on two levels. First, the day-to-day tasks which superintendents reported that they typically performed were examined to identify the general patterns which characterize the occupation's work as perceived by members of that occupational group. Then, superintendents' descriptions of the general responsibilities were analyzed to identify the set of roles which are characteristic of the superintendency.

**Superintendents' Tasks**

All occupations are characterized by the specific tasks or activities which are typically performed by their members. If human beings derive meanings from social interaction as Blumer contended and if
language reflects such meanings as Mead suggested, then patterns which emerge in occupation group members' descriptions of their tasks should provide some insight to meanings which they attach to the work they do.

An analysis of superintendents' descriptions of their daily occupational tasks and activities uncovered a single, dominant pattern. Superintendents' work is largely comprised of communicating through various media and in various settings with individuals and groups. Superintendents communicate with elements internal to the formal organizational structure of their school systems as well as with elements in the school system's environment. In fact, of the fourteen tasks named by superintendents, only one, checking on progress relative to "the yearly schedule", did not necessarily involve interacting and/or communicating with people.

**Internal communications.** Superintendents indicated that they communicated with staff members and members of their boards of education on a consistent basis. With the exception of the two who worked in large-city school districts, superintendents agreed that they interacted far more with their staffs than with board members.

Three patterns mark superintendents' communications with staff members. First, the amount of time a superintendent reported spending with a particular member of his/her staff tended to be directly related to that member's position within the formal, administrative hierarchy. For instance, superintendents almost always ranked their staffs in descending order of the amount of time they spent interacting with them: 1. central office administrators 2. principals 3. teachers.

In the very smallest districts which did not have central office
administrators other than the superintendent, superintendents usually reported that they interacted most with school principals. In these same districts, superintendents tended to communicate more with members of their non-instructional staffs (e.g. bus drivers, mechanics, cooks, custodians) than with teachers. This is apparently due to superintendents of such small systems having to be responsible for many of the basic operations of a school system, including: transportation, food services, and maintenance. Superintendents of larger districts, of course, had supervisors who were assigned to oversee the non-instructionally related aspects of their districts' operations. However, superintendents never mentioned communicating with these supervisors.

The second pattern which characterizes superintendents' communications with staff members is that they tend to occur in face-to-face encounters. These encounters occur in any one of three situations.

Superintendents reported that one situation in which they communicated with staff members was formally convened meetings or "conferences". In fact, a majority of the superintendents in the interview sample reported that such formalized encounters with staff were a typical occurrence in their work. Consistent with the hierarchical pattern of interaction noted above, most of these meetings involved central office staff members. Superintendents, with the exception of those working in the largest systems, tended to also have regularly scheduled meetings with principals. Superintendents also reported communicating with teachers in formal meeting situations. However, they did not meet with all teachers in such settings; they met only with small, "representative" groups of teachers. These groups were usually one of two types.
The first consisted of teachers who represented the interests of a larger group of their colleagues in bringing concerns to the superintendent's attention. The most obvious example of this type were leaders of local teachers' organizations. The second type of teacher group that superintendents met with were district committees convened, usually by the superintendent, to either work on a special project or make recommendations regarding some problem in the school system.

The second setting for communicating with staff members reported by superintendents was the informal, drop-in conference in the superintendent's office. Again, consistent with the hierarchical pattern of interaction, superintendents of larger systems tended to interact most with central office staff and principals in such informal sessions, although teachers and other staff members might occasionally stop to share a concern with the superintendent. In small school systems, the superintendent was more likely to be visited by a member of the non-instructional staff and individual teachers.

Superintendents indicated that a third setting for communicating with staff members occurred when they left their offices to visit their districts' schools. Only one superintendent (H) contended that visiting schools was a waste of his and the "professional staffs'" time, but even he reported visiting schools when there "was a reason". Generally, superintendents reported that walking through a school, visiting a classroom, stopping in the teachers' lounge and just generally chatting with staff members and students provided them with an opportunity to: show that they are "interested" in what's happening in the schools, gain a sense of staffs' feelings and concerns, and judge the general
educational atmosphere. These visits were described as fairly unstructured. Superintendents, on the whole, tended not to go into a school for an expressed purpose. These excerpts from superintendents interview accounts are illustrative:

... Probably go out and it would appear that I would be wasting time, because (I would be) just kind of wandering around talking with people. Casually trying to get them to relax ... getting into classes maybe, or at least, around the building. (Superintendent A)

I think it helps employees to know that the superintendent is interested in what's going on. A lot of public relations work. With teachers I don't know, if you call it public relations or not, human relations ... Also, I believe I'd spend some hours in the teachers' lounge ... to listen to what the teachers have to say. (Superintendent L)

Although superintendents tended to emphasize face-to-face encounters with staff, they also indicated that they sometimes communicated with their staffs in writing. This was especially true for superintendents of larger, city school systems for whom it would be virtually impossible to make personal contacts with every staff member. This was supported by the following comment made by the superintendent of a fairly small system:

We're a small enough district that I probably can get away without written communications ... If the district were any larger I could not. (Superintendent K)

The third pattern characteristic of superintendents' communications with their districts' staff members is a two-way flow of information. Superintendents reported that while they often provided information and direction to their staffs, they also received a good deal of input from staff members. For example, superintendents
reported that while they often fed information or assigned tasks to their central office staff, they also received information from those same staff members regarding the progress being made, problems being faced, and new directions which might be considered. As Superintendent P indicated:

Well, they're (central office administrators) constantly bringing their ideas and concerns to me either for my consideration, interpretation, or decision. If they feel that they have an idea that they want to run by me ... to get my reaction, to determine which direction they want to go. (Superintendent P)

Similarly, superintendents reported that while they often convened and established the general focus for the work of a special committee of teachers, the members of such committees often provided them with important information and recommendations. As Superintendent N noted:

It depends on what area you're in. For instance, if you're talking about developing a reading curriculum, I sat in on that (committee) numbers of times ... to try to learn because I'm not an elementary person.

In summary, superintendents tended to indicate that they communicated with staff members, particularly those highest in the administrative hierarchy, in face-to-face encounters and that the communication was typically two-way.

Communicating with Boards of Education. The characteristics of superintendents' communications with their boards of education will be discussed separately due to the difficulty of locating boards of education relative to the formal organizational structure of school systems. On the one hand, they can be viewed as being internal due to their status as the school systems' governing bodies. On the other hand, they might
just as reasonably be viewed as external because they are considered extensions of state governments and because board members ideally represent the interests of their communities.¹ This special position of boards of education is reflected in the special relationship which exists between superintendents and their boards. When asked what considerations they would make before accepting an appointment as the superintendent of another district, every superintendent responded that one factor would be the board of education's educational philosophy and/or the relationship which existed between the board and the superintendent.

As indicated above, superintendents tended to report that they interacted less with board members than they did with central office administrators, principals, and, in some cases, non-instructional staff members. The distinct exceptions to this general tendency were the superintendents of large, city school systems. Regardless of the degree of interaction, superintendents indicated that they regularly communicated with board members. The same general patterns identified in superintendents' interactions with staff members characterized their communication with board members.

A simple, hierarchical pattern was found in superintendents' descriptions of their interaction with school board members. Several superintendents indicated that they interacted directly with the individual serving as the board's president more often than with other

Superintendents indicated that they communicated with board members, over the phone, in face-to-face conversations, and in writing. Several superintendents indicated that they regularly submitted written reports to their board members to keep them abreast of district activities and relevant information from state and federal sources. Most reported that agendas for board meetings and supporting information were communicated to their boards in writing. Beyond those formal written documents, most of the communication between superintendents and boards of education occurred either during formally convened meetings of the board of education or in phone conversations or conferences with board members. The superintendent of a large system observed that:

> I spend a lot of time in direct communication on this telephone or conferences in here with individual board members or groups of two or three. A lot of time goes into board-superintendent communications in this school system, and I appreciate that. (Superintendent S)

Superintendents in smaller districts tended to report that they spoke with board members fairly infrequently in person or by phone. The following comment made by Superintendent K is illustrative:

> Board members are welcome to stop in any time they would like ... I'll generally see one of them, at least, once a week ... They raise some question or found out about something.

The third basic pattern which characterizes superintendents' communications with both staff and board members is the two-way flow of information. Superintendents consistently reported that their boards provided not only personal insights and opinions but that they
also articulated concerns of their constituents.

Our board members approach boardmanship with very serious intent. They mean to do business. They want information. They feed me information that they've picked up from their constituencies. (Superintendent S)

(The board president) may make a suggestion or want to know about something, but it's not a situation where he's telling me what to do. We discuss problems. (Superintendent H)

I would say with the board it's mostly information. I'm giving them information ... Really, I imagine they do more PR than I do. They'll be talking to people, feeding us information. We try to make adjustments to some of the things they're hearing out in the community. (Superintendent K)

Superintendents, then, reported that they communicate regularly with members of their school districts' boards of education. It seems that larger districts are characterized by a great deal more interaction between superintendents and board members than is found in much smaller systems. Superintendents also tended to interact more often with board presidents than with other members. Although superintendents tended to communicate information to their boards via formal, written documents (e.g. agendas, supporting documentation, and newsletters), much of their interaction occurred by phone and in face-to-face encounters. Finally, while superintendents provided board members with information regarding the operation and program of their districts as well as relevant information from state and federal sources, board members kept superintendents apprised of activities and sentiments in their communities.

External communications. Superintendents reported that a good part of their work involved communicating with various elements in
their school systems' environments. They further indicated that their districts' environments largely consisted of two components: the people residing in the communities which their schools served and state and federal agencies and institutions. Three patterns characterize the communication between superintendents and their school systems' environment. Two of these patterns -- face-to-face encounters and two-way communication -- are also found in superintendent-staff and superintendent-board communications. The third pattern is a tendency among superintendents to communicate with certain socially and politically defined categories of citizens. They tend to interact most with parents of students in their school systems and with "leaders" in their communities. This pattern will be described fully in the following reporting of findings.

Superintendents tend to interact with elements of their school systems' environments in face-to-face encounters. According to interview accounts, these encounters occurred in three basic settings: formally convened meetings, conferences with individual citizens or small groups of citizens, and school-related public gatherings.

Superintendents indicated that they spent anywhere from two to five nights during a typical week involved in work-related activities. Findings of the AASA survey indicated that the median number of nights superintendents reported devoting to "work in a typical week: was three (see Table 8, Appendix D). Superintendents reported in their interview responses that much of their night work involved attending meetings of various community groups and organizations. Many of these groups were school-related, including: athletic boosters clubs,
parent-teachers' associations, and various committees organized by school administrators to facilitate citizen participation in their school systems' affairs. Superintendents also reported meeting with non-school groups and organizations in their communities such as: service clubs, church groups, and local governmental bodies. The following excerpts from superintendents' talk are illustrative:

I do feel that to be successful you have to have that personal contact with the community. The only way you can do that is to spend time. You've got to go to meetings. (Superintendent Q)

If you want a general group, the idea of meeting with community people would probably fall ahead of the board of education ... PTA, at least, once a month. Again, civic clubs, civic associations, kaffee klatches in the homes -- that type of thing. (Superintendent N)

We try to see to it that we have representatives from our group, talking about the professional staff ... involved in civic clubs. I, myself, for better or worse, belong to the Rotary; and I try to sit with a different group of people every Tuesday. Inevitably, there's some concern with the schools. The assistant belongs to Kiwanis. Another fellow belongs to Civitan Club, churches. (Superintendent K)

There are a lot of church functions in this community and there is a council meeting and there are different clubs that meet. And I do meet from time to time with various ones of those groups, but if you were to ask me where do I spend most of my time at night, I would say it's school-related groups. (Superintendent J)

Superintendents also noted that they met with individuals and small groups of citizens who had school-related concerns that they wanted to share with school officials. While all superintendents reported interacting with citizens on such a personal basis, this practice was reported as a more common occurrence by those who served
In smaller school districts.

In a community like this one, they (the community) like to see their superintendent. They also like to talk personally to the top. They don't want anybody in the second seat. So I have all that that I have to take care of. (Superintendent J)

So much of my time is taken up with putting out fires. For instance, the people who were in here, held you up thirty-five minutes. Before I could see you I was trying to put a fire out. Thank goodness, they had come to me before they had gone somewhere else ... You spend a lot of time putting fires out, giving people facts. (Superintendent A)

The third setting in which superintendents interact and communicate with community people is large school-related, public gatherings. Superintendents reported attending numerous activities ranging from school plays to awards banquets for the expressed purpose of meeting with the public.

Well, I consider that to be a part of the job. That's a part of the exposure part of showing interest ... I happen to be one (superintendent) who feels that within reason I should attend football games, basketball games, or at least, those where there are a number of people available. A lot of times I do it simply for relaxation. I enjoy it and, many times, it turns out to be I'm there because I feel like it's important from a PR point-of-view to show interest in kids. (Superintendent T)

Then I went to a district ball game; I mean a sectional semi-finals to watch our high school play from 4:30 until 6:00. At 6:30 there was a scholarship banquet for our seniors and I also had to speak at that scholarship banquet. (Superintendent F)

Thus, superintendents indicated that they spent a good deal of their work day and night interacting and communicating with people in
their communities in face-to-face encounters in meetings, personal conferences, and at large school-related activities where the public was in attendance. This is not to say that superintendents never communicate with the people in their communities in writing. Several noted that they periodically published newsletters to inform their communities about school-related matters and activities, and others suggested that they made special efforts to furnish local media, especially newspapers, with stories about the school district's activities. However, the overall tendency was to rely on face-to-face situations to communicate with this key aspect of school systems' environments.

The one major exception to this tendency among superintendents to interact in face-to-face situations with elements of their school systems' environments was the nature of their communication with state and federal agencies. Several superintendents noted that they spent many hours filling out or reviewing forms required by state and federal agencies, reading recently passed or proposed legislation which would impact on the operation of school systems, and writing to state representatives and Congress persons to indicate their concern over some issue.

I have every day a stack of mail, all kinds of things. Things from the state department of education -- reports, forms -- that I have to fill out. (Superintendent A)

Well, Senator Roberto, who is Chairman of the Education Committee in the state legislature, certainly knows who I am. Two nice factual letters, one rather candid phone call, and a third letter which was not so nice but was factual and was candid and downright blunt
finally has caused him to ask the State Assistant Superintendent who was coming in this direction to check on my facts to find if I was correct ... (Superintendent B)

I'm finding that I'm having less and less time to do the reading that is necessary to keep me attuned to what is happening politically and financially in the state. (Superintendent F)

This suggests that superintendents tend to utilize different means to communicate with the two main components of their school systems' environment. Personal interaction characterizes their communications with elements in the immediate environment, while formalized written communications characterize their interactions with formal, governmental institutions.

The second pattern which characterizes superintendents' communications with their environments in a two-way flow of information. This pattern holds for communication both with local community people and with state and federal agencies. Superintendents consistently reported that they provided information to, as well as received, needed information from the environment. They indicated that they transmitted information to their local communities regarding: school activities and programs, the needs of their school systems, and specific school-related concerns or problems identified by community people.

So much of the time people (are) going off on tangents, jumping to conclusions, getting a little bit of information. You spend a lot of time putting out fires, giving people the facts. (Superintendent A)

I spend a lot of time communicating with the public, keeping them informed about the schools. (Superintendent C)
There are some (community groups) that will call you and ask you to come and talk to them ... The groups know that any time they want to know anything about the school to call and we'll talk to them. (Superintendent G)

Superintendents also reported that in meeting with their communities, they tried to convey a concern and interest in the community. Note Superintendent N's comment:

Last night was a vocational awards banquet ... I go to all the open houses ... I think visibility to show support is extremely important, even though you don't get up and say a word. You don't have to. And I think if you had all those things going on and the superintendent never showed up, I think people in the community and the staff in the school would wonder where you were.

Also, as reflected in the excerpts from superintendents' talk regarding their communications with state and federal agencies and officials, superintendents provide information to this environmental component as well.

Information also flows into superintendents from these various elements in their school systems' environments. Superintendents consistently indicated that they came away with much important information from their interaction with their communities and from monitoring activities of state and federal governmental units. Take, for example, Superintendent L who reported that it was a group of parents who identified the need to provide educational experiences for "gifted" students in the district. Similarly, both Superintendents G and N indicated that they had included community people on various committees convened to make recommendations concerning such matters as curriculum and student discipline. Many superintendents also reported that they
stayed in touch with happenings in the state and federal government which related to the operation of school districts. For instance, most superintendents reported that they conscientiously read various bulletins, reports and newsletters to remain up-to-date on education-related legislation, administrative policies and court decisions. Several superintendents also noted that they kept in constant touch with legislators, particularly those representing their districts in the State House. Finally, Superintendent K indicated that he often called upon members of the State Department of Education's staff for information.

So, communication between superintendents and their school systems' environments is characterized by a two-way flow of information. Just as superintendents provide information to their communities and state and federal agencies, so people in the community and state and federal units serve as sources of information for superintendents.

The third pattern which characterizes superintendents' communications with their school systems' environments is a tendency to communicate with certain socially and politically defined categories of individuals and groups. The environment of any school system is comprised of a large number of people interrelated by a web of complex relationships. As has already been shown, the environment is comprised of more than the immediate community of people served by a school system and includes state and federal governmental bodies and agencies. Given the environment's expansiveness and complexity, how does a superintendent of a school system manage to communicate with all of its relevant elements? How does she/he decide who it is important
to communicate with?

The analysis of superintendents' interview responses found that they tended to interact with categories of individuals or groups which were defined by existing social and political structures.

Superintendents indicated that they focused their efforts on communicating with: parents of students in their school systems, existing organizations in their communities and influential community members.

Superintendents consistently reported that they made special efforts toward interacting and communicating with parents. This occurred in any number of settings as illustrated by the following excerpts from superintendents' interview responses:

The advisory committees come in with some pretty heated things ... From those committees, we get a lot of feedback from our district and those change every year because we ask for parent volunteers' names. (Superintendent G)

Yes, a lot of this town is very active and formulated on a very active Parent Teacher Association which is the heart of this system. And I would probably meet with those people seven or eight times a month. Plus, I spend two mornings, one morning with all the presidents of all the building units and the other with the council each month. (Superintendent H)

I happen to be one (superintendent) who feels that within reason I should attend football games, basketball games ... I'm there because I feel like it's important from a PR point-of-view to show interest in kids. I firmly believe that's the best way to relate to parents and to ... have a healthy relationship with them. (Superintendent T)

They also suggested that they spent a good deal of time interacting with organizations and agencies in their communities. The following
comments made by superintendents are illustrative:

Every day there would be, at least one, two, or three community groups that I'm in touch with. (Superintendent J)

There are a lot of church functions in this community and there is a (church) council meeting and there are different clubs that meet. And I do meet from time to time with various ones of those groups. (Superintendent I)

Finally, superintendents consistently reported the importance of communicating with influential members of the community, the opinion leaders. These excerpts from superintendents' talk are illustrative of this view:

I would say beyond that (I meet) with the business community, individuals in the power structure of the community. Not just business people, the clergy, organized labor, political parties ... (Superintendent S)

If you can find out directly or indirectly how some key people really feel. I'm talking about a social structure kind of thing. You find that the guy that owns the drugstore is a pretty important guy. People listen to him. Down through the years, you find that this guy has been kind of a key in the community. (Superintendent A)

Thus, faced with having to communicate with communities comprised of large numbers of individuals, superintendents tend to focus their efforts towards communicating with individuals and groups defined socially and politically to be relevant and influential constituencies — parents, community groups, and individuals in the community power structure. As Superintendent H aptly summarized:

It's my job to meet with the PTAs and with the community leaders and with the various groups that have concerns or interests in the school system.
Summary. The analysis of superintendents' descriptions of typical occupational tasks uncovered one dominant theme. Superintendents are constantly involved in communicating with their staff members and elements in their school systems' environments. Their communications with staff members and members of their boards of education are characterized by: a tendency to communicate most with individuals who rank highest in the formal hierarchy, an emphasis upon face-to-face contact, and a two-way flow of information. Superintendents communicate with two environmental components -- the local community, and state and federal governmental agencies. Again, communications are characterized by a two-way flow of information, and in the case of local communities, face-to-face encounters. Communications with state and federal agencies are typically written. Finally, superintendents' communications with environmental elements are characterized by a tendency to focus upon communicating with individuals and groups which are politically and socially defined as relevant and influential constituencies -- namely parents, community groups, and members of the community power structure.

Superintendents' Roles

Thus far, the description of superintendents' work has focused upon the set of day-to-day tasks which characterizes that occupation. Such discrete occupational tasks are not unrelated, nor do they occur in a vacuum. For, occupations link individuals to the social structure.  

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A concept which has emerged from attempts to explain that link is "social role". The notion of role has been applied to the study of occupations. In their study of school superintendents, Gross, Mason, and McEachern defined role as "a set of expectations ... applied to an incumbent of a particular position." \(^3\) They defined position as "the location of an actor or class of actors in a system of social relationships." \(^4\) From this view, the set of tasks which characterize an occupation occur in the occupational group members' fulfillment of their roles.

The roles of superintendents, then, was the second dimension of the occupation's work considered. How do superintendents describe their roles?

The analysis of superintendents' identification of the major responsibilities of their jobs resulted in the identification of three role categories: coordination, mediation, and resource management.

**Coordinative role.** A large majority of the responsibilities identified by superintendents fell within the general role category of coordination. Coordination is taken here to mean the act of "adjusting" various parts so as to have harmonious action." \(^5\) Superintendents indicated that their major responsibility involved "leading and


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 48.

\(^5\) This definition was taken from Webster's *New World Dictionary of the American Language*, Second College Edition (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968).
directing" their school systems. This view was summarized in the following statements made by Superintendents F and N:

I can give a generalization I think in terms of providing, in terms of providing leadership and direction for the entire school system ... I'd say that in terms of providing administrative supervision and supervision of the administrative staff ... and principals. I'd say to a lesser extent with teachers. But, basically, working, creating an administrative organization to fulfill whatever the goals are of the school system. (serve) as the ... communicative link between the professional, non-professional staff and the board of education ... In terms of being a financier ... (In) a school system you have a number of specialists ... I'm on top of whatever they're doing to the extent that I can. (Superintendent F)

Develop or lead the development of a plan for the district. And that plan covers a variety of areas, whether it's finance, personnel, curriculum, staff evaluation, hiring, whatever ... You lead your administrative staff in such a way that you really develop a concrete plan of action as to what you want to do in a school system. So that people know what is to happen. Now, that covers almost the total job. (Superintendent N)

These statements as well as those made by other superintendents indicated that a major role in which superintendents saw themselves serving was one of coordination, working with various elements of their school systems to develop a sense of organizational direction. These statements also identified the specific responsibilities which superintendents generally reported that they must fulfill in order to serve in a coordinative role.

The first responsibility identified by superintendents was the setting of organizational goals and the concomitant establishment of priorities. Several superintendents reported that they met this
responsibility by working with both members of their boards of education and members of their districts' instructional staffs.

Each year I have a meeting with the board of education when we determine what our goals are for the year ... I have already met with my department heads. We then form up our (goal) statements which I then take to the board ... And then the board and the superintendent mediate, you might say, between and among one another as to what the goals are. (Superintendent J)

In this district currently, it's (goal statement) a mutual set of concerns arrived at between the board and the superintendent. The superintendent brings to the board those concerns he hears from staff and community ... The board perceives what's going on in terms of community reaction to the schools. And from that discussion we try to pick four or five immediate kinds of objectives, two or three longer range ones. (Superintendent K)

Thus, one way superintendents coordinate their districts' operations is to work with their boards and staffs to develop goals or objectives which the district will work to meet.

Superintendents also indicated that their role in the development of organizational goals went far beyond serving simply as mediators between their boards of education and their districts' staffs. In fact, they reported that one of their major occupational responsibilities was to initiate ideas, to identify problems which needed to be addressed, and to identify ways to improve their districts' operations and instructional programs. Note the following excerpts from superintendents responses:

Providing leadership means identifying, first of all, goals ... identifying the mission at a given point in time ... You've got to have a capacity to assess needs, identify goals ...
(Superintendent S)
(My role) is a great deal of the initiator of ideas and concepts ... The constantly asking the questions, throwing out the idea or concept. (Superintendent N)

To constantly seek out better methods and better means of operating the districts, whether it be to keep abreast of curriculum developments ... to see if there's a cheaper way of operating or (producing) a better product. (Superintendent Q)

Identification of problems, and then determine how you can go about solving the problems. (Superintendent P)

These comments suggest that superintendents, in fact, are primary actors in the establishment of goals for their school systems. For, by identifying problems to be solved, new instructional programs and ways to make their systems function more efficiently, they establish targets toward which they can move their organizations.

Quite naturally, the second responsibility that superintendents identified was the fulfilling of those organizational goals or, in more general terms, implementing policy established by the board.

Working, creating an administrative organization to fulfill whatever the goals are of the school system. (Superintendent F)

I suppose most of us would answer in terms of implementing policy that the board of education adopts. I suppose that's the main function. To see that the district is directed in such a way that it's in compliance with policies that have been approved, and I guess I speak for the board of education. (Superintendent T)

Working with principals, the central office, the staff that we have in accomplishing the goals or objectives of the district as the board sees them. (Superintendent G)

This last statement made by Superintendent G suggests another job responsibility of superintendents which is part of the general
coordination of a school system's operation, the whole area of personnel management. In fact, almost every superintendent interviewed mentioned at least some aspect of personnel management as being an important part of their occupational responsibilities. Nearly half of them noted that recruiting capable staff members was an important responsibility. The following comments are illustrative:

Another chief one (responsibility) is good recruitment, not just recruitment ... my teachers come from everywhere. (Superintendent B)

Number two (responsibility) is attempting to hire competent personnel. (Superintendent D)

I've got to provide the best teachers possible. (Superintendent I)

Another aspect of personnel management which superintendents identified as a major occupational responsibility was the coordination of staff. Over half of the superintendents indicated that they were responsible for communicating with, inspiring, supervising, and otherwise generally coordinating the work of their districts' staff members. Because smaller systems tended to have smaller staffs and, therefore, less staff specialization, superintendents in the smallest systems were often responsible for many day-to-day operations with which their counterparts in larger systems were not directly involved. Consequently, superintendents in smaller districts had smaller staffs to coordinate. Nonetheless, superintendents, even those in the smallest systems, tended to report that coordination of staff members was one of their chief responsibilities.

I make sure that others do it (their jobs). And, therefore, supervision of people is my most important function. Getting them to do it ... Giving them the
leadership necessary, the inspiration, the latitude, if you will, to do what needs to be done in the school systems. (Superintendent H)

One certainly has the responsibility to his staff, to the employees to keep them performing (at) as high a level as possible ... and, by the same token, try to look after them in terms of the benefits they derive for that kind of performance. (Superintendent T)

You work with your assistant superintendents and your directors, your building principals, to see that we, in general, know what we're supposed to be doing, know where we're going, and basically how we're going to get there. (Superintendent N)

One important pattern in the coordination of staff deserves mention here. Superintendents, on the whole, reported that they focused their coordination efforts on central office and building level administrators. Those in the smallest districts which lacked central office staff noted that they worked through principals to coordinate district efforts:

Probably the second (greatest amount of time) is spent with principals or head teachers, persons in positions carrying out board policies. (Superintendent T)

Superintendents in systems with other central office administrators worked most closely with these staff members to coordinate their districts' activities.

Most of it (time) would be spent with the central office people just identifying what they are doing, where they are at this particular point in time. (Superintendent G)

Another responsibility which superintendents identified as an aspect of their general coordinative role was financial management. Most superintendents noted the importance of obtaining the monetary resources
necessary to properly operate their systems and efficiently managing the expenditure of resources they did have. In terms of their overall coordinative role, superintendents indicated that money was necessary to hire competent staff members, pursue needed instructional program improvements and provide for the necessary support operations (e.g. maintenance and construction of facilities, transportation, food services).

I guess the total operation with respect to the financial status of the district — the monies coming in and the monies going out. Working on the budget with the treasurer and getting that money into the right place ... (Superintendent G)

I guess the major disappointment ... has been the money situation. Always fighting the money, that's a tough one. You can have all the fine ideas in the world, but if you don't have the dollars to buy textbooks, to hire the people, to fix the buildings ... (Superintendent T)

A chief responsibility would be finance. We've got to keep the doors open. We have to be able to ... when we spend something - we have to have the mind to carry through with that. (Superintendent M)

A final responsibility which a large proportion of the superintendents in the interview sample identified as an important part of their work concerned the development of positive relations with their communities. In fact, over half specifically reported that "public relations" work was a major occupational responsibility. In general, superintendents indicated that it was important to gain community support for school programs, to keep citizens informed about school-related activities and issues, and to determine community sentiments concerning the district's educational program and operation. The following excerpts from superintendents' interview responses are illustrative:
One (responsibility) I think probably that we do a great deal of ... is the whole area of community relations ... Through such things as community meetings, civic club presentations, bringing people into the schools. We have a program where we bring people in, we don't just go out to them all the time. Writing publications. We have a monthly publication that goes out. I write most of that. (Superintendent N)

I think coordinating and keeping the community informed of what's happening is a chief responsibility. (Superintendent M)

It's my job to meet with the PTAs and with community leaders and with various groups that have concerns or interests in the school system ... They want to be heard so listen to them ... and, hopefully, you can utilize something that they've given you. (Superintendent H)

All interview subjects worked in Ohio at the time of this study's data collection phase. In that state, as in many others, a large portion of school systems' revenues are generated by local property taxes. This situation moved one superintendent to comment that it was important for him to be involved in:

Selling that district to the public so that we can, hopefully, pass that (tax) levy to get that money. (Superintendent G)

Thus, superintendents' public relations responsibility is tied directly to their responsibility to manage their school systems' fiscal affairs.

According to superintendents' interview accounts, they serve in a coordinative role. They work with various elements of their school systems to produce harmonious organizational action. The various occupational responsibilities they identified fit together in a way which suggests a general approach taken by superintendents to the coordination
of a total school system. Superintendents direct the development of organizational goals. They insure that the system runs effectively and moves toward its goals by marshalling the efforts of the districts' staff. They manage their districts' financial resources so that the system will function efficiently and so that monies will be available to attain organizational goals. And they communicate with the public either directly or through members of their boards of education to inform the public about school-related activities and issues, to gain its support, and to receive feedback concerning their districts' existing operations and programs. The essence of the superintendent's coordinative role as well as its specific elements are captured in the following excerpt from the interview of Superintendent S:

Providing leadership means identifying ... goals ... identifying the mission at a given point in time ... You've got to have a capacity to assess needs, establish goals. Identify the policy implications of where you want to go. Design the policy framework so that you get the official sanction of the elected representatives of the people to go in that direction. Then, an important component of leadership is the capacity to coordinate, to identify resources and hitch them up together, coordinate them. Human resources, material resources, and the most important resource of all - time ... There are many good things for a school system to do. The superintendent has to lead the community, the board, the staff, in identifying the most important things ... the capacity to lead a community in concentrating its resources on what is important.

**Mediative role.** A mediator is defined here as an actor who serves as a conciliator between elements of a social system. A mediator, in

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6 This definition was based upon definitions in Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language (Unabridged) 2nd edition (New York: William Collins and World Publishing Company, 1977).
this sense, does not merely serve as a medium for the transmission of information, although he/she can serve this function, but actively participates in bringing varied elements to a consistent position or view relative to some issue. Several responsibilities which superintendents identified as important aspects of their work suggest that members of that occupational group serve in such a mediative role. While mediation might be seen as simply an element of the superintendents' coordinative role described above, the regularity with which the mediative pattern emerged in superintendents' interview responses required that it be treated separately.

The interview data suggest that superintendents function as mediators between four elements of a school system and its environment -- staff, board of education, the community, and the environment beyond the immediate community, namely state and federal agencies, courts, and legislative bodies. Not only do superintendents mediate between these elements, but they also mediate between members of a given element. For example, a superintendent might have to mediate between board members to get sufficient support for the adoption of a new reading program, or (s)he might have to mediate between principals and the curriculum director over the implementation of this same program. Thus, superintendents mediate, not between opposite sides, but within a complex network of relationships.

The mediative role is evident in several of the responsibilities which superintendents identified as important aspects of their work. First, in working with the board of education, a superintendent often mediates between the board and staff, and between board and state and
federal agencies. Several superintendents indicated that their
districts' goals were developed as a joint effort of their boards of
education and staffs with themselves serving as mediators.

Its (goals) a mutual set of concerns arrived at
between the board and superintendent. The super­
intendent brings to the board those concerns he
hears from staff ... (Superintendent K)

Similarly, several superintendents indicated that they translated
board adopted policies into actions taken by the district's staff.

Trying to interpret the schools and the profession
to the board and, in turn, trying to translate the
board's wishes and desires to staff as sort of a
two-way conduit there. (Superintendent F)

Superintendents also reported that they fed information to their
boards concerning state and national affairs relevant to their
districts:

I do a report to the board monthly which is rather
extensive which keeps them fully informed of local,
state, and national affairs in education.
(Superintendent H)

In each of these relationships, superintendents were involved
in bringing various elements of their school systems and environments
to a consistent view of the world. They mediated, in these cases,
between their boards of education, and the districts' staff and
governmental agencies.

Superintendents also identified situations in which they mediated
between their communities and the school system's staff. These situa-
tions ranged from dealing with individual parents concerned about
something that had occurred in the schools, to interacting with
community groups and influential individuals to inform them about new
programs and to receive their feedback about the district's operation.

The following excerpts from superintendents' interview responses illustrate the various types of situations in which they mediate between the community and their staffs.

The superintendent gives direction, gives input, gives leadership, in terms of what is needed in the community. He taps sources -- this community group, that community group -- to kind of get a feeling of what is needed ... (Superintendent T)

Parents will come to see me at various times or call ... community people will call because they would like to do something with the schools ... we try to see to it that we have representatives from our group, talking about the professional staff, involved in civic clubs ... So, we try and at least keep an open ear and be willing to talk with people on those issues ...

(Superintendent K)

For two years, there was a group of parents meeting to try to start a gifted program ... Well, first off they didn't have a definition of what they meant by "gifted". There's a lot of things the school is already doing for gifted students ... Some of these things had to be pointed out ... I set up a committee of educators that worked in the school system ... For two years, there was never a catalyst.

(Superintendent L)

Again, superintendents mediated between various elements in the school system and its environment, in this case, between staff and community, to develop consistency of views and to enable their school systems' staffs to provide programs which reflect the wishes and needs of the communities they serve.

Several superintendents indicated that they not only mediated between elements in their school districts but also within elements, especially between members of their districts' staffs. They reported that they often mediated between members of their administrative staffs:
Trying to bring them (supervisory staff) together when there were conflicts ... where we can talk it out and work it out and everyone goes out in an amenable role. (Superintendent H)

Personnel (director) is constantly saying we need help ... in this area. Can we afford this? And, consequently, I've got a finance director, my business director, instructional director. Together everybody throws out their ideas and concerns and the treasurer says, "You're short in this area; you're long in this area. Can we shift emphasis from this project to this project?" (Superintendent P)

Superintendents, particularly those serving in smaller systems, reported that they also mediated between non-instructional staff members. For instance, Superintendent R reported that he often had to mediate conflicts between bus drivers and mechanics, and between cooks in his school system's cafeteria, in order to maintain a smooth operation.

Superintendents, then, often find themselves in mediative roles. They work between the various elements which comprise their school systems -- board, staff, community, and state and federal agencies -- to develop, to the degree possible, common understanding and acceptance of their school systems' operations, the educational programs provided and goals towards which their systems will move.

Superintendents as resource managers. While this role is largely subsumed under the superintendent's coordinative role, it emerged as a sufficiently strong pattern in superintendents' descriptions of their job responsibilities to merit separate treatment. A resource manager is an organizational actor who functions to acquire the resources necessary for the organization to operate and is responsible for the
allocation of resources within the organization.

Two resources that superintendents consistently identified as being necessary to the proper operation of their school systems were money and competent personnel. Both were also viewed by superintendents as the focus of much of their work. Superintendents reported that they were responsible for both their acquisition and allocation.

Most superintendents indicated that they were responsible, directly or indirectly, for the recruitment and placement of personnel. In fact, only public relations was named by more superintendents as a major job responsibility.

My second most important responsibility is hiring competent people. (Superintendent D)

Being able to fill those positions with the best people. (Superintendent C)

Hiring a staff. That whole area is another one I work very, very strongly in. (Superintendent N)

Superintendents also indicated that they were responsible for managing the financial resources of their school systems. Fiscal management ranked just behind public relations and personnel recruitment, in terms of the frequency with which it was identified by superintendents as an important job responsibility. They indicated that this responsibility involved both the acquisition of funds and the allocation of these funds within the school system. This role is captured by Superintendent C's comment:

Total operation, in respect to the financial status of the district -- the monies coming in and the monies going out -- getting the money into the right places.
Thus, the third role in which superintendents perceive themselves is the manager of the two tangible resources which they believe are necessary for their school systems to operate — money and competent staff members. They reported that they were responsible for both acquiring these resources from external sources and allocating them judiciously within their school systems.

Two Observations About Superintendents’ Work

Two general patterns which cut across both tasks and roles emerged from superintendents’ descriptions of their work. They reflect the stumbling blocks which superintendents face in the course of their work, and the limited and indirect involvement of superintendents in their schools' instructional programs.

Complications. Superintendents noted that several problems complicated their work. These problems had four general sources — personnel, the board of education, the community, and finances.

Superintendents reported that non-productive and uncooperative staff members hindered their efforts to manage school systems. The following comments from superintendents illustrate this perception:

Total control over personnel, from the standpoint of having staff members who are satisfactory, not unsatisfactory, but not doing a super job ... So, I see personnel as an obstacle to some degree, in terms of getting things done. (Superintendent K)

Not having a good central core of administrators, having one that's kind of a rebel or maybe has his own ideas and he's off here by himself ... Lack of support I guess from those people you'd hope would be supportive and filtering that down through. This would be a real bind. (Superintendent G)
A majority of superintendents indicated that boards of education were often sources of problems. Several observed that board members with "axes to grind" or who represented a particular interest made their jobs more difficult.

The people who run for the board or are on the board for personal reasons, personal gain, personal prestige ... that kind of thing. That gets in the way ... (Superintendent A)

Boards of education can be horrid stumbling blocks ... They can either be very supportive, or they can be very anti and be very political. I've had only one ... bad board. That was a very deceitful couple of people. (Superintendent H)

Other superintendents noted that strong divisions between board members hindered them in their efforts to manage the affairs of the system.

When my board is really split ... A bad day is when this division -- it's a valve dilemma and political to some extent -- when it is obvious that things are stymied because of that. (Superintendent J)

Most superintendents also reported that relationships between school systems and members of the communities they served could be the source of problems. Several observed that communication breakdowns often led to misunderstandings which impeded their work. Superintendents tended to imply that the source of communication problems was the community and not the school system. The following excerpts are illustrative:

Run into some people with closed minds, that are just being dogmatic and not being open. People in the community or in the school ... (Superintendent O)
People not being thoroughly knowledgeable about what's going on but being more than ready to opinionate. Give opinions ... most of which are negative. And in a small town it can have a cancerous effect ... (Superintendent B)

A majority of superintendents suggested that the lack of general, community support for a school system can cause major problems for district administrators.

(A problem is) getting started in a community that's just not educationally oriented ... (If) the old ground is poor it can't be fertile for education. (Superintendent D)

I would like to have a place where the people in that district really wanted their children to have a top-notch program of education ... (Superintendent J)

I think one of the things I'd look at (in a school district) would be the history of the willingness of the community to support the schools through the financial aspect ... Have they passed levies without a lot of difficulty ... (Superintendent N)

As this last comment indicates, one reason that community support can be problematic for superintendents is because, at least in the state of Ohio, it is linked to the level of financial resources that a school system generates. A majority of superintendents reported that insufficient revenues were a major problem which besets the operation of school systems.

It doesn't mean that money is the answer to everything, but I think the financial resources really do help in a city like ________. (Superintendent I)

I suppose the biggest shock is just not being aware or maybe sensitive, alert to the fact that dollars do speak. And when it comes to financing or supporting programs, it costs money. (Superintendent T)
These problems identified by superintendents as hindering their work are consistent with the major roles and tasks described earlier. The problem of non-productive and uncooperative staff members would clearly impede a superintendent from fulfilling their coordinative role; while a non-supportive or strongly divided board of education or community would certainly make it difficult for a superintendent to fulfill his/her mediative role. Finally, the problem of insufficient funds would hamper the resource management aspect of a superintendent's work.

Thus, the job of superintendent is not an easy one. Superintendents are faced with several types of problems which make the fulfillment of their roles often difficult and, at times, impossible.

Lack of involvement in instruction. Superintendents stressed repeatedly that their major concern was the quality of instruction provided to youngsters in their school systems.

I would say it's a good idea to try to build the whole thing around students, and that is very difficult to do at times but I think a good superintendent will continue to come back, whether it's at a PTO meeting or board meeting, or something to the paper, or whatever, that he is centering his efforts around the education of kids. (Superintendent T)

Yet, by their own accounts, superintendents spent little time with teachers and even less time with students. Moreover, the three basic roles filled by superintendents -- coordinator, mediator, resource manager -- are, at most, indirectly related to a school system's instructional program.
Summary and Synthesis

The analysis of superintendents' descriptions of the day-to-day tasks they perform resulted in the identification of one major theme. Superintendents interact and communicate with staff members, members of boards of education, various elements in their communities, and state and federal agencies. This communication is largely characterized by: face-to-face contact, a two-way flow of information, and a tendency to communicate with socially and politically defined categories of participants (e.g. individuals who rank highest in organizational and political hierarchies, representatives of community and professional groups, parents).

The subsequent analysis of superintendents' descriptions of their work responsibilities identified three general occupational roles, coordinator, mediator, and resource manager. As coordinators, superintendents work to adjust the various parts of their school systems and environments to produce harmonious action. While the mediative role calls from them to conciliate between the various elements of the school system and its environment to develop a consistent position or view among these varied elements. Finally, as resource managers, superintendents acquire the resources necessary to operate a school system, staff and money, and allocate these resources throughout their school systems.

The themes which characterize the role dimension of superintendents' work are fundamentally consistent with that which characterizes the task dimension. Superintendents coordinate and mediate between their staffs, members of their boards of education, their
communities-at-large, and state and federal agencies. They acquire resources and allocate them throughout their school systems. How do they fulfill these roles? How do they coordinate and mediate? How do they recruit teachers and acquire financial resources? How do they determine where these resources are most needed in their school districts? The answer to all of these questions lies in the theme found to characterize the day-to-day tasks of superintendents. Superintendents communicate. They gather information from, as well as provide information to, the various elements that comprise a school system and its social environment.

As mediators, superintendents gather information about the concerns, interests, and values of various elements in their school systems and the environment; synthesize that data; and facilitate the development of a unitary view which accommodates, to the extent possible, the views of their school systems' constituents. One product of such mediation is the identification of goals towards which the system is to move.

In their coordinative role, superintendents communicate to staff members what needs to be done, and who is responsible for doing it. They learn from these staff members, usually members of a district's central office staff or school principals, about the extent to which progress is being made and about problems that have been confronted. Thus, communication is vital to coordination.

As resource managers, superintendents communicate with their business managers, treasurers, personnel directors, and school principals to determine the level and nature of resources needed to operate. If a
determination is made that additional monies or personnel are needed, superintendents intensify communications with elements in their school systems' environments (e.g. local citizens, state legislature, federal agencies, training institutions, and superintendents of other systems) to locate and acquire the needed resources. If, on the other hand, it is decided that staff levels are to be reduced, superintendents communicate with elements of their systems (e.g. staff and board of education) to determine and explain criteria for selecting staff members to be released.

This indicates that the tendency for superintendents to emphasize occupational tasks which involve communicating with their school systems' various constituents is consistent with their roles as mediator, coordinator, and resource manager.

To this point, the discussion has focused upon what superintendents say they do, their tasks, and what they say they are expected to do, their roles and responsibilities.

In the next section, the focus will be upon the skills, knowledge and personal attributes that superintendents identified as necessary for an individual to accomplish the tasks and fulfill the roles characteristic of their occupation.

**Occupational Skills, Knowledge, and Attributes**

What does it take to be able to work as a school superintendent? An occupation can to an extent be characterized by the particular set of requisite skills its members possess.\(^7\) Further, the manner in which

\(^7\)Pavalko, loc. cit.
members of a given occupational group describe the set of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes which they view to be necessary to carry on their occupation's work should provide insights to how they perceive their work reality.

The patterns which emerged from superintendents' descriptions of this dimension of their work are largely consistent with those which emerged from their description of occupational tasks and responsibilities.

**Financial Management**

Superintendents tended to identify as important those skills and characteristics which bore on interacting and communicating with people. The one exception to this pattern was the identification of skills in the management of financial resources as an important component of their occupational repertoire. This exception is notable if for no other reason than over half of the superintendents interviewed regarded financial management skills as crucial to their work.

He (the superintendent) has got to be a good money manager. (Superintendent D)

The ability to manage money, budgeting (is important). (Superintendent E)

I think you have to have some skill in the area of finance. Where you can actually, not perhaps look at all of the detail but look at the large segments of expenditures and see if you're on target so that you can avoid some of the crises that are happening now in finances. (Superintendent I)

That superintendents view financial management skills as important is consistent with their role as resource managers.
Communication Skills

Returning to the main pattern found in superintendents' descriptions, it is apparent that they view interacting and communicating with people as the most important part of their work. The following excerpts from superintendents' interview responses illustrate this general tendency:

(A superintendent) better have good interpersonal relationships with people. If not, better have somebody immediately with him who can do that for him. (Superintendent K)

He (the superintendent) must be able to get along with people. Must be able to communicate with people in such a fashion that when they leave they're not more angry than when they arrived. (Superintendent M)

The analysis of interview data revealed that this general ability to interact well with people has two basic components: the ability to transmit information, and the ability to receive and use information.

Receiving and utilizing information. Several skills and attributes that superintendents identified as necessary to their work are related to the reception and use of information. The most obvious is the ability to listen. Several superintendents noted that it was of crucial importance for superintendents to listen carefully to staff members, members of boards of education, and people from the community-at-large.

You've got to listen to people, or at least, make them feel they're being listened to. (Superintendent E)

It's my job to meet with the PTAs and with the community leaders and with the various groups that have concerns or interests in the school system ... I've learned something else. Don't advise them. They don't really want advice. They want to be heard. So, listen to them.
Thank them very much and, hopefully, you can utilize something they've given you. (Superintendent H)

Be a good listener. Communication, I think is very important but not your own communication. Letting the other person say what he wants to say and get it out of his system. (Superintendent R)

Another skill which superintendents tended to identify as important in the reception and utilization of information is the ability to remain emotionally detached from focal issues in a school system. Although superintendents described this ability in different ways, they agreed that this ability allowed them to view issues and events objectively. This included criticism heaped on superintendents, themselves. They further indicated that such objectivity enabled them to view issues in terms of their impact on the total system. The following excerpts from superintendents' interview responses illustrate various characterizations of this ability, as well as the variety of situations in which it is called into play:

Their ability to remain cool, calculating, to be sure of what they are doing. To take all sides before judging. (Superintendent O)

I think you've got to have ... a great degree of sensitivity, but that you can't be thin skinned ... If you are not able to take a step back and realize that everything isn't personally coming down on you. That you just happen to be in the position that's the focal point. (Superintendent N)

Not to have a pre-conceived idea when somebody comes in and says, "Hey, I'd like to change the social studies or math program," and have a pre-conceived idea of, "Well, I think this is how it should be." (Superintendent G)
You have to have certain specialized skills and understandings, but also be able to see the broad picture. (Superintendent F)

Related to this ability to remain open and objective is a personal attribute which several superintendents deemed necessary for survival in their occupation. They maintained that superintendents must remain "flexible", that they be able to retain their personal and professional integrity while flowing with situations as they changed in their school systems and the environment.

I think the flexibility there and the ability to read that (the community's sentiments) is extremely important. (Superintendent N)

You've got to be a real chameleon as a superintendent. You've got to be dressed up one day talking to the Lion's Club ... and the next day you go down in there with the custodian ... (Superintendent O)

Thus, superintendents observed that to gather information members of their occupation must be good listeners, retain an objective view of issues, and be flexible. To what use do they put this information? Patterns in superintendents' descriptions of occupational skills suggest that they use the information to interpret the social situations in which they work. Superintendents reported that it was critical for members of their occupation to be able to "read people", to determine what they value and what their underlying feelings are.

It's most important for a superintendent to be perceptive. He has to have the ability to assess people and the community's feelings ... (Superintendent C)

The thing (skill) I would put second ... is knowing how a teacher feels and works and a principal and a supervisor ... So, I think that having perceptions and good human interactions with other people, perceptions of what other people want and how to get
them to move is very important. (Superintendent I)

Transmitting information. A majority of superintendents also suggested that it was important for members of their occupation to be able to transmit information. They consistently reported that superintendents must have well developed skills in the use of both the spoken and written word to communicate with their staffs and communities.

I think that communicating is the single most important thing ... You can be the smartest person in the world, but if no one buys your ideas you're going to be a failure. To stay on as a superintendent for a period of time, you must be able to meet and communicate with people. (Superintendent M).

I think it's essential to be able to communicate verbally. I think also ... it's important -- I don't see it as much as I used to -- in terms of written communication skills. (Superintendent F)

Superintendents observed that it was not sufficient for individuals to be merely skilled in communicating their thoughts. They indicated that a superintendent must also have credibility. People must believe them and value their opinions. Superintendents suggested that to develop such credibility and respect, members of their occupation must be totally honest and sincere in their communications with people.

You've got to have the faith of the people. Now there's no question about it. If you lose that, you'd better move on ... Be truthful with them. Lay it on the line just the way it is. (Superintendent D)

I'm saying be completely honest in all that public talk, scrupulously honest. Because this is an era of accountability such as people in authority have never experienced before in this country. (Superintendent S)
Superintendents reported that members of their occupation should also have the ability to communicate without alienating people and without closing off options prematurely. Superintendent S provided an insightful description of this skill:

That, I think, is terribly important, the capacity for a certain kind ... what I would call public talk ... It's one that leaves your options open ... insofar as the superintendent can suspend judgement, and through his public talk keep his options open, as time passes the picture sharpens into focus, and if you have traded off some of your options prematurely through unfortunate or ill-advised public talk, the institution is not well served, the community is not well served.

So, superintendents indicated that members of their occupation must be able to transmit as well as receive information. To transmit information, superintendents must not only be skilled in verbal and written communication, but also develop credibility among their varied audiences by projecting an honest and sincere image. Further, they must do all of this without prematurely limiting their options through what one superintendent termed "unfortunate or ill-advised public talk."

Political Skills

A third theme emerged from superintendents' descriptions of requisite occupational skills, knowledge, and personal attributes. They consistently reported that a superintendent must have what some termed "political" skills. These skills are fundamentally extensions of the communication skills discussed above. They involve the analysis of and response to the opinions, values, and interests of participants in a school system's operation and governance. Political skills as
described by superintendents enable a person to gauge the pervasive attitudes among constituents of a school system, synthesize them and direct the system to operate in a manner consistent with these views.

I don't make any decision any more without considering the political aspects of it. I'm not saying that's good. But it's truthful. I learned that a lot of things that you can do that are absolutely right ... simply do not work out in terms of the community ... I would say that is important, political ability. (Superintendent H)

It is most important for a superintendent to be perceptive. He has to have the ability to assess people and community feelings and the complexities. If you just forge ahead in a direction that you think is right, you'll have problems. (Superintendent C)

Several superintendents went so far as to say that if they found that their personal and professional values and views on education were irreconcilable with those of a community, they would leave that school system.

The ability to read your community and to see whether that community fits in with what you really believe in about education, I think is extremely important. And then you have to decide by how fast you can move along or whether you have to slow down, or whether you can even live within that situation. And then be able to accept the fact that maybe you might have to move on. (Superintendent N)

As this last statement made by Superintendent N suggests, superintendents' political skills go beyond simply acquiescing to a community's wishes. Several superintendents indicated that they called upon a collection of skills which enabled them to lead their systems in directions which they believed were beneficial.
The most obvious skill in this repertoire involves the ability to transmit information. As indicated in the section on communication skills, superintendents noted that it was of critical importance that members of their occupation be skilled verbal and written communicators, that they develop credibility, and that they be able to avoid alienating people and not prematurely eliminate options. Such communication skills are necessary to individuals wishing to assert leadership, for as Superintendent M observed, "If no one buys your ideas, you're going to be a failure."

Another skill or attribute that superintendents indicated individuals must have if they are to assert their leadership in school systems might best be described as opportunism. Several reported that a superintendent must be able to sense when a situation is ripe for moving a district in a particular direction. Two superintendents cited specific situations in which chance events, the destruction of school buildings, were turned into opportunities to lead their school systems toward the development of new educational programs. Others described general approaches they took to identify less dramatic opportunities to exert leadership:

You have to be able to have some creativity in figuring out how to grab leadership. I see it as a leadership job, and you have to be able to grab leadership because it doesn't just come to you neat and packaged. You have to be able to take whatever it is, analyze the conditions, figure out in regards those problems and conditions how you can lead. (Superintendent J)

... know how to read the greens. In other words, leadership is important but you've got to know when to lead. You've got to know when to shut up. You've got to know how to get people enthused
and then get out of their way. (Superintendent 0)

A sense of timing. The capacity to sense when an idea has -- its time has come. To sense that and then to act. (Superintendent S)

Superintendents, then, communicate with the various elements that comprise their school systems, sense what the conditions are, and move the system to adopt a new program or somehow change its operation when the requisite conditions exist.

Superintendent A described another "political" skill which superintendents use to enable themselves to gain control over situations in their school systems. He referred to this procedure as raising "strawmen". In many respects, this technique is the antithesis of sensing when community and staff sentiments provide opportunities for superintendents to assert their leadership. It involves distracting participants from an issue, thus enabling the superintendent to act on it without encumbrances.

Put strawmen up ... It's almost devious. You put strawmen up for them (elements in the community) to go after. You get them on that so that you can deal with the issue yourself. When I say the ability to work with people, yeah (I mean) the textbook theory and all that but not quite. There's some more things that I think are not in the textbook ... See, that's the problem with theory. The textbook assumes that all people are really OK, sane, or rational ... It's not that way in reality. (Superintendent A)

Thus, when superintendents indicate that members of their occupation must be skilled politically, they are referring to a set of skills which enable them to both operate their systems in accordance with the desires and values of various constituencies, and control, to the extent possible, the directions which their school systems take.
The latter they accomplish by identifying when conditions are such that their ideas can generate support, or by diverting attention away from an issue so that they can act on it themselves.

**Summary and Synthesis**

The analysis of superintendents' descriptions of their occupation's requisite skills, knowledge, and personal attributes resulted in the identification of three general categories of skills: financial management, communication, and political.

Superintendents placed particular emphasis on communication skills. They reported that members of their occupation must be able to facilitate the reception of information, and interpret it to assess the values and opinions of individuals and the community as a whole. The second component of communication skills identified by superintendents involved the transmission of information. Superintendents reported that it was necessary for them to be able to communicate verbally and in writing, gain the confidence of their audiences, and not alienate people or needlessly limit their options by statements they make publicly.

Superintendents also observed that it was essential for members of their occupational group to have "political" skills. They suggested that these skills enabled them to assess the values and attitudes of their school systems' various constituencies, and to respond to them in such a way as to gain and/or maintain their support. They further suggested that superintendents sought opportunities to lead their systems in what they thought to be positive directions. These political
skills are closely interrelated with the occupation's communication skills. For, in order to assess social and political conditions, superintendents must receive information; and to respond, they must be able to transmit information to their staffs, boards of education, and communities.

These patterns are basically consistent with those identified in superintendents' descriptions of typical occupational tasks and basic job responsibilities.

First, communication is the major theme of both tasks and skills. Second, financial management, one aspect of the superintendents' resource management role, is also identified as one of three general categories of necessary occupational skills. Finally, both communication and political skills are directly related to superintendents' coordinative and mediative roles. Superintendents must communicate with their school systems' constituencies and discern their values and opinions to mediate between their varied interests. As indicated in the earlier description of superintendents' roles, mediation is necessary to develop school systems' agendas which, in turn, serve as the foundation for the administrative coordination of school systems' operations. That superintendents' political skills are directly related to their mediative role is reinforced by the fact that descriptions of both indicate that superintendents do not merely function as passive facilitators in getting school systems to reflect their communities' values, but that they often work to exert leadership in determining the direction school districts take relative to both operations and instructional programs. The analysis of skills provided
an important insight to how superintendents managed to do this. As it turns out, they monitor their school systems for opportunities to steer them in directions they believe to be beneficial, and they divert attention away from certain issues so that they can act upon them decisively and without interference from their school system's constituents.

Thus, it seems that just as the characteristic tasks of the occupation are consistent with the roles played by members of the occupation, so the occupation's characteristic skills enable occupational group members to carry out their tasks.

Occupational Assessment

Thus far, the description of school superintendents' work has focused on what members of that occupational group do — their tasks and roles — and what it takes to do them — skills, knowledge, and attributes. In this next section, the focus shifts to the description of how superintendents assess their own performance, and how they assess the operation of their school systems.

The analysis of superintendents' interview responses to questions of how they judged their own performance and the overall operation of their school systems identified several consistent patterns. First, superintendents tended not to separate the assessment of their personal performance from that of the operation of the school system as a whole. In fact, they identified the same three general areas of concern for the assessment of both personal and organizational performance. The three areas were: feedback from community, student achievement, and
Feedback from Community

Superintendents indicated that for both personal and organizational assessment, the feedback they received from their communities was the most important measure of success or failure. They noted that feedback took two forms. First, superintendents indicated that they developed a general sense for whether or not their communities were positively disposed to them and the district's operation. They admitted that it was a very subjective and even impressionistic measure:

I guess it's the community. It's the feeling you pick up from people in the community. Like if you find out directly or indirectly how some key people really feel. (Superintendent A)

A basketball coach gets his report card after every game. It's a little bit more intangible (for a superintendent). I think that really, basically, it comes down to a very impressionistic (sense) ... of the community attitude. (Superintendent F)

Several superintendents noted that they monitored local newspapers for "letters to the editor" which discussed issues regarding the school system. A few also reported that they saw the success or failure met by their school systems in getting local voters to support bond or tax issues as an indirect measure of citizens' attitudes towards the school system. However, even with the use of these somewhat more tangible measures, superintendents generally relied on subjective perceptions to determine if their local communities approved of their personal performance and the operation of the school system.

Superintendents reported that the extent to which people in the community communicated with its superintendent was a second important
measure of occupational success or failure. They indicated that it was a positive sign when people sought them out for their opinions or came to them with some bit of information.

If you go to meetings or dinners, people come up and talk to you. You can tell just when you sit down whether they move away or move up to you. It's a barometer. (Superintendent F)

Well, community acceptance. Whether I'm in demand for my opinion on community situations. In the service clubs do they turn to me for a comment ... (Superintendent P)

When they no longer have confidence in me, seek me out. If nothing more than to listen. When I start getting the cold shoulder by the staff, by the board, by the community ... then I'd say I'd had it. (Superintendent O)

**Student Achievement**

Superintendents observed that a second important measure of both personal and organizational success was the level to which students in their school systems achieved. Most reported that they used scores from standardized achievement tests as the main indicator of student achievement.

Well, I think it has to go back again to what is your end product among the students of that school ... we can judge it by ... testing every year. We have achievement testing. We know how our students rank. (Superintendent E)

The community prides itself on test scores and as long as the test scores come in, well, you know that you're doing relatively well. I don't think it's an adequate judge, incidentally, but the community does. (Superintendent H)

Are children learning? When we look at the test scores ... we use norm referenced, standardized tests, and we recognize all the deficiencies that they have and, yet, they do provide some
indications. (Superintendent S)

As these comments indicate, superintendents use scores from standardized achievement tests as a measure of student achievement, and as an indirect measure of their own performance and the performance of the district as a whole, in spite of their awareness of the limitations of such instruments.

Several superintendents also reported that they viewed student performance in various types of competition with other school systems as a measure of student achievement.

If your FFA organization places sixth in the state for the past three, four, or five years out of three hundred and some -- that's some indicator that you have some pretty good things going for you. (Superintendent T)

When any program receives a commendation for any student, I feel good about it. Whether it be an undefeated football team or the science team that competes with the state ... (Superintendent G)

**Operational Effectiveness**

Superintendents indicated that the third general component in the assessment of their personal performance concerned the basic operation of the school system. To judge the efficiency and effectiveness of their organization's operation, superintendents focused on two dimensions: problems and goal attainment.

Several superintendents reported that the number of problems that arose was one important performance measure.

You measure how he's doing by whether the school is running smoothly or it's got all kinds of problems. (Superintendent F)
By operating successfully ... Are there any major concerns ... If we're getting a lot of complaints on the way school buses are operating then I would say we're not operating too successfully. (Superintendent Q)

The second measure consistently identified by superintendents was goal attainment. Several indicated that they judged their performance according to the extent to which their school systems had approached the goals the board of education and staff had developed for the school year.

I think the other thing is whether you really feel that you're doing what you set out to do as a goal ... That feeling that you see that moving; you see the things happening that you set out in your plan of action ... (Superintendent N)

Well, when we establish our goals and how close we come to achieving those goals. Where are we at this point in time? What do we want to achieve? And how close have we been able to come to attaining those goals? (Superintendent P)

We have goals and objectives and plans of action and everybody's working and doing their work and you can see progress. (Superintendent J)

Others noted that a general sense of movement and progress indicated that a school system was operating well.

Are we moving? Despite the fact that ... this school system could be dead in water in a raging sea, we're moving. We're underway ... I've got to see signs of vitality. When I see signs of vitality that despite the encumbrances of the day that we're looking forward to that better day, and I can see that things are happening toward that end. That, to me, helps measure success. (Superintendent S)

I guess I would summarize the second part of it as being an effective change agent. In other words, you've got to have the operation running really good before you can even think about improving and making things better. And now
Summary and Synthesis

Superintendents indicated that they basically did not separate the assessment of their individual performance from the assessment of the success of the school system's operation. Patterns in superintendents' descriptions of the process and criteria by which they assessed both personal and organizational effectiveness suggested that they were concerned with three general measures.

First, they were particularly concerned with feedback they received from their communities. Superintendents noted that this component of their assessment relied upon a subjective feel for how the community viewed their performance within the context of the overall operation of the school system.

The second measure which superintendents reported they used to assess their performance was the level of achievement enjoyed by students. Although many superintendents acknowledged the deficiencies of achievement tests for purposes of measuring student achievement, most viewed test scores as a major indicator of their performance. Superintendents also indicated that they viewed the success of their system's students in various types of competition against students from other systems as another measure of their own effectiveness.

The final measure which superintendents utilized to assess their performance was the quality of the overall operation of their school systems. They focused on two indicators. First, they judged the
operation of the system by the number of problems which arose. Secondly, they assessed the extent to which their school systems were "progressing".

The patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of the processes and criteria by which they assess their own performance and the overall operation of their school systems are generally consistent with those identified in their descriptions of typical tasks, roles, and requisite skills, knowledge, and attributes.

Just as communication was the major theme in superintendents' tasks and skills, so the extent to which the community and staff communicates with superintendents is seen as a measure of a superintendent's job performance. Superintendents also develop an overall sense for their community members' opinions of their performance by receiving feedback. Similarly, this measure of a superintendent's performance is integrally related to his/her mediative role. For, the extent to which a school system's various elements approve of a superintendent's performance suggests the level of success with which she/he has mediated between their varied interests.

Furthermore, the superintendent's coordinative role is reflected in the occupational assessment measure which focuses on the quality of the overall operation of the school system. The extent to which a school system moves towards the attainment of formally and/or informally developed goals is something of a measure of coordination which exists in the system.

Finally, the identification of the pattern in the occupations' tasks and responsibilities which indicates that superintendents are
only indirectly involved in the basic work of school systems, the
instruction of students, is again apparent here. Two of the three
general measures by which superintendents assess their performance,
community attitudes and operational effectiveness, are at most
indirectly related to a school system's instructional program. While
the third measure, student achievement, is fraught with an inherent
uncertainty. Uncertainty, it will be recalled, is the extent to which
the causes of an event are not understood. For, as indicated in the
description of the occupation's reward structure in Chapter Four, it
is impossible to assess a superintendent's contribution to student
performance, especially given the aforementioned absence of their
direct involvement in the instructional program.

In these ways, the assessment of occupation group member's
performance reflect and, therefore, are consistent with its tasks,
roles, and requisite skills.

**Occupational Satisfaction**

To this point, three general dimensions of the work of school
superintendents have been described -- what it is that superintendents
do and are expected to do, what it takes to do these things, and how
they judge their performance. The final dimension which was studied
in this investigator's effort to describe the occupational ethos of
the school superintendency was satisfaction. That is, an answer was
sought to the question, "What is the nature of events which provide
superintendents with satisfaction in the course of doing the work
which is characteristic of their occupation?"
Accomplishments

The analysis of superintendents' descriptions of sources of work satisfaction uncovered one major pattern. Superintendents, on the whole, identified tangible, organizational accomplishments as providing the greatest satisfaction. Those named most often by superintendents were: passage of tax and bond issues, construction of a new facility, and making a change in curriculum. Each of these accomplishments are tangible; they can be identified and recognized by members of a school system's staff and community alike.

In addition to being tangible, these accomplishments were seen as somehow moving their school systems in positive directions. They were viewed as improvements over whatever existed before. This is evident in the following excerpts from superintendents' interview responses:

Whatever that's going to change things better for kids. If we come up with an idea as to how to improve our English curriculum and resolve to do so and so. I get the charges out of those little things that happen that I think indirectly is going to provide a better thing for kids. (Superintendent T)

Basically, what I really enjoy is seeing projects undertaken and accomplished. In terms of seeing a school system really growing. By that I mean that they see some real quality in the program. And you see a staff that you think is better than it was the year before ... I find a whole lot of satisfaction in that. (Superintendent F)

Superintendents clearly emphasized organizational accomplishments over individual ones as providing personal satisfaction. In fact, of the twenty superintendents interviewed, only one mentioned personal achievement. As a group, they tended to reflect greatest satisfaction from leading their school systems to the accomplishment of some goal or
the solution of some problem. As Superintendent O stated, a member of his occupation is "totally a background type person." And Superintendent H noted that he "doesn't necessarily ... do anything", but that he makes "sure that others do it." Several superintendents further indicated that they cannot do the job alone, but must rely on a whole cast of participants including members of their staffs and communities.

The pattern which indicates that accomplishment serves as a primary satisfier for superintendents also emerged in the analysis of superintendents' descriptions of what characterizes a "good day" on the job. Nearly all of the superintendents interviewed indicated that they felt satisfied at the end of a day when they had either accomplished something significant, accomplished all the tasks they had set out to do that day, or reached closure on some problem.

A really good day is when you have a sense of accomplishing something of significance. (Superintendent S)

A really good day? Getting everything accomplished that I set out to accomplish. (Superintendent B)

The typical good day is where you think you've probably solved ... There's no problem left hanging over for the next day or next week. You think the matter's been solved and resolved. (Superintendent E)

This is reinforced by the finding that superintendents tended to characterize as "bad" those days when tasks were left undone, problems were left unresolved, or when it was discovered that something would keep the school system from reaching a goal.

I really got hung up in here and really didn't feel like I got out and got anything done outside of here. (Superintendent N)
To have a parent come in who has ... a handi­capped child, and we're having difficulty in finding a way to transport him to Columbus for his special program and not be able to find a solution. Those are bad days. (Superintendent Q)

A bad day quite often stems from having a great need or sensing a desire to improve something and maybe not having the funds to do it. (Superintendent T)

Harmony

A second pattern emerged from the analysis of superintendents' descriptions of what constituted their "good days" and "bad days" on the job. Good days were characterized by harmonious relations between the superintendent and various elements of the school system and its environment. Several superintendents indicated that they felt satisfied at the end of the day if they had been able to settle a conflict which existed between individuals or groups relative to some school-related issue, while others reported that they felt satisfied whenever their systems received positive feedback from either the community or members of the staff.

One of the things would be no real conflict today, nor real confrontation where you went home feeling it was unresolved. (Superintendent N)

Before I came, there was a meeting between the adminis­trators and teachers' association they'd end up fighting. I said some things they didn't agree with and they said some things I didn't agree with but neither one of us got hot under the collar and I left here feeling they had a better understanding of why I have to do some of the things I do, and I have a better understanding of why they're after some things they're after. (Superintendent L)
I guess good days are when you get a phone call from somebody in the community saying, "Hey, I heard this happened at the high school or the junior high school," or "I read about this and that's really great." (Superintendent G)

The same sentiments were exposed when superintendents indicated that they left work feeling unsatisfied when they had received complaints and when conflicts between elements of the school system remained unresolved:

A bad day is when the phone's ringing and everybody's complaining. (Superintendent G)

A bad day as far as I'm concerned is when my split board is really split ... A bad day is when this division ... is so obvious that things are stymied because of that. (Superintendent J)

Summary and Synthesis

The analysis of superintendents' interview responses identified patterns which suggested that members of that occupational group derive satisfaction from two types of events -- the accomplishment of some tangible outcome, and the existence of harmonious relationships between and among the various elements which comprise a school system and its environment.

The nature of the events which provide superintendents with feelings of personal satisfaction is generally consistent with their tasks and roles, requisite occupational skills and assessment of job performance.

The communication theme which was found to be so strongly evident in superintendents' tasks and skills is again evident in the types of events that provide occupational satisfaction. For, superintendents
gauge the level of harmony which exists between elements of their school systems by the nature of the feedback they receive.

Further, the identification of harmonious relationships between a school systems' various elements as a major source of personal satisfaction is consistent with superintendents' mediative and coordinative roles. For, superintendents work to develop an agenda for the operation of their school system which accommodates the views of the system's relevant constituents; and through coordination, they work to develop harmonious action in the operation of their school systems. Clearly, harmony in perspective and action is the aim of superintendents in both their mediative and coordinative roles.

The satisfaction which superintendents reportedly derive from the accomplishment of tangible, organizational outcomes is also consistent with their coordinative role. For, as superintendents noted in their interview responses, such accomplishments are the result of the work of many participants in their school systems.

Finally, the tendency for superintendents to be only indirectly involved in their school systems' instructional programs is reflected in the nature of the events which they identified as providing satisfaction. Superintendents identified tangible indicators of progress such as the construction of a new building, the passage of a tax issue, and the development of a new curriculum component, and the existence of harmonious relationships between their school systems' constituents as the major sources of job satisfaction. None of these sources of satisfaction is directly tied to the instruction of students.
Thus, the nature of the events which provide satisfaction to superintendents is basically consistent with their tasks, roles, requisite skills, and assessment of their job performance.

**Major Themes In the Work of Superintendents**

--- Meanings and Sentiments

Four major themes are reflected in the patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of their occupation's tasks and roles, requisite skills, assessment of job performance, and events which provide satisfaction. The first theme is the tendency among superintendents to view the entire school system, with special emphasis upon the environment, as the arena in which they work. The second is the basic uncertainty which characterizes so many aspects of superintendents' work. The third theme is the emphasis which superintendents place upon movement. The final theme reflects the tendency among superintendents to work with the structural aspects of school systems.

**The Entire School System As the Work Arena**

Involvement with the many elements which comprise a school system and its environment is a theme reflected in every aspect of superintendents' work described in this study.

In terms of typical occupational tasks, it was found that superintendents are largely occupied by tasks which involve communicating with staff members, boards of education, and individuals and groups in the community.

Similarly, in fulfilling their primary roles of coordination, mediation, and resource management, superintendents must interact with
their school systems' varied constituencies and work with an eye to the operation of the school system as a whole. For example, to develop an agenda for the operation of a school system, the superintendent communicates with and mediates between and among the interests of the system's staff, board of education, and community. Ideally, the agenda which results from this mediation accommodates the views of each of these elements sufficiently to gain their support. The superintendent can then coordinate the efforts of staff members and allocate resources to enable the system to accomplish items included on its agenda.

Like the occupation's tasks, its requisite skills, knowledge, and attributes emphasize the ability to communicate with the various elements which comprise a school system and to use information provided by these elements in determining what directions the system should take and when it is propitious for the superintendent to exert leadership.

This theme is also reflected in the patterns which characterize superintendents' descriptions of the process and criteria by which they assess their performance. As noted in the earlier description of this aspect of the occupation's work, superintendents do not separate the assessment of their own performance from that of the effectiveness of the total school system's operation. Furthermore, they tend to focus on the community's attitudes toward themselves and the school system and the smoothness and effectiveness of the school system's operation as measures of their individual performance.

Finally, the nature of the events which provide superintendents with satisfaction is consistent with this general orientation towards considering the whole of the school system as their occupational arena.
Superintendents find satisfaction in the existence of harmonious relationships between their school system's participating elements, and in their school system's accomplishment of tangible outcomes. In both cases, satisfaction stems from the relationship among elements of the entire school system. In the case of harmony, the quality of the relationship themselves is satisfying. In the case of accomplishments, satisfaction is derived from the product of these relationships. Furthermore, superintendents quite simply do not focus on personal achievements for satisfaction.

Thus, patterns throughout the various aspects of superintendents' work described in this study reflect the general theme of an awareness among occupational group members of the total school system, with special emphasis on the community it serves, as their work arena.

**Uncertainty In Superintendents' Work**

The second theme is uncertainty. Uncertainty, as it will be recalled, was defined as the extent to which an actor lacks knowledge of the causes of focal events and, therefore, lacks control over their occurrence.

This theme is reflected in the mediative and coordinative roles of superintendents. As mediators, superintendents communicate with various elements in their school systems to develop a common view of school-related issues and events. The sources of uncertainty in such an undertaking are many. First, superintendents cannot always remain apprised of all school-related issues and events. Consequently, they are often unable to mediate between parties for a lack of information.
Secondly, various elements in a school system might develop very different interpretations of a single event or issue. When such differences reflect differences in values or interests between elements mediation is extremely difficult. Third, some events or issues, such as increasing property taxes or desegregation, attract the attention of a wide spectrum of elements in the school system. In such cases, the difficulty of developing a common view among elements is increased by the sheer number of views which must be accommodated.

Uncertainty is also apparent in the superintendent's coordinative role. In developing harmonious action among the school system's various components, it has been noted that communication of information is important. However, superintendents often are unable to either gather all relevant information; the information gathered is somehow faulty, or they are unable to transmit information to relevant participants. Another source of uncertainty is the commitment of participants. As superintendents noted, members of their staffs and communities do not always choose to function in harmony with programs or general directions adopted by their school systems. Here, the sources of uncertainty in the superintendent's mediative role, described above, are relevant to the coordinative role as well.

The patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of the processes and criteria by which they assess their performance also reveal an element of uncertainty. First, superintendents admit that they base much of their assessment on a sense or feeling for their communities' attitudes towards their performance and the operation of the school system. Secondly, the connection between superintendents'
performance and student achievement, a second assessment measure identified by superintendents, is unclear. While it is difficult to determine the extent to which any variable affects student performance, in the case of superintendents, the problem is further complicated by their indirect involvement in their school systems' instructional programs.

The Organizational Movement Theme

The third theme which characterizes the patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of their work is movement. Movement, it will be recalled, was defined in Chapter Four as the perceived alteration of some condition or the action which results in such alteration.

This theme is first apparent in the coordinative role of superintendents. Superintendents tend to emphasize their role in focusing the efforts of participants and allocating resources to attain organizational goals, goals which most often take the form of problems to be solved and improvements to be made. Superintendents, then, see themselves as coordinating their school systems to alter existing conditions, that is, to move.

The movement theme is also reflected in the patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of requisite occupational skills. Superintendents believe that it is necessary for an individual to be able to determine when conditions are right to lead a school system in a direction which (s)he deems in the system's best interest. Again, the emphasis is on the improvement or alteration of some existing condition.

The occupational emphasis on movement is also reflected in superintendents' descriptions of assessment processes and criteria. A
measure of job performance which superintendents utilize is the extent to which organizational goals are approached or the degree to which the school system generally seems to be moving towards improving its operations and instructional program. Movement is so clearly evident in this measure that it could easily be seen as the "movement criterion" for the assessment of school superintendents' performance.

The final dimension of superintendents' work in which the movement theme is reflected is the nature of events which provide members of the occupation with satisfaction. Superintendents tend to find satisfaction in their school system's attainment of tangible outcomes. Further, they view such outcomes as improvements in their school systems. Thus, just as superintendents stress the alteration of existing conditions in their work roles, requisite skills, and assessment, so do they gain satisfaction from movement in their school systems.

Structure of School Systems

The final theme which characterizes the patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of their work is a tendency among occupation members to pay attention to the structural aspects of school systems. Meyer and Rowan defined structure as the "blue print" for organizational activity — the categories which identify offices, departments, positions, programs and participants. This theme is reflected in several dimensions of superintendents' work.

The tendency among superintendents to pay attention to structural aspects of school systems is reflected in a pattern which characterizes the occupation's day-to-day tasks. A superintendents' work day is largely taken up with tasks which involve her/him in communicating with elements in their school systems. However, superintendents do not communicate with everyone in their school systems. There is a definable order to the cast of individuals and groups with whom superintendents interact. That order is largely defined by in terms of organizational, social, and political structures. Superintendents tend to meet with staff members who rank highest on the school systems' organizational hierarchy. Similarly, they interact most with presidents of their boards of education. They also communicate with agencies of state and federal governments. Finally, they communicate with individuals and groups in their communities who belong to socially and politically determined categories -- parents of students, members of the power structure, service organizations and leaders of interest groups. Thus, superintendents' tasks are largely structurally defined.

The structural theme is also reflected in the nature of the events which provide superintendents with satisfaction. Superintendents find satisfaction in tangible accomplishments such as the construction of a building to house a school, the passage of a tax or bond issue, the development of a new curriculum, the implementation of a special instructional program, or the graduation of a senior class. In light of Meyer and Rowan's definition, each of these is an aspect of a school systems' structure. Conversely, superintendents are not directly involved in the instruction of students in their system's schools.
Occupational Meanings and Sentiments

If meanings, "the interpretation of the significance of a situation, act, idea, or object with reference to how one should respond",[^9] are taken to arise from social interaction as Blumer has suggested,[^10] and if such meanings are in part reflected in verbal expression as Mead suggested,[^11] then themes in superintendents' descriptions of their work should indicate meanings they attach to that work. Similarly, if sentiments, "an enduring pattern of emotional dispositions held by an individual in relation to another person, an object, or an idea,"[^12] are taken to influence social behavior as Homans has contended,[^13] then superintendents' occupational sentiments might be inferred from their descriptions of the work they perform.

As noted above, four general themes were found to characterize patterns identified in superintendents' descriptions of various aspects of their work. What do these themes suggest about the nature of meanings and sentiments that superintendents attach to their work?

The total school system as the occupational arena. The first theme suggests that the significant unit for superintendents is the


[^12]: Theodorson and Theodorson, loc. cit.

school system as a whole and not individuals or units within it. They tend not to be concerned with promoting the interests of any one element within the school systems, but seek to maintain a harmonious balance between and among them. For superintendents, the school system is comprised of staff, board of education, and community. They attach particular importance to maintenance of harmonious relationships between schools and the communities they serve. Superintendents cherish harmonious situations and abhor those torn by conflict. Furthermore, they find great satisfaction in the accomplishment of outcomes which result from the coordinated efforts of many elements in their school systems.

**Uncertainty.** The uncertainty theme which characterizes superintendents' descriptions of their work suggests that a significant aspect of that work involves the management of uncertainty. They attach significance to the giving of direction to the operation of school systems in the face of the often conflicting interest of participants, and a dearth of information and resources. Further, superintendents are committed to providing their communities with a service, the instruction of students, which is characterized by an uncertain technology. For superintendents, this latter uncertainty is compounded by the uncertainty inherent in assessing their contribution, which is indirect at best, to the education of students.

**Organizational movement.** The organizational movement theme indicates that superintendents generally view the existing conditions in their school systems as a significant aspect of their work. They derive particular satisfaction from progressing towards and attaining pre-determined organizational goals. On a less formal level,
superintendents are generally committed to the "improvement" of their school systems' operations and educational programs. They see as significant their role in leading and directing their school systems toward an improved state.

**Structural aspects of the school system.** The fourth theme which characterizes superintendents' descriptions of their work is a tendency among members of that occupational group to pay attention to the structural aspect of school systems. It suggests two meanings which superintendents attach to their work. First, superintendents view as significant their involvement with elements in their school systems which are defined by existing organizational, social, and political structures to be influential in the operation and governance of their school systems. Secondly, superintendents attach meaning to the structural aspects of their school systems: facilities, programs, legal parameters, and division of labor. They derive satisfaction from accomplishments and the resolution of problems in those areas.

**Summary.** The analysis of superintendents' descriptions of their tasks and responsibilities, requisite occupational skills, assessment, and events which provide satisfaction resulted in the identification of four themes. These themes suggest that members of the occupation of public school superintendent attach meanings and sentiments to: the total school system as their work arena, the management of uncertainty in their school systems, progressive movement in their organizations, and attention to their school systems' structural aspects.

In the following chapter, the meanings and sentiments which superintendents attach to their work, as described here, will be integrated
with the occupational orientations described in Chapter Four to develop a unitary description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents.
CHAPTER VI
FINDINGS - PART THREE
THE OCCUPATIONAL ETHOS OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Introduction

A description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents has been pursued along two dimensions. First, three occupational structures — recruitment, socialization, and reward — were analyzed for themes which indicated general orientations shared by occupational group members (see Chapter Four). Then, superintendents' descriptions of four aspects of their work — tasks and responsibilities; requisite skills, knowledge, and attributes; assessment of performance; and events which provide satisfaction — were studied to identify themes which suggested the nature of meanings and sentiments that superintendents attach to their work (Chapter Five). In this chapter, the orientations, and meanings and sentiments will be synthesized in a unitary description of the ethos of the occupation of school superintendent.

In subsequent sections of this chapter, the description of the superintendent's occupational ethos will be discussed in terms of its relationship to existing social scientific theory, and then compared to
findings of other investigations which focused on the school superintendent.

The Occupational Ethos

If an occupation's ethos is viewed as the system of emotions which serves as the basis for the behavior of a given occupational group's members, what do the orientations, meanings, and sentiments shared by school superintendents suggest about that occupation's ethos?

It will be recalled that an analysis of occupational structures resulted in the identification of four general orientations shared by school superintendents. The contextual orientation concerns the tendency among superintendents to be sensitive to both the organizational and environmental conditions in which they work. While the quasi-fatalistic orientation reflects the limited understandings and control which superintendents have over occupational events, and their subsequent tendency to respond to chance opportunities. The movement orientation among superintendents reflects the occupational penchant for changing existing conditions. Conservatism is the final orientation shared by superintendents. It suggests that superintendents tend to be positively disposed to existing organizational structures and institutional forms.

The nature of the work meanings and sentiments shared by superintendents is largely consistent with the orientations which stem from occupational structures. The analysis of superintendents' descriptions of their work indicate that they attach meaning to and are emotionally committed to: the total school system as their work arena, the management of uncertainty, progressive organizational movement, and attention
to the structural aspects of a school system.

The occupation's orientations, and work meanings and sentiments reflect similar themes. They both indicate an occupational perspective which emphasizes the primacy of the organization and its environment as the significant work arena. Both dimensions are characterized by the pervasiveness of uncertainty and its accommodation and management. The theme of organizational movement is common to both dimensions, and both are characterized by themes which emphasize the structurally defined aspects of school systems and their environments. Thus, the processes which sustain the occupation are congruent with the ways that occupational members view their work.

Elements of Ethos

Such congruity of themes across structural and meaning dimensions suggests that the occupational ethos of school superintendents consists of four primary elements: 1. concern for the total social system of which schools are a part, 2. the accommodation of uncertainty, 3. an emphasis upon movement, and 4. attention to structure.

While each element of the superintendents' ethos has been described separately, they are neither totally discrete nor unrelated. They fit together to form a pattern which is peculiar to the ethos of the occupation of school superintendent. As indicated by the definition of ethos adopted for this study, it is a system of emotions, not merely a set of discrete parts. What follows is an initial attempt to describe the nature of that system.
Ethos As A System

Superintendents are the formally designated chief executive officers of public school systems. Like other occupational groups, the basic nature of the work of superintendents is, at least, partially conditioned by the context within which that work is performed. Thus, a brief description of the basic characteristics of public school systems is appropriate, if not necessary, to an explication of the occupational ethos of school superintendents.

Public school systems are a formally organized component of the social institution of education. The educational institution is: "The system of interrelated social roles and norms that ensures the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another."¹ As an integral component of a social institution, a school system must necessarily reflect the socio-cultural setting in which it is imbedded.

School systems are also formal organizations. Aldrich defined organizations as: "goal-directed, boundary-maintaining, activity systems."² Bidwell suggested that schools, as formal organizations, have as their central goal the preparation of students for adult roles in society,³ a goal which is consistent with the notion of school systems as formally organized components of a social institution. However, as

¹This definition is taken from George A. Theodorson and Achilles G. Theodorson, Modern Dictionary of Sociology (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969).


Aldrich's definition suggests, school systems as organizations maintain boundaries. That is, distinctions are maintained between members and non-members. In the case of school systems, a distinction is conventionally made between individuals on a school system's staff and individuals who are members of the social system which the schools serve but are not members of the school system's staff. This distinction is made by superintendents in describing their work. Further, many staff members are particularly qualified, even licensed, to prepare students for adult roles in society and, as a result of their occupational socialization, are given to a special view of what the preparation should include.

Thus, the context within which superintendents work is marked by two basic characteristics which together color the nature of their work. First, school systems are integral components of the social institution of education and, by definition, reflect the values of the society in which they are imbedded. Second, school systems are also formal organizations. From this latter perspective, they are "goal directed" and "boundary maintaining". School systems, then, can be characterized as formally organized social institutions. However, these two dimensions of school systems are not totally congruent. For example, as social institutions they reflect the values of society, while as formal organizations, they maintain boundaries. This apparent incongruity is brought into sharper focus by the boundary maintaining distinction which is made between staff and non-staff members. As suggested above, members of the school system's instructional staff, including the superintendent, are given to a particular view of education by virtue of their distinct socialization which might not be consistent with the values and interests
of the broader social system in which they work. This and other incongruities which stem from the interface of the institutional and organization dimensions of school systems are the focus for much of the work of superintendents.

**Concern for the total system.** The first element of the occupational ethos of superintendents, a concern for the total system, indicates that superintendents' work indeed is concerned not only with the formal organizational aspects of a school system, but also involves the community it directly serves, and the broader society as represented by state and federal agencies. This is borne out by patterns identified in occupational structures and meanings.

As the chief administrative officer of a school system, a superintendent is largely responsible for seeing to it that a school system's program and operation are consistent with the values and interests of the society it serves. This requires that a superintendent work to get schools to respond to the desires of community members as Superintendent L did when he facilitated the development of a program for gifted students upon discovering that this was viewed as a need by parents in his community. It also means that a superintendents must also gain community members' acceptance of ideas initiated by staff members who, as noted earlier, are the socially ordained specialists in matters of instructing students. Superintendent M performed this latter function when he supported a teacher's request to the board of education to implement a new instructional program. Superintendents are also responsible for insuring that their schools are operated within the parameters established by state and federal policies. Further, superintendents, nearly
all of whom were trained as educators, often work to move their school systems toward providing, what in their own views, are good instructional programs. Superintendents, it will be recalled, are attracted to the occupation by what they view as an opportunity to "improve education" on a broad scale, are rewarded by the recognition of student success, and assess their performance by the level to which students in their school systems achieve. Thus, a central theme in superintendents' work is the harmonizing of community values and governmental policies with the operation and educational program of the formal organization that is a school system. This is reflected in the mediative and coordinative roles of the superintendency described in Chapter Five.

To perform this function, superintendents actively communicate with elements, both internal and external, to the formal organizational structure of a school system. They determine the interests and values of staff and community members by listening and, otherwise, receiving information and monitor legislation and court rulings; they then develop a unified view of the activity of the school system among participants by communicating the form of that view to them. Thus, it is not surprising that superintendents report that they spend a majority of their working day communicating with various elements in their school systems, as information is a major tool in their work. This also accounts for the tendency among superintendents to assess their job performance by the extent to which community and staff members seek them out for counsel.

Uncertainty. The second element of the superintendent's occupational ethos, uncertainty, is interwoven with the theme which reflects superintendents' concern for the total system. This uncertainty
characterizes two dimensions of a superintendent's work reality. First, superintendents are faced with several forms of uncertainty in mediating between and among the interests of the various elements which comprise the formal organizational aspect of a school system and the society the system serves. Second, the basic technology of school systems, teaching students, is itself fraught with uncertainty.

It is a rare community in which all members agree upon the type of education which its youngsters need to prepare for adult roles. Thus, superintendents are faced with the task of determining what values and interests in the community should be reflected in the educational programs provided by the schools. Similarly, it is not likely that all the members of a system's instructional staff will agree on the types of educational experiences which the school system should provide. And, on occasion, the views of staff members do not coincide with those held by the community. Additionally, state and federal strictures can conflict with local attitudes. The result is that a superintendent is confronted with a constellation of sometimes conflicting interests and values. This confounds superintendents' attempts to develop even a minimal consensus among members of the social system within which school systems function as a component of the social institution.

Another form of uncertainty which superintendents face in mediating and coordinating between the various elements which comprise school systems stems from their necessary reliance upon information to fulfill these roles. In working to develop and maintain a harmonious balance between and among a school system's elements and the type of educational program which the schools provide, superintendents must collect and
interpret information from participants, and transmit information to
them regarding the direction of the activities in the school system.
However, superintendents often find that the information they receive
is incomplete or faulty, and that the information they transmit is
often interpreted in a way that they did not intend or even ignored
completely.

If, as Bidwell suggested, the basic goal of educational organiza­
tions is the preparation of students for adult roles, then it would seem
to follow that the basic technology of educational organizations is the
instruction of students. As several authors have noted, this technology
is, itself, characterized by uncertainty. 4 It is difficult to determine
the extent to which any number of factors, including teacher performance
and type of instructional program offered, contribute to student achieve­
ment. Further, members of the social system of which schools are a part
do not necessarily agree upon what the nature of that achievement should
be.

This uncertainty creates a critical problem for a superintendent,
who as the chief administrative officer of an organization which has as
its basic goal the preparation of students for adult roles in society,
is largely responsible for answering to society (i.e. the community) for
the effectiveness of the organization. For, technological uncertainty
and an absence of societal consensus regarding preferred outputs are not

4See for example, Daniel C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher - A Sociological
Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), and Karl E.
Weick "Educational Organizations As Loosely Coupled Systems," *Administra­
conducive to the objective assessment of an organization's effectiveness. And yet, a superintendent must be able to somehow rationalize the operation of school system to the community for which schools serve as a component of a social institution and upon whom a school system depends for its financial resources.

Thus, in mediating between and among elements within the formal organization of a school system and the socio-cultural system in which the organization is imbedded, a superintendent's work is characterized by a great deal of uncertainty. Communities are characterized by diverse views relative to what students should be prepared for and how that preparation should occur. The opinions of instructional staff members differ on these same issues and conflict with the views held by community members. The information which superintendents receive is often incomplete, and the information they transmit can be misinterpreted or ignored. And the basic technology of educational organizations is uncertain, making outputs difficult to assess.

The third and fourth elements of the superintendent's occupational ethos, movement and structure, provide insights to the strategies which superintendents employ to manage the uncertainty which so characterizes their work.

Movement. The movement element is manifested in two forms, both of which are related to the management of the uncertainty which characterizes superintendents' efforts to mediate between the organizational and institutional dimensions of school systems. A superintendent moves between and among elements which comprise the formal organization of a school system and the society it serves. He/she communicates, usually
in face-to-face encounters, with staff members, the board of education, the community, and state and federal agencies. A superintendent, in effect, monitors several streams of information which indicate attitudes, concerns, and interests relative to the school system. This maximizes the amount and reliability of the information from which a superintendent works to insure that the school system reflects the dominant interests and values of the social system of which it is a part. By monitoring informational streams, a superintendent is also better able to determine points at which they converge, thus indicating consensus relative to some school-related issue(s). The identification of such points provides a superintendent with themes upon which a common view can be developed among participants in a school system. Similarly, a superintendent specifically monitors informational streams to determine when conditions are right to lead the system in a direction which she/he views to be educationally beneficial.

Thus, in the face of the uncertainties which characterize the mediation of a myriad of often conflicting values and interests in society, superintendents monitor the movement of several informational streams with an eye toward identifying points of convergence. Such points provide opportunities to develop consensus and to lead the school system in some focal direction.

The second manifestation of the movement element is the emphasis which is placed on changing existing conditions in the school system. Such change is typically viewed as improvement. The movement theme exposes another incongruity which stems from the interface of the two dimensions -- institutional and organizational -- which characterize
school systems. As a component of the social institution of education, a school system has as its basic goal the training of youngsters for adult roles in society. And as a formal organization, a school system is assessed by the effectiveness with which its goal is attained. The incongruity stems from the difficulty with which the goal of training students is assessed. As noted above, at least a portion of this uncertainty results from the absence of a societal consensus regarding how educational outcomes should be measured. However, one point upon which most elements that comprise the social system in which a school system is imbedded agree is that schools are not perfectly effective in educating the populous and, therefore, are improvable. Faced with the responsibility of answering to society for the effectiveness of an organization whose basic output is difficult to measure in objective terms, a superintendent focuses upon moving the organization towards an improved state. In the absence of an objective measure of the quality of a school system's product, movement towards an improved organizational state becomes a surrogate measure of organizational effectiveness. Thus, a superintendent focuses upon developing more efficient operations (i.e. saving money), improving facilities, and redesigning instructional programs, all considered to be tangible improvements to a school system. This is not to say that superintendents are not concerned with the training of students. They do view the recognition of the successes of individual students as an occupational reward and even view the level of student achievement in their school systems as a measure of their own job performance. However, in mediating between the institutional and organizational dimensions of their school systems and in developing
harmonious relationships between the school system and constituents in the environment, superintendents emphasize the movement of their organizations towards tangibly improved states.

Structure. The fourth element of the occupational ethos of school superintendents, the attention to structural aspects of the school system and its environment, also provides insights to superintendents' management of uncertainty.

In working to develop and maintain a harmonious balance between the operation of the school system and the society which it serves as a component of the social institution of education, superintendents monitor the values and interests of various organizational and societal elements. But superintendents do not monitor all elements. They pay particular attention to those which are defined by existing political and social structures as relevant participants in the operation and governance of the school system. A superintendent monitors information from and transmits information to state and federal agencies, the local boards of education, the school system's administrative staff, representatives of employee groups and organizations, representatives of community organization, leaders of parent groups, and influential members of the community's political and social structure. Thus, existing social and political structures give order to the social system between whose elements superintendents mediate to develop a unitary meaning to the activity of the school system.

The structural theme is also manifested in the tendency among superintendents to attend to the structural aspects of their school systems. This tendency apparently reflects another element of the
organizational response of school systems to the dilemma posed by the incongruity which exists between their institutional and organizational dimensions. As a component of the social institution of education, a school functions to prepare youngsters for adult roles and, therefore, must reflect the values of the society in which it is imbedded. As a formal organization, a school system is judged in terms of the effectiveness with which it attains its goals. If, as the institutional dimension suggests, the basic goal of a school system is the preparation of youngsters for adult roles in society, it follows that it would be judged by the effectiveness with which it meets that goal. This is the crux of the dilemma. For, due largely to the institutional dimension of school systems, it is difficult, if not possible, to objectively assess the extent to which the goal of preparing youngsters for adult roles in society has been met. Because a diversity of views is reflected throughout society with regard to what the outcomes of schooling should be, it is impossible to account to the whole of society for the effectiveness of a school system using goal attainment as a measure.

Faced with the impossibility of developing a unitary view among societal members regarding preferred outcomes of schooling, and the necessity of reflecting societal values to maintain societal support, school systems rely on means other than the assessment of outcomes to account to society. As a key actor in the mediation between the formal organization of the school system and the society it serves, the nature of the work of school superintendents provides an important insight to the manner in which school systems manage this dilemma. A superintendent attends to the structural aspects of a school system. According
to Meyer and Rowan, structure is the "blue print" for activity of educational organizations, and includes categories of offices, departments, programs, and participants. Superintendents emphasize such elements of their school systems as: physical facilities, curriculum, instructional programs, grade level organization, and fiscal management. They spend little time doing work directly related to the basic work of their school systems, the teaching and training of students.

This suggests that school systems reflect the various dominant social values not in their organizational outcomes but in the various elements of their organizational structure. This obviates the need to develop a unitary societal view of education which confounded the use of outcomes to engender societal support.

Summary and synthesis. The four elements of the occupational ethos of school superintendents are integrated to form a pattern which characterizes the nature of the work peculiar to members of that occupational group. The organizational context in which superintendents function is a powerful determinant of the nature of that work. School systems are characterized by both social institutional and organizational dimensions. Two incongruities, which exists between the institutional and organizational dimensions of school systems, strongly color the work of superintendents. The first basic point upon which the dimensions differ is the relationship which exists between a school system and the society it serves. From the institutional perspective, a school system, by

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definition, reflects the values of the society, itself; while from the organizational perspective, a boundary is maintained with a clearcut differentiation being made between staff and non-staff. The second incongruity concerns the basic goal attainment of school systems. As a component of a social institution, school systems function to prepare young people for adult roles. As an organization, a school system's effectiveness is determined by assessing the extent to which its goal is attained. The dilemma stems from the uncertainty which characterizes the instrumentation of a school system's basic goal, instructing youngsters.

The occupational ethos of school superintendents is set within this contextual framework. That element of the ethos which reflects superintendents' concern for the totality of the school system and its environment is the centerpiece. It indicates a superintendent's prominent role in mediating between the various elements of the school system and its environment to insure that the schools serve their institutional function and reflect societal values.

This role is fraught with uncertainty, as illustrated by the second element of the superintendent's ethos. Segments within society differ in their views on education, members of school districts' instructional staffs can differ in their views on education and often differ collectively from the views held by the communities in which they work. Further, superintendents as professional educators have their own views relative to what characterizes a good instructional program. Thus, superintendents are faced with the uncertainty of mediating between and among a constellation of views including their own. Additional
uncertainty stems from superintendents having to function with incomplete or inaccurate information, and from other elements misinterpreting information provided by the superintendent. The final source of uncertainty is the basic technology of school systems which is the teaching of youngsters. This is compounded by the absence of a societal consensus with regard to what the outcomes of schooling should be. This makes the objective assessment of organizational products impossible.

In the face of these uncertainties, superintendents emphasize movement and structure to mediate between the formal organization that is the school system and the society for which the school system serves, an institutional function. Superintendents move between various informational streams which originate with different elements in the social system. They monitor the movement of these streams to identify points of convergence. Such points indicate opportunities to forge a unitary view of a school system's activity among elements in the system and its environment. Superintendents also emphasize the movement of their school systems toward improved states. In the absence of objective measures of the quality of a school system's product, movement towards an improved state becomes a surrogate measure of organizational effectiveness.

Superintendents also emphasize structure to manage the uncertainty which seems endemic to their work. Existing social and political structures provide an order to the organizational and societal context within which they work. And, faced with the impossibility of developing a consensus among societal members regarding preferred outcomes of schooling and the necessity for a school system to reflect societal
values to engender societal support, superintendents work to have various elements of the structure of their school systems reflect various dominant societal values.

The ethos of school superintendents is, perhaps, best summarized by one finding of this study. When asked to name and describe the occupation which is most similar to their own, superintendents named two occupations more often than any others, the clergy and politics. In fact, several indicated that the superintendency was best characterized as a hybrid of these two lines of work.

Like members of the clergy, superintendents are involved, albeit in a different way, in the service of society. In fact, several superintendents suggested that their work in the educational service of their communities was a calling. Thus, the clerical aspect of superintendent's work corresponds roughly to the social institutional dimension of school systems.

Additionally, a superintendent is fundamentally responsible for accounting to society for the effectiveness of a formal organization, a school system. Thus, like politicians, superintendents mediate between the interests and values of their school systems' constituencies. In fact, a number of superintendents liked their efforts to accommodate the varied societal values and interests in the operations and educational programs of their school systems to "running for office." This political aspect of superintendent's work reflects their role in mollifying the incongruities which stem from the interface of school systems' social institutional and organizational dimensions.
Thus, the superintendency might be characterized as:

... A combination of politician and a clergyman
... I think clergymen are very idealistic in the
sense that they have ideals and they want to make
things better in the community ... I think you've
got to be a politician ... to survive on the job
... you've got to listen to people or, at least,
make them feel that they're being listened to.
And you've got to get down in many cases and cast
that final vote, make that decision.
(Superintendent E)

Relation of Findings to Theory

The identification of four basic elements of the occupational ethos
of school superintendents and an initial attempt to describe their
inter-relationships has resulted from this study. However, the essence
of scientific inquiry is not the collection of discrete observations,
but the cumulative understanding of phenomena. To this end, the
findings are discussed here in terms of their relationship to existing
social scientific theories.

The discussion will focus upon conceptualizations which are aimed
at the description of two related social phenomena, leadership and
formal organizations.

Relation of Findings to Leadership Theory

At the core of most conceptualizations which focus on leadership
is the notion of goals or outcomes. This is clearly reflected in Sergio-
vanni and Carver's definition of a leader:

The individual charged with the tasks of "directing
and coordinating" the group activities necessary to
achieve or change goals.\(^6\)

Further, most conceptualizations which appear in the leadership literature emphasize the leader's role in the attainment of group goals and tend to dwell upon the leader's relationships with subordinates. For example, Robert House developed a "Path Goal Theory" of leadership.\(^7\) House contended that a leader's behavior had its most direct effects on the motivation of subordinates rather than on their behavior. He suggested that among other functions, a leader clarified group goals and facilitated their attainment by:

1. Increasing the personal payoff for the achievement of goals
2. Easing the path through coaching and direction
3. Helping subordinates clarify expectancies
4. Reducing frustrating barriers, and

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5. Increasing the opportunity for personal satisfaction from effective performance.8

Similarly, Fred Fiedler developed a contingency model of leadership.9 Fiedler classified supervisors as "task oriented" or "interpersonal-relations oriented" depending on the way they described the individual with whom they least liked to work. He concluded that the effectiveness of leadership style was contingent upon three variables: relations between leader and subordinates, the degree to which the task was structured, and the power of the leader.10 Fiedler further concluded that, to be effective, a leader must emphasize varying degrees of task and interpersonal orientations depending upon the nature of the specific situation encountered.11

Guba and Bidwell developed another conceptualization of leadership12 based upon the Getzels-Guba social systems theory.13 Guba and Bidwell described three leadership styles: nomothetic, idiographic, and transactional. Nomothetic leaders focus upon structural concerns of the organization while idiographic leaders emphasize the needs and concerns of individuals. And transactional leaders are characterized by a more

8Idem
10Idem.
11Idem.
13For the most highly developed model of this model, see Jacob W. Getzels, James M. Lipham, and Roald F. Campbell, Educational Administration As A Social Process (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 105.
balanced concern for both organizational and individual dimensions.\textsuperscript{14}

As with the two previous conceptualizations, the basic focus of the Guba-Bidwell formulation is the description of leadership behaviors which lead to the effective attainment of organizational goals.

While the three conceptualizations of leadership briefly summarized above certainly do not and were not intended to represent the universe of existing theory, they do serve to illustrate that the conventional focus of leadership theorists has been upon the coordination and motivation of individuals toward the attainment of group goals.

In terms of the findings of this study, the Guba-Bidwell view of leadership does provide insights to one aspect of the work of superintendents but leaves a significant dimension of the occupation unexplained.

The description of the occupational ethos suggests that as the chief executive officer of formal organizations (i.e. school systems), superintendents do work to coordinate the efforts of participants toward the accomplishment of organizational goals. Consistent with the theoretical conceptualizations of leadership summarized above, superintendents do indicate that they pay attention both to the personal needs and concerns of participants and organizational structures in the form of policies and action plans to this end. However, the basic elements of the occupational ethos and the system of interrelationships by which those elements are bound suggest that such a view of leadership does not adequately account for much of the work of school

\textsuperscript{14}Cuba and Bidwell, loc cit.
superintendents. An essential element of superintendents' work involves mediating between the formal organization of the school system and the society for which it serves as a component of the social institution of education. It is this fundamental element of the superintendency which is not addressed by most conceptualizations of leadership. For example, while House suggested that an effective leader facilitates organizational goal attainment by clarifying those goals and concomitant expectations for individual performance, his conceptualization does not account for a superintendent's role in mediating between and among societal and organizational elements to develop a unified view of the activity of a school system, an element of which is the system's goals. Nor do most conceptualizations of leadership account for superintendents' inattention to the basic activities and goal of their organizations, the preparation of youngsters for adult roles in society. This is not to say that existing theories on leadership do not reflect the reality of superintendents' work. The point to be made here is that the findings of this study suggest that such a view of leadership accounts for only one dimension of superintendents' reality, the formal organizational aspect of school systems, but does not account for the social institutional dimension or the incongruities which stem from the interface of these two dimensions.

A body of social theory which addresses this latter dimension of the occupation of superintendent focuses upon formal organizations.
Relation of Findings to Organizational Theory

A view of formal organizations has recently emerged in the literature which appears useful to the explication of the findings of this study. In response to the perceived limitations of existing organizational theory, several authors have posited conceptualizations which stem from a view of organizations as "loosely coupled systems".

Conventional views of organizational structure are rooted in Weber's descriptions of the ideal-type bureaucracy. They are based upon the assumption that organizations are inherently rational; that organizations are controlled objectively towards maximizing organizational goal attainment. However, the organizational literature is replete with descriptions of events and behaviors in organizational contexts which expose the frailty of such an assumption.\(^\text{15}\)

In an effort to account for phenomena not accommodated by the rational view of organizational structure and behavior, several authors have developed conceptualizations which focus upon loose couplings in organizations. It is important to note that much of the loose coupling literature has focused upon educational organizations.

Weick raised the question of the usefulness of the loose coupling concept as a sensitizing device for furthering the development of

\(^{15}\)For comprehensive surveys of the organizational literature that indicate the pervasiveness of the loose-coupling phenomenon see: Ronald G. Corwin, "Compensatory Control in Loosely Coupled Organizations," Revision of a paper prepared for a Seminar on Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems (Palo Alto, California, November, 1976), and Margaret R. Davis, The Contribution of Loose Coupling (Stanford, California: Stanford Center for Research Development in Teaching, Stanford University, 1977).
organizational theory. He states that:

By loose coupling, the author intends to convey the image that coupled elements are responsive but that each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness.

Weick identified intention-action, yesterday-tomorrow, line-staff, teachers-materials, voters-school board, teacher-teacher, parent-teacher, and teacher-pupil as possibly coupled elements of educational organizations.

In view of Weick's coupling imagery, the description of the occupational ethos suggests that the work of superintendents is loosely coupled to the basic work and goal of school systems and more tightly coupled to school systems' structural aspects. It also suggests that superintendents are coupled loosely to elements both within the formal organizational structure of school systems and in school systems' environments; and, thus, that superintendents serve to loosely couple these various elements relative to the activity of school systems. Further insights to the nature of the coupling of superintendents are provided by organizational conceptualizations which focus upon the coupling of specific elements of educational organizations.

Meyer and Rowan developed a view of educational organizations aimed, in part, at explaining the observed looseness of the coupling which


17 Ibid., p. 3.
exists between structural aspects of school systems, the "blueprints" for activity, and the activity of school systems, the instruction of students.18 Their explanation hinged on the notion that organizations generate structures to reflect institutions19 -- "classifications built into society as reciprocated typifications or interpretations"20 -- in their environments. According to Meyer and Rowan's conceptualization, educational organizations decouple structure generated in this fashion from activity because attempts to control and coordinate activity can lead to conflicts and a loss of legitimacy for the school among organizational constituents.21 They also contend that structural elements are loosely coupled to enable educational organizations to "adapt to inconsistent and conflicting institutionalized rules."22

This view of organizations is clearly reflected by the findings of this study. The occupational ethos of school superintendents indicates that superintendents are largely responsible for mediating between the formal organization of a school system and the society for which it serves as a component of the social institution of education. In meeting this responsibility, superintendents are primarily occupied with

20Ibid., p. 341.
22Ibid., p. 100.
matters related to the structural aspects of school systems and only minimally involved with school systems' basic work and goal, the preparation of youngsters for adult roles in society. Further, a tentative description of the interrelationships binding the basic elements of the occupational ethos suggest that the tendency among superintendents to emphasize structure over activity stems: 1) from the absence of a societal consensus regarding the preferred outcomes of schooling, and 2) the necessity for school systems to reflect dominant social values to sustain societal support. The description of the system of the superintendents' occupational ethos suggests that school systems manage this dilemma by reflecting sometimes conflicting social values in various elements of their structures, and that because superintendents function to mediate between schools and society, their work is, therefore, largely focused on school systems' structural aspects. This is consistent with the Meyer and Rowan notion that the structure of educational organizations is isomorphic with environmental institutions to legitimize the organizations to constituents in their environments. It is also consistent with their notion that structural elements are loosely coupled to enable educational organizations to accommodate disparate institutions.

Additionally, the Meyer and Rowan conceptualization provides an insight to the finding that superintendents are only minimally involved in the basic activity of school systems. Their explanation of the loose coupling observed between organizational structure and activity suggests that superintendents are not directly involved in the supervision and control of instructional activities because such efforts could expose
incongruities between social values reflected in various elements of the school system's structure and the nature of the instruction being provided to students. The exposure of such value misalignments could result in the withdrawal of support for the school system by elements in the school system's environment whose values and interests conflict with instructional practices.

Cohen, March, and Olsen posited another conceptualization of organizations as loosely coupled systems which provides insights to the explication of the nature of superintendents' work. In describing "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice", they focused upon the loose coupling of intention to outcomes. Cohen, March, and Olsen contended that "organized anarchies" -- organizations characterized by problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation -- are characterized by decision processes which systematically depart from conventional notions of "rational" planning and problem solving. It is important to note that each of these conditions is present in educational organizations. They suggested that under such conditions "a decision is an outcome of interpretation of several relatively independent streams within an organization." Cohen, March, and Olsen identified four such streams: problems, solutions, participants, and


24 Ibid., pp. 1-2.

25 Ibid., p. 2.
choice opportunities.26

Cohen, March, and Olsen also suggested that:

Elements of organizational structure influence outcomes of a garbage can process (a) by affecting the time pattern of the arrival of problems, choice, solutions, or decision makers, (b) by determining the allocation of energy by potential participants in the decision, and (c) by establishing linkages among the various streams.27

They concluded that decisions are made in three ways in organized anarchies. First, "some choices resolve problems after some period of working on them."28 Second, if participant energy is available to make an available choice quickly when problems are attached to other choices, a decision is made by oversight.29 Finally, a decision is made by flight when problems leave a choice to move to a more attractive one, thus, making it possible to make a decision. Such decisions do not resolve problems.30

The garbage can model of decision making is consistent with several aspects of the occupational ethos of school superintendents. Most fundamentally, the three characteristics of organized anarchies as described by Cohen, March, and Olsen are reflected in the basic elements of the ethos. An element of the ethos is uncertainty and its management. The description of the system of ethos suggests that the basic goal of

26Ibid., p. 3.
27Ibid., p. 4.
28Ibid., p. 8.
29Idem.
30Idem.
education, the preparation of students for adult roles, is the source of uncertainty for superintendents because the technology of teaching, itself, is fraught with uncertainty and because of the absence of a societal consensus regarding preferred school outcomes. This is consistent with the problematic preference and unclear technology characteristics of unorganized anarchies. The third characteristic of organized anarchies described by Cohen, March, and Olsen -- fluid participation -- is reflected in the superintendents' role of mediating between the interests and values of a myriad of elements both within the formal organizational structure of a school system and its environment. Thus, the context within which superintendents work can be characterized as an organized anarchy. What contribution, then, can the garbage can model of decision making provide to an improved understanding of the occupational ethos of school superintendents?

One element of ethos indicates that superintendents are absorbed with work related to the structural aspects of the school system and structurally determined elements in the environment. As noted above, Cohen, March, and Olsen contended that organizational structure influences decision outcomes by affecting "the time pattern of the arrival of problems, choices, solutions, or decision makers", by deciding the amount of energy potential participants will expend on a decision, and by linking the streams of participants, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities.\footnote{Ibid., p. 4} This notion is consistent with the finding that, in mediating between and among elements in the school system and the
environment, superintendents monitor informational streams which emanate from elements structurally defined as influential or having a vested interest in the activity of the school system. This tendency reflects the influence of structures on the allocation of participant energy to various choices. The tendency found among superintendents to monitor informational streams to identify points of convergence which indicate opportunities to develop consensus among participants or to steer the school system in a direction which they, the superintendents, view to be beneficial to the system is also basically consistent with the garbage can model. For, it indicates that superintendents, in their mediative role, link participants, problems, and solutions to opportunities to make choices.

The findings of the study also show that superintendents are involved in decision processes which reflect at least two of the three ways that decisions are made in organized anarchies. First, superintendents indicated that they found particular satisfaction in the resolution of a problem. This is the decision process that superintendents identify as the ideal. Second, superintendents acknowledge that decisions are not always made according to this convention. For example, a superintendent reported that he often raised "strawmen" to divert attention away from an issue so that he could act on it decisively. This is a clear example of a superintendent exploiting decision by oversight to influence a decision outcome. Another superintendent spoke of issues simply dying by attrition. Perhaps this is simply a manifestation of decision by flight.
Summary and Conclusions

The application of an admittedly limited and selective set of conceptualizations from two bodies of literature -- leadership and loose coupling of organizational elements -- provides what is a potentially significant insight to the work of the superintendency. Conventional leadership theory as represented here by the formulations of House, Fiedler, and Guba and Bidwell emphasizes the leader's willful direction of action towards the attainment of organizational goals. Indeed, this does account for a portion of superintendents' work. The basic limitation of this view, however, is brought into focus by conceptualizations which seek to explain the existence of loose couplings between organizational elements. This view of organizations as represented here by the writings of Weick, Meyer, and Rowan, and Cohen, March, and Olsen recognizes and attempts to explain situations in which: structure is functionally detached from activity, outcomes are not directly linked to intent, and decisions are made systematically by processes not accounted for by more conventional views of organizations and leadership except as aberrations.

The description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents that resulted from this study reflects an occupational reality which does not totally conform to the rationality of directed action implicit in conventional conceptualizations of leadership. Instead, as the loose coupling literature suggests, superintendents are apparently confronted with a work reality in which: a. intentions and activity are often detached from outcomes; b. decisions result from the confluence of problems, solution, participants, and choice opportunities rather than from
the rational analysis of alternatives in light of pre-stated goals;
c. structural aspects of school systems must sometimes be detached from
instructional activities to maintain societal support; and d. conflicting structural elements are maintained to reflect conflicting values in
the environment.

Relation of Findings to Findings of Other Studies

How does the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents which resulted from this study compare with the findings of
previous research on the American school superintendency? As noted in
the previous section of this chapter, the heart of scientific inquiry
is the cumulative acquisition of knowledge about phenomena. Consistent
with that ideal, this last section will be devoted to relating these
findings to those that resulted from previous investigations. The
descriptions of the occupational ethos of school superintendents will
be compared to the findings of two types of studies. The first are
those that focus upon the school superintendency. The second is the
study in which Daniel Lortie describes the occupational ethos of school-
teachers.

Studies of the Superintendency

While numerous works describe the school superintendency, this
discussion will be limited to those which resulted from the systematic
collection and analysis of empirical data, and which focus expressly on
the superintendency.

A study conducted Goldhammer, Suttle, Aldridge, and Becker sought
to determine what school superintendents viewed to be the major issues
and problems they faced. Goldhammer et al. found that superintendents identified educational change, teacher militancy, administrative leadership, critical social issues, instruction, and finance as the most difficult issues, and that they identified the acquisition of adequate information for making decisions in all phases of school administration as a critical problem. Goldhammer, et al. also found that superintendents in their sample did not see themselves as directors of their school systems, but as the individual whose function it was to mediate between and among groups and to link the schools to the community.

These findings are consistent with the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents which resulted from the present study. The central element of the ethos, a concern for the total social system of which schools are a part, suggests that superintendents mediate between and among the concerns, values, and interests of various participants in the formal organizational structure of a school system and its environment. To fulfill this role, superintendents spend a major part of their work day and night communicating with participants who comprise the school system and its environment. This element of the ethos is clearly consistent with the Goldhammer et al. findings that superintendents viewed the acquisition of adequate information as a

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33 Idem.

34 Ibid., p. 40.

critical problem and that they saw themselves not so much as leaders but as mediators between and among groups and between the school and community. Further, the sensitivity to events external to the formal organizational structure of a school system which is implicit in the total social system element of the ethos is reflected in the Goldhammer, et al. findings that superintendents viewed educational change, teacher militancy, critical social issues, and finance to be among the major issues they faced.

The Midwest Administration Center conducted a study in 1958-59 that centered upon an application of Hemphill's concepts of "initiating structure" and "consideration" to the analysis of data collected by observing the behavior of five suburban school superintendents. While Campbell and Cunningham reported that three-fourths of the superintendents' interactions recorded could not be clearly classified within the initiating structure-consideration model, they did classify with whom superintendents interacted and for what purposes. Campbell and Cunningham reported that superintendents interacted with four major groups: community groups (this included governmental agencies), professional groups, school boards, and members of the districts' staffs. An analysis of 711 observed interactions showed that:

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36 Also see: Andrew Halpin, Leadership and Behavior of School Superintendents (Columbus, Ohio: College of Education, The Ohio State University, 1956).

37 Roald F. Campbell and Luvern L. Cunningham, Observation of Administrator Behavior (Chicago: Midwest Administration Center - University of Chicago, 1959).

38 Ibid., p. 48.
15 percent of them were with community groups, 3 percent with professional groups, 12 percent with the school board and 70 percent with the organization.39

Campbell and Cunningham also reported superintendents tended to interact with members of their school systems' staffs for the following "purposes": instructional program objectives, program content and organization, and instructional materials and equipment; staff assignment and recruitment, and in-service education; school plant resources and plant growth and development; sources of revenue, school budget, and internal accounting; public relations; and social exchange, and routine communication.40

These findings are consistent with at least two of the elements of the occupational ethos identified by the present study. The Campbell and Cunningham findings that superintendents interact with elements both within and external to the formal organizational structure of a school system and that they emphasize public relations as a purposes for interacting with staff reflect the element of the ethos which indicates that superintendents are concerned with the total social system in which schools are imbedded. The element of the ethos which indicates that superintendents pay special attention to school systems' structural aspects is reflected in Campbell and Cunningham's findings relative to the purposes for superintendents' interactions with staff members. Most of the purposes identified are of a structural nature. A clear illustration of this point is the finding that superintendents often

39Ibid., p. 103.
interacted with staff regarding instructional program objectives, program content and organization, and instructional materials, but never interacted with staff regarding the supervision of program content or instruction.

Pitner applied the analytical approaches developed by Mintzberg for his study of managerial behavior to the study of three suburban school superintendents. Pitner concluded that superintendents function as managers of information within the social systems of which schools are a part. She found that superintendents controlled "the acquisition, retention, and dissemination of information." Expanding on the notion, Pitner suggested that superintendents employ several "devices" as information managers:

The superintendent, then, is someone who in the performance of his role, interprets organizational history, interprets contemporary events, manages the meaning of crucial terms or concepts, and manages organizational myths.

Two elements of the occupational ethos of school superintendents are reflected in Pitner's findings. First, the central element of the ethos, a concern for the total social system of which school systems are a part, is clearly consistent with Pitner's finding that superintendents function as information managers within the social system in which schools are imbedded. For, the findings of the present study

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42 Ibid., p. 123.

43 Ibid., pp. 123-124.
suggest that superintendents function as mediators between the various elements of a school system and its social environment by monitoring informational streams which emanated from structurally defined elements in the social system. Further, the element of the ethos which indicates that superintendents manage uncertainty in the mediation of the institutional and organizational dimensions of school systems is reflected in the "devices" for information management described by Pitner. For, the interpretation of history and contemporary events, the management of the meaning of terms and concepts, and the management of myths can be viewed as devices for the management of uncertainty which characterizes superintendents' efforts to develop unitary views of a school system's activity among its constituents.

Thus, the findings of studies conducted by Goldhammer, et al., Campbell and Cunningham, and Pitner reinforce the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents which resulted from the present work. The central element of the ethos, superintendents' concern for the total social system of which school systems are a part, is reflected in each of these studies' findings. The structural element is reflected in the findings of the study reported by Campbell and Cunningham, and the uncertainty element is consistent with Pitner's description of devices utilized by superintendents in the management of information.

The Ethos of Teachers and Superintendents

As noted in previous chapters, the present study owes much to Lortie's study of schoolteachers. He developed the notion of an
occupational ethos, and devised the general, two-dimensional approach adopted for the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents.\footnote{Daniel C. Lortie, Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1975).} For these reasons and because schoolteachers and superintendents are occupational groups which function within the same social-organizational context, a comparison of the findings of the two studies can be instructive.

Lortie found that:

The ways teachers define their tasks and the feelings they attach to them are largely congruent with the orientations induced by recruitment, socialization, and career rewards. Approaching the ethos from two perspectives, we find the same themes. Conservatism, individualism, and presentism are significant components in the ethos of American classroom teachers.\footnote{Ibid., p. 212.}

Similarly, the findings of the present study indicate that superintendents' orientations which stem from recruitment, socialization and reward structures are largely consistent with the ways they define their work and the sentiments they attach to it. However, in contrast to Lortie's findings, the following were found to be the basic elements of the occupational ethos of school superintendents: concern for the total social system of which school systems are a part, uncertainty and its management, movement, and structure.

A comparison of the elements of the schoolteacher's ethos with those found to characterize the ethos of school superintendents reveals several striking contrasts. Teachers focus upon the individual, while
superintendents are concerned with the social system in which schools are imbedded and pay particular attention to a school system's structural aspects and to structurally defined elements in the school system's environment. Teachers emphasize the present, while superintendents emphasize movement, an element which has an inherent futuristic dimension. Teachers tend to be conservative, a tendency also reflected in the element of the superintendent's ethos which suggests a commitment to existing organizational and social structures. However, in the case of superintendents the conservative element is countered by the element which emphasizes movement, the alteration of an existing state. The implications of the differences identified between the ethos of teachers and the ethos of superintendents will be described in the section of Chapter Seven which outlines recommendations for future research.
Summary

The general purpose of this study was to describe the occupational ethos of the American school superintendent by analyzing:

1. The structures which develop and sustain the occupation to determine the general orientations which they encourage among occupation group members; and

2. Superintendents' descriptions of their work to determine the meanings and sentiments of their work.

Flowing from this general purpose were research questions and related sub-questions which provided the basic structure for the interview guide used to collect data, and focused the description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents. These questions serve as the basis for the framework of the summary of findings and conclusions.

1. What patterns exist in the recruitment of superintendents into the profession?
The attraction and process dimensions of the occupational recruitment structure were analyzed to identify characteristic patterns.

**Attractions.** Three characteristics of the superintendency function as occupational attractions. First, prospective superintendents are primarily attracted by an occupational characteristic which is basic to education-related work, the service dimension.

Second, the superintendent's position at the top of an organizational hierarchy is an attraction to budding school administrators. Superintendents generally believed that they would be able to exert the influence of their office to improve education on a broader scale than they could as classroom teachers or school principals. Thus, the service dimension of educational work serves as a general attraction to educational occupations, while expectations of district-wide influence is an attraction specific to the superintendency.

Third, individuals are attracted to the superintendency by the salary the occupation commands. However, the attraction of salary is only a consideration as it is a differentiation between occupations available in institutions of public education. It seems that superintendents are primarily drawn by the opportunity to serve which educational work provides, and secondarily attracted by the relatively greater salaries earned by superintendents.

**Recruitment process.** Another dimension of the recruitment structure is the nature of the process by which members are recruited into the occupation. Four general patterns characterize the process by which individuals are recruited into the superintendency -- a constrained recruitment pool, deferred occupational choice, chance, and subjectivity
of selection.

Unlike many occupations, the school superintendency draws its members from an existing occupational group. Nearly all superintendents serve as teachers, and most also work as school principals before ascending to the superintendency. Thus, superintendents are not drawn from the general population. Instead, they are drawn from occupations which are characterized by their own structures, meanings and sentiments, and ethos.

The recruitment of superintendents is also characterized by the deferment of occupational choices. Individuals who eventually become superintendents do not make the decision to pursue the superintendency until they are well into their educational careers. In fact, some never consciously seek it, but have it "fall" to them.

The third pattern in the recruitment of superintendents is the element of chance. Superintendents, even those who consciously map out their careers, ascribe a great deal of importance to the role that chance opportunities, timing, and just plain luck play in determining who does and does not become a superintendent. This general pattern is consistent with Carlson's finding that when boards of education are dissatisfied with the administration of a school system, they tend to hire an outsider as superintendent and when satisfied, hire an insider.¹

The final recruitment pattern reflects the apparent subjectivity by which individuals are initially selected to become school administrators

and finally chosen to be superintendents. The only specific criterion that superintendents can identify as being important in their selection is that they were actively involved as teachers and principals in activities which were visible and reached beyond their classrooms and schools.

Recruitment themes. Four general themes are reflected in the patterns described above as characterizing the recruitment of superintendents. They are: an attentiveness to context, the accommodation of uncertainty, movement, and conservatism.

Several patterns reflect the theme which emphasizes attentiveness to the contexts within which superintendents work. Specifically, the attraction of the authoritative position of superintendents in school systems' organizational hierarchies, the nature of the recruitment pool, and the deferment of occupational decisions encourage an awareness of the operation of the entire school system. Similarly, the attractions of the service dimension of education-related occupations and the authoritative position of the superintendency encourage the development of a sensitivity to school districts' environments.

The second theme reflected in the patterns of the recruitment structure is the existence and accommodation of uncertainty. The selection of individuals into the superintendency is fraught with uncertainty. That is, superintendents lack knowledge of both the process by which they are selected into the occupation and the reasons for their selection. They tend to identify luck or chance as important factors in their careers. To function in the face of such uncertainty, superintendents tend to focus on identifiable outcomes and maintain a
fundamentally reactive posture. Since causes are not understood, they attach importance to outcomes and respond to events as they occur.

Movement is the third theme reflected in the recruitment structure. The nature of the occupation's recruitment pool, and the attractions of the superintendency's authoritative position in school systems and the salary the position commands suggest that superintendents are prone to career movement. They move up the organizational hierarchy from teacher to superintendent and up the concomitant salary scale. Superintendents also emphasize the improvement of their school systems. In fact, they indicate that one attraction of the superintendency is the influence they expected to be able to exert from that position to improve education. Improvement, of course, connotes alteration of an existing state, movement.

The fourth and final theme which characterizes the patterns identified in the recruitment structure is conservatism. The nature of the superintendency's recruitment pool and the attraction of its authoritative position contribute to the population of the occupation by individuals positively disposed to existing organizational structures and institutional forms.

2. What patterns exist in superintendents' characterizations of their occupations' socialization process?

Sociologists have observed that occupational socialization occurs in two realms -- formal training programs, and on-the-job experience.  

They have also noted that training occurs on two levels — formal and informal. These two dimensions served as the framework for the analysis of the socialization structure of the superintendency.

**Formal training programs.** Three general patterns characterize the formal level training of superintendents in university based training programs. First, a great majority of the courses included in formal training programs focus upon elements both internal and external to the formal organizational structure of school systems which must be managed and sustained to support school systems and their instructional programs. For example, courses are commonly offered on school finance, personnel administration, public relations, business management, and school law. Second, superintendents see formal training programs as having only limited usefulness in preparing to do the work of the superintendency. However, a third pattern indicates that superintendents tend to be positively disposed to courses in which professors or other participants share experiences from their own backgrounds as school administrators.

Preparation for occupational membership in formal training settings goes beyond the transmission of occupational skills and knowledge. Several studies have shown that characteristics of formal training programs function partially to imbue students with the orientations of

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the occupation for which they are being prepared.

Three patterns characterize the informal level socialization of superintendents in formal educational administration training programs. First, most prospective superintendents receive their university based administrative training on a part-time basis. Not only does this pattern affect the nature of the training, itself, but also allows trainees to maintain full-time employment as teachers in nearby school districts.

Secondly, the successful completion of a course of study in educational administration directly results in the formal, occupational certification of students. As superintendents generally find that the substantive content of the coursework in formal training programs does little to prepare them for their work, courses are not taken so much for their intrinsic value as for their instrumental value. Courses are seen as hurdles which must be crossed to complete training programs and thereby obtain certification. The third characteristic of formal educational administration training programs is an element of uncertainty. Through their exposure to the occupation's conceptual foundation, future superintendents are at once exposed to the limits of the occupation's knowledge base and to the limits of their own ability to master what is known.

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Informal training. The occupational socialization of superintendents in informal training settings begins long before an individual actually becomes a member of the occupation. As teachers and principals, prospective superintendents are provided with a vicarious initiation to the superintendency. By observing superintendents at work, they begin to shape their own approaches to the job, finding fault with some of what they see and wanting to emulate individuals they come to respect. What is more, superintendents carry with them the perspectives and skills they developed as members of other educational occupations. In a very real but limited sense, they are able to see the school system from the perspectives of teachers and principals, as well as their own. Superintendents also call upon occupational skills developed as teachers, coaches, and building level administrators to work with people, both in the schools and in the community. Superintendents particularly find that coaching experience prepares them to withstand the pressure of public criticism which so characterizes the superintendency.

Superintendents view their on-the-job experience as the most important aspect of their occupational socialization, and characterize such experience as a largely sink or swim affair. These two socialization patterns underscore the importance of the familiarization of superintendents with school systems' existing response structures and with structures in the systems' environments which influence the operation and management of the school system.

The final socialization pattern indicates that superintendents ascribe a great deal of importance to innate qualities and experiences early in life for their ability to work with people. Quite
understandably, they find it difficult to differentiate the effects of one from the other. What is important, however, is that superintendents indicate that factors which cannot be consciously altered and which are not well understood affect their ability to perform the work of their occupation.

Socialization themes. The same four themes which characterize the recruitment structure of the occupation of school superintendent are found to characterize the occupation's socialization structure. They are an attentiveness to context, the accommodation of uncertainty, movement, and conservatism.

The informal patterns in the socialization of school superintendents emphasize the importance of understanding conditions in a school system and its environment which affect the operation and, therefore, the management of the system. Superintendents are socialized to respond to situations within the parameters set by existing organizational and environmental conditions. For that reason, many superintendents discount the utility of the "concepts" and "theories" they are exposed to in formal training programs and value the anecdotal accounts of past exploits passed down by individuals with extensive administrative experience. For, such "war stories" provide guides for behavior within a specified context. Superintendents, then, are socialized carefully to consider the special nature of the contexts in which they work.

Like the occupational recruitment structure, patterns in the socialization of superintendents in both formal and non-formal settings expose prospective occupational members to various forms of uncertainty. Formal training programs confront them with their own inability to master
every aspect of the occupation's knowledge base, as well as with
the limitations of the knowledge base, itself. The sink-or-swim
characteristic of superintendents' on-the-job socialization reveals
the inadequacy of the occupational knowledge base in a most graphic
way, and orients superintendents toward adopting a reactive posture
in the face of uncertainty. Finally, superintendents acknowledge that
certain occupational skills result from unexplainable and, therefore,
uncertain causes such as innate qualities and early childhood experi­
ences. The contention here is that the exposure of occupational
members to various forms of uncertainty in their socialization results
in the development of an orientation among superintendents which
accommodates the uncertainties of occupational life.

Patterns in the occupational socialization of superintendents are
also characterized by a movement theme. Movement involves the perceived
alteration of some condition, or the act which results in such altera­
tion. This theme is reflected in the nature of the university based
training of school administrators. Since the completion of a set of
prescribed courses results in occupational licensure such coursework
tends to be viewed as steps which must be taken to gain certification.
Movement is also apparent in the socialization of superintendents in
non-formal settings. Superintendents characteristically do not become
superintendents until they have worked as teachers and principals.
Given superintendents' perceptions of the superintendency as the "top"
position in the administrative hierarchy of school systems, selection
into the occupation is viewed as a move up. Thus, patterns in the
occupational socialization which occurs in both formal and non-formal
settings indicate that movement, especially in the sense of progressing towards some goal, is a theme which characterizes the occupation of school superintendent.

Conservatism is the final theme which is reflected in the patterns of the socialization of superintendents. The formal training of prospective occupational members emphasizes the maintenance of various organizational elements such as finance, personnel, and facilities. Furthermore, superintendents tend to favor courses in which professors recount specific episodes from their own experiences as school administrators. Such exposure of prospective superintendents to past superintendents contributes to the maintenance of continuity in the practice of the occupation.

Conservatism is also reinforced by patterns in the socialization of superintendents in non-formal settings. While working as teachers and principals, prospective superintendents are afforded opportunities to observe superintendents at work. This exposure functions to preserve continuity in the occupational practice from one generation of superintendents to the next. Additionally, individuals who spend their entire working lives in one institutional setting, as most superintendents do, and aspire to and attain positions of authority in that setting are likely to be positively disposed toward existing institutional structures and practices.

The conservative theme is also reflected in the tendency among superintendents to identify innate, personal characteristics as a major source of occupational skills. The citing of irreversible, inbred characteristics to explain a poorly understood phenomenon (i.e. the
sources or causes of occupational skills) exposes a tendency to view major portions of their occupational reality as non-malleable or irreversible.

3. What patterns characterize the reward structure of the occupation of school superintendent?

In modern, industrial societies, occupational rewards are often measured in terms of the money and prestige afforded members of a given occupational group. However, Lortie has demonstrated the importance of considering both monetary and non-monetary rewards in the development of a more complete understanding of an occupation. Thus, the analysis of the superintendency's reward structure focuses upon both types.

Monetary rewards. It is apparent that within the context of their careers in public education, superintendents view salary as a reward. That being the case, a pattern in the occupational reward structure of superintendents is a focus on the future. The monetary rewards of education-related work increase as an individual moves through a career line from teacher to the superintendency. However, the future does not hold promise for significant salary increases once an individual reaches the superintendency. Thus, the monetary reward structure for the occupation of school superintendent is somewhat, but not totally characterized by a futuristic tendency.

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Non-monetary rewards. Although superintendents admit that money serves as an occupational reward, they tend to emphasize the greater importance of non-monetary, intrinsic rewards. Three types of events provide superintendents with a rewarding sense of gratification. First, superintendents are rewarded by the recognition of students who achieve a measure of success. Because it is impossible to assess the superintendent's contribution to student achievement, this rewarding event is characterized by an inherent uncertainty.

Similarly, superintendents are rewarded when they find that a member of the school system's staff is doing outstanding work. This event, too, is shrouded in uncertainty. It is no more apparent how a superintendent contributes to the success of students than it is how (s)he contributes to the success of staff members. In districts where superintendents are directly involved in hiring personnel, they tend to focus on the performance of individuals whom they hired. In these cases, superintendents view their decision to hire an individual as their contribution to the success enjoyed by a staff member.

The third type of event that superintendents find gratifying is the completion of a project, particularly those that result in tangible outcomes. For example, superintendents emphasize the construction of new facilities and the adoption of new curricular components as rewarding events.

Like the recruitment and socialization structures, patterns in the reward structure of the superintendency reflect four basic themes: a sensitivity to context, an emphasis on movement, conservatism, and the accommodation of uncertainty. The contextual theme is consistent with
the patterns which indicate that superintendents find serving their communities to be rewarding and that they view salary as a reward only within the institutional context of public education. The occupational rewards of salary, the recognition of successful students and staff members, and the completion of organizational projects all reflect the movement theme. However, the same monetary reward pattern and focus upon the achievement of students are consistent with the conservative theme, because the salary structure is congruent with existing hierarchical structures and student success is measured against standards which reflect existing social norms. Finally, the difficulty of assessing a superintendent's contributions to the outcomes which they view as rewarding exposes an occupational tendency to accommodate uncertainty.

4. What orientations do superintendents derive from the structures of their occupation?

Four general themes characterize the recruitment, socialization, and reward structures of the occupation of school superintendent. They are: a sensitivity to context, the accommodation of uncertainty, an emphasis on movement, and a tendency towards conservatism. If social structures are viewed as processes which maintain a system's existing form, then these themes which persist across occupational structures can be reasonably inferred to reflect occupational tendencies which are most consistently reinforced and are, therefore, the dominant

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orientations shared by occupational members.

Thus, a general finding of this study is that the occupation of school superintendent is characterized by contextual, quasi-fatalistic, movement, and conservative orientations.

The second phase in description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents involved the analysis of superintendents' descriptions of four aspects of their work -- tasks and responsibilities, requisite skills and attributes, events that provide satisfaction, and performance assessment. This analysis led to the identification of four general themes, from which were inferred the meanings and sentiments superintendents attach to their work.

5. What do superintendents identify as their typical tasks and responsibilities?

Tasks. A single dominant pattern characterizes superintendents' descriptions of their typical occupational tasks. Superintendents constantly communicate with staff members, boards of education, and elements in their school systems' environments. Their communications with staff members and members of boards of education are characterized by a tendency to communicate most with individuals who rank highest in the formal hierarchy, an emphasis upon face-to-face contact, and a two-way flow of information.

Superintendents also communicate with two environmental components -- the local community, and state and federal governmental agencies. Communications with environmental components are characterized by a two-way flow of information, and in the case of local communities, face-to-face encounters. Communications with governmental units are
typically written. Finally, superintendents' communications with environmental elements are characterized by a tendency to communicate with individuals and groups which are politically and socially defined as relevant and/or influential constituencies — namely parents, community groups, and members of the community power structure.

**Responsibilities.** The analysis of superintendents' description of their work responsibilities resulted in the identification of three roles — a. coordinator, b. mediator, and c. resource manager. As coordinators, superintendents work to adjust the various parts of their school systems and environment to produce harmonious action. While the meditative role calls for them to conciliate between the various elements that comprise a school system and its environment in an effort to develop a unitary view among these elements with regard to the activity of the school system. Finally, as resource managers, superintendents acquire the resources necessary to operate a school system (i.e. staff and money) and allocate them to their systems' various components.

6. **What do superintendents perceive to be the requisite skills, knowledge, and attributes for success as a member of their occupation?**

Superintendents believe that an individual must be skilled in three general areas to succeed as a member of their occupation. The three areas are: financial management, communication, and politics.

**Communication.** Superintendents place particular emphasis on communication skills, a finding consistent with the predominance of communication in their day-to-day tasks. They suggest that members of their occupation must facilitate the reception of information from members of their staffs, boards of education, local communities, and
governmental agencies by remaining objective, flexible, and by listening well. This information is used by superintendents to assess the values and opinions of the various elements which comprise a school system and its environment relative to school-related issues. Superintendents must also be adept at transmitting information clearly both in written and verbal communications. Furthermore, superintendents must be able to develop a high level of credibility among their school systems' constituencies by projecting an honest and sincere image.

Political skills. Superintendents also believe that to succeed and, indeed, survive they must have highly developed political skills. Political skills, according to superintendents, are those which enable an individual to operate a school system in accordance with the desires and values of its various constituencies. These skills also are employed by superintendents to control, to the extent possible, the directions a school system's activity takes. The latter is accomplished by identifying when conditions are such that a superintendent's ideas about what is best for the school system can generate support, or by diverting attention away from an issue so that the superintendent is able to act on it decisively.

7. How do superintendents judge their professional performance?

Community feedback. Superintendents do not separate the assessment of their performance from the assessment of the effectiveness of their school system's operations. Superintendents use three general measures to assess their job performance. The first measure is the extent to which members of the local community viewed the superintendent's performance favorably. This is subjectively gauged by monitoring letters
in local newspapers and comments from community leaders, and by monitoring the extent to which members of both the community and the school system's staff sought and respected the superintendent's opinions.

**Student achievement.** The second assessment measure is student achievement. Superintendents view student performance on standardized achievement tests and in competition with other school systems (i.e. athletics, music competition, etc.) as indicators of both their personal performance and the effectiveness of the school system's operation.

**System operation.** The final measure which superintendents employ to assess their performance is the quality of the overall operation of their school systems. They focus on two indicators of operational quality -- the number of problems which arise, and the extent to which school systems are "progressing". Superintendents measure progress either by evaluating whether or not their systems attain or approach pre-set goals, or by assessing whether or not their systems are generally moving to change and improve operations and instructional programs.

8. What is the nature of events that provide superintendents with feelings of satisfaction?

Superintendents generally derive satisfaction from two types of events -- the attainment of some tangible outcome (e.g. construction of a building, passing a tax levy) and the existence of harmonious relationships between and among the various elements which comprise a school system and its environment. Further, superintendents view tangible outcomes as indicators of progress in the improvement of their school
9. What is the nature of meanings and sentiments that superintendents attach to their work?

Four major themes are reflected in the patterns which emerged from superintendents' descriptions of their occupation's tasks and responsibilities, requisite skills, assessment of job performance, and events which provide satisfaction. Assuming that meanings arise from social interaction and are reflected in verbal expression, and assuming that sentiments are manifested in behavior, then the meanings and sentiments that superintendents attach to their work can be inferred from themes derived in this way. Thus, a basic finding of this study is that superintendents attach meanings and sentiments to: 1. the total social system of which a school system is a part as their work arena, 2. uncertainty and its management, 3. organizational movement, and 4. the structural aspects of a school system.

10. What is the occupational ethos of school superintendents? And to what extent are the occupational orientations congruent with the meanings and sentiments superintendents attach to their work?

Superintendents' occupational orientations, and the meanings and sentiments they attach to their work reflect similar themes. Both occupational dimensions: 1. indicate a perspective that emphasizes the primacy of the organization of a school system and its environment as the significant work arena, 2. are characterized by the pervasiveness of uncertainty and its accommodation or management, 3. focus upon organizational movement, and 4. emphasize the structurally defined aspects of school systems and their environments.
Thus, four basic elements of the occupational ethos of school superintendents are: 1. concern for the \textit{total social system} of which school systems are a part, 2. the accommodation of \textit{uncertainty}, 3. an emphasis upon \textit{movement}, and 4. attention to \textit{structure}.

\textbf{Recommendations}

The description of the occupational ethos of school superintendents which resulted from this study has implications both for future research and for the preparation of individuals for the superintendency.

\textbf{Recommendations for Future Research}

The findings have implications for research both on the nature of the occupation of school superintendent and on the structure of educational organizations. The following are recommendations regarding areas in which future research could prove fruitful.

1. \textit{More rich descriptions of the recruitment, socialization, and reward structures of the occupation of school superintendent are needed.}

   Little is known about the occupational structures of the superintendency. The present study approached the analysis of this dimension from only two perspectives, but found that structural themes were consistent with themes in superintendents' descriptions of their work. This suggests that the application of other investigative approaches to the study of occupational structures could provide improved understandings of the nature of the superintendency.

2. \textit{More detailed accounts of the ways in which superintendents order their work world are needed.}
Few studies have focused on the manner in which superintendents give order to the work they do. This study resulted in the identification of four themes which characterized twenty superintendents' descriptions of various aspects of their jobs. These themes suggest questions about specific aspects of superintendents' work which could serve as foci for future investigation. What characterizes the decisions that superintendents make and the processes by which they make them? What characterizes the process by which superintendents prioritize issues to which they respond? What is the nature of a school systems' constituents whose inputs gain superintendents' attention? How do superintendents mediate between the competing interests of constituents? How is superintendents' work linked to the instruction and training of youngsters?

3. Research to test the usefulness of the two-dimensional (i.e. institutional and organizational) view of educational organizations for developing an improved understanding of organizational structures and administrative behavior is needed.

One result of the present study was the development of the notion that school systems can be characterized both as social institutions and as formal organizations. It was further suggested that incongruities which stem from the interface of these two dimensions have implications for the structure of educational organizations and the consequent behavior of school superintendents. This notion is consistent with an emergent view among students of formal organizations that organizations are largely controlled and constructed by forces in their
social environments. The utility of this view for the development of understandings of educational organizations requires testing by empirical research.

4. Descriptions of the nature of the goals of educational organizations, the processes by which they are derived, and their effects on organizational activity are needed.

The description of the system of the occupational ethos of school superintendents suggested that the ambiguity of the basic goal of educational organizations resulted in the development of "surrogate goals" against which organizational effectiveness could be measured. This implies that the description of the nature of goals which characterize educational organizations could contribute to an increased understanding of organizational structures and participants behavior.

5. Research which compares the nature of the work conducted by various categories of professional staff members (e.g. teachers, supervisors, principals, superintendents) could provide increased understandings of the couplings between categories.

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A comparison of Lortie's description of the schoolteachers' occupational ethos to the findings of the present study showed that teachers focused upon the individual, while superintendents were concerned with the social system of which school systems were a part, and paid particular attention to a school system's structural aspects and to structurally defined elements in the school system's environment.

Weick suggests that:

Organizing consists of the resolving of equivocality in an enacted environment by means of interlocked behaviors embedded in conditionally related processes.  

He further indicated that:

In order for equivocality to be registered, the order within the process to which the information is an input must match the degree of order in the input.

Framed within Weick's conceptualizations, teachers and superintendents might be viewed as processing inputs of different levels of equivocality. For, in a social context an individual is a more equivocal entity than is one which is defined by existing social structures. A single, isolated student who must be taught to read, write, and do mathematical computations is more equivocal when viewed as an input than is the representative of a civic group whose values and interests are generally known. Thus, teachers function as organizational elements which process inputs of a given range of equivocality,


12 Idem.
and superintendents function as elements which process inputs of a less equivocal nature. Consistent with Weick's notions, teachers respond to individual students as individuals themselves, while superintendents respond to inputs from structurally defined elements by focusing on the structural aspects of school systems. All of this suggests that the observed lack of control exerted by school administrators over teachers does not indicate a breakdown of organizational structure, so much as it reflects the necessity for these two elements of school systems to maintain sufficient autonomy to process inputs characterized by different levels of equivocality.

Research which compares the nature of the work done by various categories of professional staff members in a school system, and/or describes the nature of the couplings between categories is needed to test the plausibility of this application of Weick's concepts and to develop new insights to the structure of educational organizations.

Implications for the Preparation of Superintendents

Although the findings are certainly not conclusive in a normative sense, they do raise several issues which should probably be considered by professors of educational administration and others who prepare individuals for the superintendency. It should be kept in mind that the implications are tentative.

1. **Much of the work that superintendents do is at best indirectly related to the instruction of students.**

   The finding that superintendents are not directly involved in the basic work of schools, the instruction of students, is not surprising.
But it is an issue about which prospective superintendents should be made aware.

2. **Superintendents tend to respond to and seek inputs from participants defined by existing social, political, and economic structures.**

The finding that superintendents pay attention to structurally defined elements in their school systems and the environment suggests that the development of alternative ways of viewing schools and the society they serve might equip members of this occupational group to develop creative approaches to the mediation of organizational and societal interests.

3. **Conventional views of leadership which focus upon the rational coordination of participant's efforts toward the accomplishment of**

**organizational goals do not fully account for the work of school superintendents.**

The findings showed that the context in which superintendents work is characterized by many forms of uncertainty -- conflicting values and interests among participants, incomplete or inaccurate information, the basic technology and goal of school systems. The existence of such conditions requires that superintendents be able to accommodate uncertainty, while providing a sense of direction to the activity of
their school systems.\textsuperscript{13}

4. The ability to receive, synthesize, and transmit information are important skills.

The superintendent's role in mediating between the interests and values of a school system's constituencies requires that (s)he be able to objectively collect information from a variety of sources, sift through that information to identify points of congruity, and transmit a view of the school system's activity which accommodates a range of views.

\textsuperscript{13} As a result of their study of college and university presidents, Cohen and March suggested eight "basic tactical rules" which individuals can follow to influence the course of decisions in organizations characterized by ambiguity of goals and technology, and by "fluid participation". These "rules" seem applicable to the work of superintendents. They are "spend time", "persist", "exchange status for substance", "facilitate opposition participation", "overload the system", "provide garbage cans", "manage unobtrusively", and "interpret history". For a full explanation see Michael D. Cohen and James G. March, Leadership and Ambiguity (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), pp. 207-215.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. When did you first begin to seriously consider becoming a superintendent? Why?

2. What was it about being a superintendent that attracted you?
   a. Can you recall what you expected life to be like as a superintendent?
   b. How has it differed?

3. Looking back, were there key events or people that contributed to your becoming a superintendent? How were they important?

4. What does it take to be able to work as a superintendent?
   Probes for this question:
   a. Personal attributes
   b. Skills
   c. Knowledge
   d. Other

5. How did you gain these attributes, skills, and knowledge you just identified?
   Probes for this question:
   a. Formal university training programs
   b. Experience in other educational positions
   c. Experience in jobs outside of schools
   d. Experience on the job as superintendent
   e. Exchange of information with other superintendents
   f. Professional reading
   g. In-service training programs

6. What is rewarding about working as a school superintendent? Of these, which are most important?

7. What aspects of the job are least rewarding?

8. Let's imagine that you have been offered several job offers to work as superintendent in other districts. What considerations would you make in deciding which, if any, of the offers you would accept?

9. The work of what other occupation is most like the school superintendent? Why?

10. What do you lose by being a superintendent and not a member of another occupation?

11. Can you think of a superintendent whom you have known that you consider to be particularly successful? What does she/he do? What is she/he like?
12. Describe for me what your job entails.

a. What are your chief responsibilities? Of these, which are the most crucial? Why?
b. How do you spend your time on an average day?
c. How much time would you say you spend on the job during the average week? At home?
d. How would you compare this with other superintendents?
e. If you were given a gift of ten hours a week extra, how would you use it?

13. If it doesn't come out in response to question twelve, above ... Who do you spend time with on the job? What activities are you involved in with each of these individuals or groups?

14. When you have a tough decision to make, or face a serious problem in your district, to whom do you turn? What is it that you're seeking from these people?

15. When you're trying to get a new program or some other activity off the ground, what strategies do you use?

16. What specific event or type of event has been most satisfying to you as superintendent? Why?

17. Describe a "really good day" for you as a superintendent.

18. Describe a "really bad day" for you as a superintendent.

19. What changes would you make in your job to make it more satisfying to you?

20. How do you know if you are successful as a superintendent?

21. If you were to call on someone to assist you in assessing your work, who would you ask?

22. What are the major road blocks to success?

23. How do you know if your district is operating successfully?

24. To whom do you have to answer for your professional performance?

25. What kind of reputation would you like to have?

26. What aspirations do you have for yourself, now?

27. How important is the superintendent to a school district? Why?
APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LETTER
SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Supt. ________:

As a graduate student of educational administration at The Ohio State University, I am conducting dissertation research on patterns which exist in the way school superintendents describe their work and profession. This study has the support of John Hauck, Executive Director of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. A letter from him to this effect is enclosed.

Some of the data for my research will come from a national survey of school superintendents conducted by the American Association of School Administrators. However, in order to develop deeper understandings of superintendents' professional insights, aspirations, perceptions, and attitudes, I will also interview Ohio school superintendents.

This is where I need your assistance. You and nineteen of your colleagues were selected through a random process as the superintendents whom I will interview. Will you please meet with me for an hour or two to share your insights and experiences with me? Your knowledge of the profession would be extremely helpful to my research.

While it may not be of great concern to you, your anonymity will be protected in any and all reporting of the study.

I plan to conduct the interviews between May 7 and June 1, 1979. I would appreciate, at least, one hour but no more than two hours of your time for the interview.

I will be contacting you by phone in the next ten days to make an appointment and to answer any questions you might have concerning the study. I look forward to meeting with you and hearing your views on our profession. Your help in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Rodney T. Ogawa
APPENDIX C

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM

BUCKEYE ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
PLEASE NOTE:
In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark √.

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9. Page(s) ______ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author ______
10. Page(s) ______ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows ______
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15. Curling and wrinkled pages ______
16. Other ____________________________________________________________
April 18, 1979

Dear Superintendent:

I met with Rodney Ogawa on this date to discuss his research proposal for doctoral dissertation. I found the proposal to be of interest; moreover, I believe the information he seeks will be most helpful to you and your colleagues. I would therefore urge you to grant Rodney time for the interview he requests.

Sincerely,

John G. Hauck
Executive Director
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil enrollment classification</th>
<th>Included in each group</th>
<th>Receiving questionnaires</th>
<th>Returning questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent of those in groups A, B, C, and D</td>
<td>Number sampled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A: 25,000 or more enrolled</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B: 3,000-24,999 enrolled</td>
<td>2,902</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C: 300-2,999 enrolled</td>
<td>8,872</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group D: less than 300 enrolled</td>
<td>2,892</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>14,848</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^aThis is a percentage of Column 1, the total universe of superintendents (14,848).

^bThis is a percentage of Column 3, the total number of superintendents sampled (1128).
### TABLE 4
Previous Positions Held by Superintendents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Position</th>
<th>National Weighted Profile for A, B, and C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teacher</td>
<td>95.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant principal</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor or consultant</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant superintendent</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate superintendent</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or university teacher</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Number reporting<sup>a</sup>      |                                          |
| Not reporting                    | 1.0%                                     |

<sup>a</sup>Totals for "number reporting" are less than the sum of responses for each column, because many respondents reported more than one position.
TABLE 5
Extracurricular Activities
in First Teaching Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracurricular Activity</th>
<th>National Weighted Profile for A, B, and C</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatics</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newspaper or annual</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other extracurricular</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong>^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not reporting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>29.8%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a100% is based on those responding. The columns add up to more than 100% because some individuals indicated they served in two or more extracurricular activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Level</th>
<th>National Weighted Profile for A, B, and C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No degree reported</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth-year or specialist</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional study beyond</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctorate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 7
Training Courses Viewed As Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses ranked &quot;important&quot; or &quot;of great importance&quot; by at least 75 percent of the superintendents</th>
<th>National Weighted Profile percentage ranking course &quot;important&quot; or &quot;of great importance&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Educational administration courses (88.8 percent reporting)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School finance systems</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel administration</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School business management</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal aspects of education</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School plant planning</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School principalship</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative theory</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Field experiences (74.6 percent reporting)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School surveys</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Educational foundations courses (83.3 percent reporting)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child growth and development</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy of education</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Curriculum, instruction, and supervision courses (85.9 percent reporting)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 7 (continued)

5. Social science courses
   (73.4 percent reporting)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political science</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Technology courses
   (68.8 percent reporting)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer and data processing</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations research</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPBS</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8
Age of First Employment in Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>National Weighted Profile for A, B, and C</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–21</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22–23</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24–25</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–27</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28–29</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 years and over</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age in years</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age in years</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Weighted Profile for Groups A, B, and C</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile for Group A: 25,000 or more enrolled</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile for Group B: 3,000 to 24,999 enrolled</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile for Group C: 300 to 2,999 enrolled</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| National Unweighted Profile for Groups A, B, and C | 5.7 | 5.3 | 5.2 | 6.1 |

| Number reporting from Groups A, B, and C | 636 | 344 | 170 | 80 |

| Special profile for Group D: less than 300 enrolled | 4.5 | 5.2 | 4.9 | 4.9 |

<p>| Number reporting from Group D | 68 | 27 | 14 | 9 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evenings Devoted to Work</th>
<th>National Weighted Profile for A, B, and C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than five</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TABLE 11

Years Spent in Graduate Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nationally Weighted Profile for Groups A, B, and C</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Starting age</td>
<td>Age at completion</td>
<td>Total years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree study</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth-year or specialist study</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate study</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Level</td>
<td>National Weighted Profile for A, B, and C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years or less</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29 years</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 years and over</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age in years</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age in years</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 13

Age At Which Assigned to First Superintendency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Level</th>
<th>National Weighted Profile for A, B, and C</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 years and over</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age in years</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age in years</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Campbell, Roald F. and Cunningham, Luvern L. "Observations of Administrator Behavior." Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, University of Chicago, 1959. (Mimeographed)


Guba, Egon G. and Bidwell, Charles E. _Administrative Relationships_. Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, 1967.


