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THE POWER OF THE SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIAL IN
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF THE
BOARDS OF EDUCATION IN SELECTED
MICHIGAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

Robert Del Fein

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 1982

THE POWER OF THE SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIAL IN
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MICHIGAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Robert Del Fein, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1982

The literature demonstrates that the dramatic growth in school district size and the increased technical complexity within which school systems must now operate have forced local boards of education into dependence relationships with their key administrative personnel. Consequently, school business officials were thought to be in a position to exercise considerable influence in the decision-making processes of their boards of education because of the technical aspects and uncertainties associated with the responsibilities of that particular role function. It is the nature and extent of this potential for influence which was the focal point of this investigation.

The methodology used for this investigation was an ex post facto field study with a "perceived influence" instrument being the primary method of data collection. The basic sampling units for the study were school districts in Michigan which were termed "average size" by virtue of their being within 500 students of the national average size (2,700).

The primary levels of the independent variable were the school business officials and the school board presidents of these specified districts. Various demographic data facilitated the introduction of secondary independent variables for data analysis purposes. The

questionnaire was designed to yield a numerical representation of the dependent variable--the amount of power (potential for influence) perceived to be possessed by the school business officials. Eighty percent of the 66 potential matched data sets responded.

Research questions were developed to guide the investigation. Three research questions were examined through hypothesis testing. Two research questions were addressed descriptively. Some conclusions drawn from the descriptive data were subject to the limitations associated with an a priori interpretation of those data.

The results of the data analysis led to the following conclusions about school business officials in average size Michigan school districts:

1. They have "considerable" power (potential for influence) in the decision-making processes of their boards, as measured by this instrument.

2. Their perception and their board presidents' perception of that power are similar.

3. Neither their perception nor their board presidents' perception of that power differs according to the professional orientation of the school business official.

4. There is little, if any, relationship between the boards' perception of their power and their amount of experience.

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First and foremost, I extend my most heartfelt love and appreciation to those to whom this effort is dedicated--Betsy, Bente, and Joan. Without the love, support, understanding, and sacrifice of my family the task would have been insurmountable. I also dedicate this effort to my parents, who have always provided me with the love and esteem necessary to recognize my own self-worth and the value of reaching to achieve difficult tasks.

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Robert Del Fein

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concept of local control of public education has become a sacred one in many communities. Persons often hold the belief that the local school district "belongs" to its citizens and that it is the last stronghold of direct democracy that exists in America today. There are also those who are quick to point out that, in reality, there is no local control of education--only local administration.

The Constitution of the United States has implicitly delegated to the individual states the organization and control of American public schools. The states have clearly retained sovereign authority over public education, even though each, with the exception of Hawaii, has established a group of subunits known as local school districts and have delegated specific organization and control functions to the governing boards of those local districts. These boards are most commonly referred to as school boards or boards of education and consist primarily of lay citizens.

The advocates of increased local control for schools frequently complain about the continued erosion of local community authority in school decisions and recognize the fact that school board decisions are important because they are, either intentionally or unintentionally, grounded in personal and community values and often contribute to the formulation of personal and community value structures. Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) made reference to this phenomenon:

School districts do not only influence values through their decisions and the service they perform, they also depend on value commitments of people in schools to make their decisions effective and on the district's citizens for support, both financial and moral. The government of the school district rests on more than force and sanctions of law. Beyond these, there is the power of emotional ties and beliefs. Here, indeed, error believed becomes truth in effect. (p. 13)

For example, decisions regarding curriculum patterns, employee selection, or budget allocation are seen as instrumental to the well-being and future of the community's young people. The school is viewed as the vehicle through which upward mobility, financial and social, is achieved (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Zeigler, 1974).

A recent Gallup poll, aimed at measuring public attitude toward schools, reported that 68% of those questioned nationwide felt that the local school board should have greater responsibility in running the schools (Gallup, 1980). It is no wonder, then, that board of education members are viewed as pivotal in helping to shape the fate and direction of the community.

In the days of the one-room schoolhouse the school board member could realistically deal with this responsibility, but society and the "system" have changed. Local autonomy for schools has bent with the change in many ways, but none more dramatic than the drastic school district abolition and consolidation patterns experienced in recent years. As the number of school-age children in the United States grew from 23.3 million in 1945 to 43.7 million in 1977, the number of local school districts plummeted from 101,382 in 1945 to 35,676 in 1960, and to only 16,211 in 1977. As a result, the average school district size in the United States grew from 230 students to

2,700 students in the same period of time (Grant & Lind, 1979).

And, as if this phenomenal growth in size and scope of responsibility were not enough, each decade has seen the onset of more complex social conditions and technologies in which and with which our public schools must function.

Phenomena such as tax reform, desegregation rulings, declining school enrollment, inflation, and a shrinking public confidence have placed an ever-increasing responsibility on the schools and their respective boards. The cries for accountability and social responsiveness have led board of education members to rely less on their own knowledge, perception, and instincts; and more on the technical expertise of key administrative personnel. Wiles and Conley (1974) stated, "The tacit expectation that the lay citizen, once transformed into a formal policymaker, can perform a superhuman role of resolving all issues in 'what's good for the children' is unrealistic" (p. 314).

Statement of the Problem

The increasing technical complexity faced by boards and the resultant dependence on technical expertise has shifted the power or potential for influence away from the board of education member and toward the educational technician. The boards of education continue to make the decisions but do so, generally, on the basis of recommendations, information, and communication provided by the superintendent and/or the school business official. These individuals, even though they are appointed by the board of education, are able to utilize their knowledge of a full range of educational concerns to

"shape" the kinds of information the board receives and the kinds of matters they discuss (Zald, 1969).

The literature is abound with those like Zald (1969), Cistone (1977), Kerr (1964), Mechanic (1962), Rogers (1969), and Wiles and Conley (1974) who have shown that as the size and complexity of the school system increases, the ability of the board to effectively exert control over the educational concerns of the community diminishes in favor of administrative control. That is, key administrative personnel begin to cross that fine line that separates their being policy-advisors to being policy-makers.

Kerr (1964) has gone so far as to say that these and other circumstances have transformed the board of education from an agency whose function is to represent the community to the schools to one which "legitimizes" the goals and actions of the school administration to the community. This position was echoed by Zeigler (1975) when he asked the question: "Why do school boards represent the views of the superintendent to the public, rather than representing the views of the public to the superintendent?" (p. 6).

Accountability can assume many forms and its history in education can be traced back to mid-nineteenth century England (Martin, Overholt, & Urban, 1976). Contemporary applications of the term, however, generally reflect a trend for schools to be "encouraged" to adopt more businesslike procedures--to operate in terms associated with measurable quantification like cost-effectiveness, Planning Programming Budgeting Systems, cost centers, inputs, outputs, and the like (Wynne, 1972). This increased demand for schools to be

economically more efficient and more "accountable" in their business practices has brought the role of the school business official to the forefront of the decision-making process.

Responsibilities in areas such as budgeting, cash-flow forecasting, contract negotiations, insurance and risk management, and investment of surplus funds are generally much beyond the normal scope of the board of education and the board must make its decisions in those areas based upon information provided by the school business official. In fact, investigators such as Kerr (1964) and Cistone (1977) have found that, by far, the majority of the issues to come before the board of education fall into the categories of finance and physical facilities, both of which are generally within the role functions of the school business official.

In summary, the dramatic growth in school system size and the increased technical complexity within which school systems must operate have forced local boards of education into a dependence relationship with their key administrative personnel. The school business official has come to center stage in this relationship because of the technical aspects and uncertainties associated with the responsibilities of that specific role function. Consequently, the school business official is found to be in a position to exercise considerable influence in the decision-making processes of boards of education. It is the nature and extent of this potential for influence that is the focal point of this investigation.

Statement of Purpose

Lieberman (1977) postulated (and, as has been mentioned, is supported by more empirically oriented approaches to the topic) that as the size of the school district increases, the control exercised by the board decreases for external and internal reasons. He further stated:

In small districts, boards do the total job. In medium size districts, the distinction between policy and administration becomes a good working guide. In large districts, boards are continuously hard pressed to develop policy in many areas and find themselves in the quandry of which policies will be resolved by the board and which will be delegated to the school administration. (p. 37)

The increased size of school districts, the ever-increasing complexity of the social and technological environments in which schools must function, and the political realities of today's society have forced the local boards of education into dependence relationships with their key administrators. The evidence that this phenomenon exists in the very large school districts and, specifically, with regard to the board-superintendent relationship is very conclusive. As indicated by Lieberman, however, the situation is not so clear-cut with medium size school districts. Further, though there is little doubt that a significant potential for influence does exist, very little is said in the literature specifically about the role of the school business official in this dependence relationship.

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the nature and extent of the potential for influence of the school business official. More specifically, this investigation will seek answers to the

following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the amount of power possessed by school business officials as perceived by the school business officials themselves or by the presidents of their boards of education?

2. When taking into account their professional orientation, either business or education, is there a significant difference in the amount of self-perceived power by school business officials?

3. When taking into account their professional orientation, either business or education, is there a significant difference in the amount of power possessed by school business officials as perceived by their board of education presidents?

4. What is the distribution of the perceived potential for influence of the school business officials in the decision-making processes of their boards of education?

5. Is there a relationship between the amounts of power school business officials are perceived to possess by their board of education presidents and the amount of experience he/she has?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study comes to the surface as the political realities of today's society and, likewise, today's schools begin to be understood. The really important educational decisions are not those involving the day-to-day operation of the school but those which involve influencing the political decision-makers.

Kimbrough (1964), whose book Political Power and Educational Decision-Making is thought to be the first and most authoritative work in the area of local educational politics (Lutz & Iannoccone, 1969), made this point quite succinctly: "In the absence of a firm understanding of the predominant forces involved in the big political decisions and major innovations in education, the educational leader often finds himself in a precarious position" (p. 2). To which Lutz and Iannoccone (1969) added a more graphic phrase: "With his head in the sand and his vulnerable side in the air waiting to be kicked!" (p. 169).

Historically, education has been held sacred, buffered and protected from the "sordid" goings on of politics. Most recently, however, education has not escaped the growing politicalization that has permeated our society. Education and educational decision-making have become very securely entwined in politics.

Critical issues such as citizen participation, student advocacy, teacher militancy, educational finance, and school system effectiveness have brought educational policy makers out of their protective shell and onto the political battleground (Cistone, 1977).

As previously stated, boards of education have been forced into dependence relationships with their key administrative personnel, especially with their school business officials. Because of the technical aspects and uncertainties associated with the responsibilities of that specific role function, the school business officials are found to be in a position to exercise considerable influence in the decision-making processes of boards of education.

Interest in influence stems from its conception as the fundamental intervening variable for analysis of decision-making. Influence is to the study of decision-making what force is to the study of motion--a generic explanation for the basic observable phenomena. (March, 1955, pp. 431-432)

Further significance for this study is seen by examining trends which have resulted from societal changes on the role functions and expectations for the school business official.

In a 1967 article from School Business Affairs, Carl E. Wilsey, the school business official of a large California school district, questioned how anyone could have anticipated the extent of the school's involvement in such things as

formal negotiations with employee organizations, the elimination of de facto segregation, specialized programs for economically, culturally, and socially disadvantaged youth, electronic data processing, and the newer management planning techniques such as PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique). (p. 34)

Phenomena such as these, coupled with more contemporary ones like inflation, tax reform, and energy shortages, have placed a great deal of pressure on schools to be economically more efficient and more accountable in their business practices.

In response to this pressure many boards of education are hiring school business officials from the "world of business" rather than from the educational ranks. That is, this new breed of school administrator has had his training and experience in private business and industry and not in education. Although the Association of School Business Officials, the American Association of School Administrators, and the National School Boards Association jointly endorse through professional registration a background that reflects a mixture of

business oriented and education oriented training, there is no nationwide, uniform certification requirement for school business officials (Hill, 1970).

This trend toward a business orientation is a logical response to a need, but perhaps ignores the possibility that some very important educational decisions would be made from a strictly "business" point of view with no regard for or knowledge of "educational" implications. This investigation, which deals with the potential for influence in board of education decisions by the school business official, may possibly serve to substantiate the premise that board decision-making may sometimes ignore educational implications and, thus, may not always best serve the needs of children.

Limitations of the Study

Power Defined

A review of the literature reveals a multitude of definitions for the term "power." Both Dahl (1957) and Griffiths (1959) use "power" and "influence" synonymously. Tannenbaum (1968) acknowledges that many authors use the terms "power," "influence," and "control" interchangeably.

For the purpose of this study, however, "power" refers to the potential for influence; "influence" refers to leading or changing the behavior of another or others in a desired direction; and "control" is the result of exercising influence. One who has power may or may not choose to use that power in a specific situation. Further, the

amount of power a person possesses may vary with the situation.

Morality Judgments

Those who study concepts such as power, influence, or control easily find themselves mired in judgmental questions of the "goodness" or "badness" associated with an act or the results of an act. Since the perceived goodness or badness of an act or the results of an act is relative to the value system of the perceiver and to the specific situation, no attempt will be made in this study to place a moral judgment on the results.

Conclusions evolving out of this investigation will be limited to the perceived existence of power and the identification of certain associated variables. The value of the study will lie in the ability of others to apply the conclusions to their specific circumstances and then make their own moral judgments.

Selected Michigan School Districts

As cited earlier, the most current national statistics place the average size for school districts at approximately 2,700 students. This study will be limited to the school districts in the state of Michigan which are listed in the 1980 Michigan Education Directory as being within 500 students of that figure; or, those having student populations within a range from 2,200 students to 3,200 students.

The School Business Official

The school business official may be known by any number of titles, such as assistant superintendent, business manager, administrative assistant for business affairs, or even superintendent of schools. For the purpose of this study, the school business official is the central office administrator whose responsibilities lie primarily with the business related functions of budgeting, accounting, insurance, negotiations, investments, plant management, and supervision of noncertificated personnel.

Overview of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows: In Chapter II the pertinent literature is reviewed. The chapter begins with an historical look at the general organization of school governance. Next, the chapter provides an overview of studies regarding the topics of power, influence, and control. And, then, the chapter documents specific application of the concept of power to the administrator-board relationship.

The specifics of the research design are found in Chapter III. The chapter includes description of and justification for sampling and research techniques, instrument development and design, and methods of statistical analysis employed in the study. Hypotheses are stated in testable, null form with nondirectional alternates.

Chapter IV consists of an analysis of the results of the research and in Chapter V those results are summarized through the

statement and discussion of conclusions. This final chapter also includes suggested directions for future research related to the topic.

Appendices are included for the appropriate organization of pertinent documentation and statistical information.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Who controls the schools? So pervasive has been this question that scores of books and a multitude of journal articles have been written on the topic. And, since the focal point of this investigation is the school business official's potential for influence in board of education decision-making, the question of who controls the schools is of particular importance here.

Literature on the topic of control in schools finds its theoretical and empirical basis in the study of organizational design and development. Control, power, and influence have long been of interest to philosophers, theorists, and social scientists.

This chapter provides a review of the pertinent literature in three topical areas. It begins with an historical look at the general organization of schools and the evolution of the board-administrator relationship. Second, the chapter provides an overview of studies regarding the topics of power, influence, and control. And, third, the chapter documents specific application of the concept of power to the administrator-board relationship.

The chapter culminates with a summary of the literature review and a description of how the findings relate specifically to the school business official's potential for influence in board decision-making.

The Evolution of School Organization and Control

The Constitution of the United States has implicitly delegated to the individual states the organization and control of American public schools. And, even though each state, with the exception of Hawaii, has established local school districts, sovereign authority over public education has been retained by the states through their constitutions, statutes, and case law. It is as "agents of the states" that local boards of education are given direct and implied powers to manage local school districts (Hill & Colmey, 1964).

This unique blend of local and state control over public education has its roots in colonial New England. It was there that a compulsory attendance law in 1642 and the Old Deluder Law of 1647 became the first semblance of municipal authority over education in America (Bendiner, 1969; Callahan, 1975).

Local control of schools in America was the only control of schools for nearly 200 years. The municipal authorities (selectmen) were charged with the task of enforcing compulsory attendance, establishing and administering schools for the community's young people, and taxing residents for financial support of those schools. As the towns became bigger and municipal government became more complex, the responsibility for overseeing educational matters fell upon the school committee (Bendiner, 1969; Campbell, Cunningham, McPhee, & Nystrand, 1970).

During these two centuries, growth in and around the colonies was staggering. The old towns grew and new ones were established in

all parts of the new frontier. Eventually, two main factors brought about the abolition of the municipal control concept of public education.

First, expansion of the country's population outside of the original colonial settlements resulted in great diversity and inequality with regard to what was considered a necessary education.

Regarding this plight, Bendiner (1969) wrote:

Not only was it hard, sometimes, impossible, for farmers to send their children to the town school, for which they were still paying taxes, but often they saw no point in exposing them to such "frills" as Latin, which the grammar schools provided. The three R's would certainly be enough for frontier living and for thwarting the Old Deluder. . . . Where the towns themselves were able and willing to support their burgeoning school systems, the farm areas and villages were the opposite of generous in this respect, and the little red school houses they put up were frequently not very red for want of paint, nor was the teaching within their walls of a very high order. (pp. 23-24)

Second, municipal control of schools became deeply entwined in the political goings on of government. Citizens became disenchanted through accusations of widespread corruption, inefficiency of management, and visible examples of patronage or favoritism (Boyd, 1976).

In response to the gross inequities that had developed between districts and the politicization that had resulted from mingling education with other municipal functions, the states began to move toward centralization of the educational system through mass consolidation of municipal districts and through the election of governing boards of education on a nonpartisan, at large basis (Bendiner, 1969; Callahan, 1975; Campbell et al., 1970).

This significant reform of the American educational system in the mid-1900's was accompanied by the ascendancy of the superintendent of schools. Led for the most part by Horace Mann and the Boston schools, newly formed boards of education began to recognize that conducting school business (especially in the larger, more complex districts) required more time and more expertise than they possessed. As a result, chief school administrators were hired to oversee the general operation of the districts. Or, as Boyd (1976) put it:

On the strength of their claims to expertise as professionally trained educational administrators, school superintendents were viewed as better qualified than their school board members to make what were held to be the essentially "technical" judgments required to develop a general and efficient educational program. (pp. 543-544)

The period of time between 1851, when the first superintendent of schools in Boston was appointed, and the early 1900's was marked by a massive power struggle between boards of education and superintendents. Absent of clear-cut definitions of responsibility and function, proponents for each side, especially in the large city systems, fought for control. While superintendents, the "technical experts," sought to be made "all powerful on educational policy," school boards, representing the "voice of the people," fought to maintain a certain level of control (Callahan, 1975, p. 31).

By the turn of the century, the intensity of the struggle for power began to ease. Superintendents began to realize that, since boards ultimately had the power to hire and fire the chief executive officer, they themselves were most often the casualties of the struggle. Callahan (1975) described this turn of events:

When they failed in their struggle with boards of education, as many of them did in 1895, they lost their jobs. Since then the leaders in administration have spent their energy not in frontal attacks on the system, but rather on working within the given framework and spending much time and energy trying to "educate" and "persuade" school board members as to what their proper role should be. (p. 34)

Slowly but surely, the division of responsibility between superintendents and board members in public education began to unfold. A leader in the field of educational administration at the time, Ellwood Cubberly, was among those who helped formulate the general perspective within which the board-administrator relationship was viewed. In essence, Cubberly (1916) called for the board to assume its proper role as a legislative body (representing the public interest) and to turn the operation of the school over to the superintendent and staff.

Cubberly's book, Public School Administration (1916), became the "standard work in the field" (Callahan, 1975, p. 37) and even went so far as to make specific recommendations about the selection and organization of school boards. First, he proposed that board members should be elected at-large to terms of 3 to 5 years. Cubberly opposed their being appointed by the mayor (as was the case in many large city systems) or being elected from wards. He felt that there was "no surer way for perpetuating the personal and political evils in school control" than continuing the ward system of representation or the mayoral appointment process (pp. 92-93). He insisted that education had to be completely separated from, and independent of, municipal government.

Next, Cubberly pointed out that "experience has shown clearly and unmistakably that a small board is in every way more effective and a more efficient body than a large one" (p. 90). For this reason, he advocated abolishing the more cumbersome large boards of education that were often found and favored boards having five to seven members.

And, finally, Cubberly characterized the type of individuals he thought should be board members. He stated that board members should be "men who are successful in the handling of large business, business undertakings--manufacturers, merchants, bankers, contractors, and professional men of large practice." He felt that such persons were used to handling business in rapid fashion, were usually "wide awake, sane and progressive," and they were in the habit of "depending on experts for advice" (pp. 124-125).

Thus, in spite of over a half century of confusion, controversy, and bitter confrontation, through which boards of education were to have retained sovereign authority, school administrators emerged as the dominant force in local educational policy-making. In fact, at least until 1960, the vast majority of local school boards in America were selected and organized, and functioned, in much the same manner as proposed by Cubberly (Bendiner, 1969; Boyd, 1976; Callahan, 1975; Rosenthal, 1969).

Since the early 1960's, the board-administrator relationship, as it relates to local policy-making, has been under continual scrutiny. And, with the onset of an era of public unrest and dissatisfaction with government's social responsiveness, the study of public policy-making has taken on a new complexion. Today, the local

governance of schools has had to be expanded to include consideration of variables associated with a more informed, more demanding, and more involved constituency.

The remainder of this chapter provides a review of the literature on power, influence, and control; first, in a general sense, and second, as it relates specifically to the board-administrator relationships which have evolved since 1960.

Power, Influence, and Control: An Overview

Literature on the topics of social power and influence relationships has its base in the theory and research of organizations and organizational behavior. It is generally accepted that decisions and the process of decision-making are the very heart of organizational behavior (March, 1955; March & Simon, 1958; McCammy, 1947; Simon, 1947); or as Pettigrew (1973) put it, "decision-making is the organizational activity" (p. 5). This being the case, the necessity for studying the operational meaning and theoretical dimensions of influence is apparent because "influence is to the study of decision-making what force is to the study of motion--a generic explanation for the basic observable phenomena" (March, 1955, p. 432).

Initial Absence of Empirical Data

Although the concept of power has been of specific interest to theorists for ages, encompassing the works of such classical thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, and Machiavelli; more systematic and scientific approaches to the topic have come only in more recent years

(Cartwright, 1965; Dahl, 1957; Tannenbaum, 1968). The literature generally attributes the noticeable absence of empirical work in this area to two reasons: First, the negative connotations attached to the topic of social power; and, second, the extremely variable nature of the topic.

The negative connotations which were for decades associated with the concept of power evolved out of the writings of Aristotle and Machiavelli. These works tainted the impression of the leader-follower relationship with "the image of the mindless masses and the strong-willed leader" (Bell, 1950, p. 75). Tannenbaum (1968) noted that this image has not been easy to overcome:

The "human-relations" approach that inspired a great deal of research in organizations avoided explicit reference to social power or control, partly because these terms carried connotations that were inconsistent with the ideal of the harmonious, conflict-free organization. Traditionally, the concept of power has been associated with forms of tyranny, elitism or authoritarianism, or with conflict and struggle. (p. 7)

Eventually, though, scientists began to recognize the fact that organizations involve power and influence relationships and an understanding of those relationships is a prerequisite to understanding the organizations themselves (Dahl, 1957; March, 1955; Mechanic, 1962; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The early contributors to the scientific study of power relationships soon found that the concept of power is very difficult to operationalize because of the multitude of variables involved. March (1955) stated quite succinctly that the concept of power lacks generality--that is, it is situational. This observation was echoed by many other pioneers in the field

(Cartwright, 1965; Mechanic, 1962; Tannenbaum, 1968; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Zald, 1969; Zander & Cohen, 1955). The point was also made quite vividly in a highly respected work by Dahl (1957). While speaking about power he said:

A Thing to which people attach many labels with subtly or grossly different meanings in many different cultures and times is probably not a thing at all but many Things; there are students of the subject, although I do not recall any who have had the temerity to say so in print, who think that because of this the whole study of "power" is a bottomless swamp. (p. 201)

Early Empirical Investigations

At any rate, empirical investigations into the concept of power are quite recent in origin. Cartwright (1959), in his review of the literature, listed only 33 references, not all experimental. In a more recent review, Cartwright (1965) listed 180 references and most were experimental. Sorensen and Baum (1977) cite about 50 studies which utilize Tannenbaum and Kahn's "control graph" technique, most of which were conducted in the 1970's.

Those investigators who first attempted to define and operationalize social power (e.g., Cartwright, 1959; Dahl, 1957; French, 1956; Goldhamer & Shils, 1939; and March, 1955) found it very difficult to speak of power without using terminology such as influence and control. The terms are inseparable. In fact, these investigators and others since (Gamson, 1968; Mechanic, 1962; Tannenbaum, 1968; Zald, 1969) have tended to use the terms interchangeably.

Goldhamer and Shils (1939) stated that "a person may be said to have power to the extent that he influences the behavior of others in

accordance with his own intentions" (p. 171). Tannenbaum (1968) made similar reference when he defined the term control as "any process in which a person or a group of persons or organization of persons determines, that is intentionally affects, the behavior of another person, group, or organization" (p. 5). Dahl (1957) concluded that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (pp. 202-203). He operationalized this definition by expanding it in probabilistic terms: The power of A over B is the probability that B does x given A does w, less the probability that B does x given A does not do w (pp. 203-204). Other popular definitions of power, influence, and control (some similar and some slightly dissimilar) have been provided by Cartwright (1959), Emerson (1962), French and Raven (1959), Gamson (1968), Griffiths (1959), Jacobson (1972), March (1955), March and Simon (1958), and Weber (1947).

In spite of this plethora of definitions and the interchangeability of terminology by the early investigators, the literature does generally support the notion that power is an influence or exchange relationship and, further, that this relationship is inherent in the behavior of any two or more interacting persons. Hence, power and influence are characteristic to any organization (Dahl, 1957; Mechanic, 1962; Stogdill, 1974; Tannenbaum, 1968; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Zald, 1969). The extent to which power is recognized as such an integral part of any organization is exemplified in the definition of an organization by Tagliere (1973): "An organization is two or more persons interacting within a recognized power relationship for

some common purpose" (p. vi).

It must be noted, too, that the variety of definitional approaches and the interchangeable nature of the terminology found in the literature necessitates that research in the field be placed in perspective by the adoption of working definitions for the terms "power," "influence," and "control." For the purpose of this investigation, "power" refers to the potential for influence (either with or without intent); "influence" refers to the act of changing the behavior of another (or others) in a desired direction; and "control" is considered a result of exercising influence.

The Anatomy of the Influence Process

Beyond defining the terminology and bringing the concept of power or influence relationships into an operational perspective, the early investigators sought to identify the variable components involved in the process. As stated earlier, influence relationships were found to be extremely variable, specific only to the situation. Hence, conclusions drawn from a specific investigation were not necessarily considered valid in other situations where variables are not held constant.

Some studies have identified as many as 15 variables associated with specific power and influence relationships (e.g., Sorensen & Baum, 1977). After sorting through semantic differences and combining like terminology, most of the literature demonstrates that the process of exercising influence consists of five basic components: resources, motivation, methods, target, and effectiveness (Cartwright,

1965; Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Gamson, 1968; Jacobson, 1962; Tedeschi, Bonoma, & Schlenker, 1972, 1973). In his review of the literature, Mowday (1975) agreed with the deduction that "there appears to be general agreement concerning the components of a model of the exercise of influence" (pp. 19-20). He expressed doubt, though, that the interrelatedness of these components had been adequately investigated in order to bring the study of power and influence relationships into a conceptual framework. "With the exception of recent work by Kipnis (1974), conceptualization of the process by which power and influence are exercised has yet to reach the paradigmatic or model building stage" (p. 19).

Having identified through the literature the five key variables or component parts of the influence process (resources, motivation, methods, target, and effectiveness), a brief definition of the terms and their relevance to this specific investigation follows. It is emphasized that, although each of these five key variables is mentioned, this investigation focuses only on the resources and the methods used in the influence attempt.

Resources. The ability of a person to exert influence stems from the possession or control of specific resources that are of value to others (Cartwright, 1965; Mowday, 1975). These resources are, of course, specific to the situation, but various attempts have been made in the literature to categorize them for empirical investigation. The most popular attempt at categorization has been what is known as the "bases of social power" by French and Raven (1959).

The five bases of O's power are: (1) Reward power, based on P's perception that O has the ability to mediate rewards for him; (2) Coercive power, based on P's perception that O has the ability to mediate punishment for him; (3) Legitimate power, based on the perception by P that O has a legitimate right to prescribe behavior for him; (4) Referent power, based on P's identification with O; (5) Expert power, based on the perception that O has some special knowledge or expertise. (p. 156)

As previously stated, other attempts at the classification or categorization of the bases or sources of social power have been made but, again, a sorting out of the semantical differences generally results in a reasonable fit to French and Raven's typology. Weber (1947) investigated the theory of bureaucracy and concluded that authority (another term sometimes used synonymously with control and influence) resides in the office or role and not in the person. Such a conclusion fits well with French and Raven's first three bases of power. Stogdill (1974) classified influence relationships based on rewards, penalties, legitimizing norms, identification or desire to continue a relationship, and the need for competent leadership. These classifications, too, coincide with the French and Raven typology.

Another approach to classification of the process makes reference to the "formal" power structure and the "informal" power structure of organizations. The former is used to describe factors similar to Weber's bureaucratic authority concept and refers to sources of power which are specific to the role of the individual within the organization. The latter centers on sources of power which are specific to the unique personal characteristics of the individuals involved (Dahl, 1970; Mechanic, 1962; Tannenbaum, 1968). This dual

power structure explanation, also, is easily incorporated into the French and Raven typology. Given these demonstrations of the universality of the typology, it is not surprising that French and Raven's work has been quite influential in guiding research in the field.

In this particular investigation, as with any study of organizational power, the source or sources of power are of significant importance. The final portions of this chapter, dealing with strategic contingency theory and the concept of power as it applies to the board-administrator relationship, will address sources of power more specifically.

Motivation. As defined for this investigation, to influence is to lead or change the behavior of another or others, and the result of successful influence is control. The reason or desire to obtain control within a specific set of circumstances is considered to be the motivation for influence. A multitude of investigations (e.g., Cartwright, 1965; Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Kipnis, 1974; Mowday, 1975; and Tedeschi et al., 1972, 1973) have examined and classified a myriad of assorted variables involved with the motivation behind the exercise of influence. Although this investigation does not propose to examine the reasons behind influence attempts, the topic might well be of interest for future investigations related to the power of school administrators.

Methods. It is natural when studying the nature of influence relationships to want to know how the influence is possible--by what means can individuals exert influence. Mowday (1975) reviewed the

literature and found enough general agreement on the topic to classify the methods of influence into five general types: (a) negative sanctions, (b) positive sanctions, (c) informational, (d) authority, and (e) attraction (p. 35).

Interestingly enough these classifications, except for their order of presentation, coincide exactly with the bases of social power contributed by French and Raven (see Table 1).

Table 1

A Comparison of French and Raven's Typology of the Bases of Social Power with Mowday's Classification of the Methods for Exerting Influence

The bases of social power (French & Raven, 1959)	Methods for exerting influence (Mowday, 1975)
Reward power	Positive sanctions
Coercive power	Negative sanctions
Legitimate power	Authority
Referent power	Attraction
Expert power	Informational

It was previously indicated that the sources of power as they apply to the board-administrator relationship will be discussed later in this chapter. The apparent interrelatedness of the sources of power and the methods of exerting influence demonstrated above will be used to coordinate a more expanded discussion of methods with the discussion of resources.

Target. By definition, to influence is to lead or change the behavior of another or others. In any influence attempt, the individual or individuals who are the focus of the attempt are considered to be the target of influence.

The literature is virtually void of investigations which address the topic of the choice of a target for influence attempts. Most studies have been structured so as to hold the target constant or to specify the target under investigation (Mowday, 1975; Tedeschi et al., 1972, 1973). Such is the case with this investigation. The influence relationship under investigation has the school business official as the influence agent and the school board president as the influence target.

Effectiveness. It is important to remember that theoretical and operational definitions of the term "influence" usually refer to changing behavior in a desired direction or according to one's intentions. Thus, it can be concluded that the results of influence attempts (control) would be viewed as having differential effectiveness, depending on the specific situation (i.e., the influence agent, his choice of method, his target, etc.).

Cartwright (1965), Dahl (1970), Mowday (1975) and Tannenbaum (1968) all make mention of a void in the body of empirical data about the effectiveness of influence attempts. This absence is usually attributed to the difficulties associated with the measurement of influence. In 1955, March stated, "available measures of influence, like influence theory, lack generality" (p. 434). Thirteen years

later, Tannenbaum (1968) noted that little had been done to improve that situation. He indicated, "direct tests for the validity for measures of control are difficult to obtain, because precise criteria have not been established" (p. 24).

As a result of difficulties associated with the measurement of influence, many investigators on the topic (and this investigation) have relied upon measurements of perceived influence. Hence, any measurement of the effectiveness of influence attempts would similarly have to depend on perceived effectiveness.

Some authorities would argue that scientific approaches to the topic should utilize more "objective" measures than perception since, after all, perception is specific to the perceiver. Perceptions, though, are of primary behavioral significance and much justification exists for relying on perceptual judgments rather than on "objective" measures of a situation (March, 1955; Perrow, 1970; Sorensen & Baum, 1977; Whisler, Meyer, Baum, & Sorensen, 1967). In fact, Tannenbaum (1968) has stated that reliance on perception "seems to us more suitable than the available alternatives" (p. 24). In actuality, it is a person's perception of a situation that affects his behavior--not necessarily the reality of the situation (Griffiths, 1959; Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Stogdill, 1959, 1974; Wiles, 1972).

As has been discussed above, a review of the literature has identified five basic components of the influence process: resources, motivation, methods, target, and effectiveness. This particular investigation is primarily concerned with the resources available to school business officials in their attempts to influence boards of

education and the methods of influence they may use. It has already been demonstrated that a definite relation exists between available resources and available methods.

Some of the most precise literature related to the use of resources and methods in influence relationships with organizations has evolved in the form of "strategic contingency theory." An explanation of that concept follows.

Strategic Contingency Theory

Strategic contingency theory is a conceptualized model of power in organizations. And, although the work of many of the earlier investigators is used to validate aspects of the theory, it is still, in fact, a theory and empirical validation attempts of the theory as a whole are sparse.

In essence, strategic contingency theorists espouse that the ability of a person to acquire power within an organization is contingent upon his/her ability to cope with the organization's critical resources and uncertainties (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977).

Some of the earlier literature on the topic of organizational power made references similar to this synthesized definition but earlier works in general failed to pull together the empirical data into a workable model. Cartwright (1965) identified ecological control (defined as control of resources and necessities) as a source of power. Mechanic (1962) stated that "power is a function not only of the extent to which a person controls information, persons, and

instrumentalities, but also of the importance of the various attributes he controls" (p. 352).

Hickson et al. (1971) relate organizational power to coping with a combination of three main variables: uncertainty, suitability, and centrality. Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) made a similar analysis by identifying three "conditions" that are likely to affect the use of power in organizations: scarcity, criticality, and uncertainty. These investigations and others (e.g., Emerson, 1962; Gamson, 1968; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; March & Simon, 1958; Perrow, 1970; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) have very convincingly substantiated the notion that within organizations, those who control scarce resources, information, and information flow, and whose functions are most critical to the overall work flow, are in positions to wield the most power. In essence, the persons gain power and the ability to influence because others in the organization (even superiors) are dependent upon them. This phenomenon was described quite clearly by Mechanic (1962):

The most effective way for lower participants to achieve power is to obtain, maintain, and control access to persons, information, and instrumentalities. To the extent that this can be accomplished, lower participants make higher ranking participants dependent upon them. Thus dependence together with the manipulation of the dependency relationship is the key to power of lower participants. (p. 356)

This investigation is directed specifically at the power of the school business official in the decision-making processes of their boards of education. Based upon what has been found in the literature, it can be concluded that the primary base (or source) of power for school business officials is their expertness (i.e., the extent

to which boards depend upon them for information and advice prior to decision-making). Similarly, the method by which school business officials are able to exert influence is through access to and control of information. More specific reference to this relationship follows.

The Board-Administrator Relationship

The focus of this investigation is the power (potential for influence) of the school business official in school board decision-making. The literature, however, is virtually void of any specific reference to the school board-school business official relationship as it relates to influence in the decision-making processes.

What is apparent in the literature is some very conclusive evidence that the superintendent and other "key" administrators are in a position (i.e., have both the resources and the means) to not only influence educational decision-making but even to dominate it (Cistone, 1977, 1978; Gittel, 1973; Haught, 1970; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Kirst & Mosher, 1969; Skippen, 1964; Wynia, 1973; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974; Zeigler & Tucker, 1976).

A study of influence in educational decision-making is, in essence, a study of educational politics. There are those who claim that politics should be and generally are kept out of education, but such reference is probably directed at "partisan" politics and fails to acknowledge that "internal" politics are something of a different matter. Kimbrough (1964) defined politics as something rather innate to all school districts: "If the educational leader and his staff

have any opinions about educational policies and take action accordingly, public education in that district is involved in politics" (p. 274).

The politics of education were described by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) as "invisible" politics, whereby the principal participants seek consensus rather than openly facing and resolving conflict. It is this mysterious or secretive nature of educational politics which has often applied negative connotations to the concept of power or influence relationships in educational decision-making. The lack of visible conflict over educational matters often gives a distorted impression of the board-administrator relationship.

Cistone (1975, 1977, 1978) and Iannaccone and Lutz (1970, 1978) have provided the most thorough analyses of the variables involved in the process of educational decision-making. These works generally identify three variables specific to the process: the societal environment, the method of selection to and composition of the school board, and the board-administrator relationship. Cistone (1977) points out that, although it is the combination of these variables and the interplay between them that determines the specifics of a given decision-making environment, the board-administrator relationship is the "critical nexus" (p. 96).

The base of power for the school board in its policy-making function rests on formal authority and the legitimacy of its representative function. Boards by law are given expressed and implied powers, one of which is to hire and fire its administrators. This type of power, combined with the fact that boards represent a

particular constituency, form the political base and philosophical argument for the board's predominance in policy control (Cistone, 1977; Wiles & Conley, 1974). The strength of this political base, although still strong in theory, has been eroded over the past 20 years in a practical sense by the ever-increasing complexity of the educational environment and the growth of school district size through consolidation. In general, as the school system increases in size and complexity, the power of the school board in determining educational policy declines (Cistone, 1977; Gittel, 1973; Kerr, 1964; Lieberman, 1977; Wiles & Conley, 1974; Zald, 1969).

Educational administrators have a significantly more limited but potentially more effective base of power. The resources which constitute this base of power for school administrators are many (e.g., control of policy implementation, command of the educational jargon, time, staff assistance), but by far the most prevalent and most effective are: (a) professional expertise, (b) information control, and (c) agenda control (Pettigrew, 1973; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974).

It stands to reason that administrators would derive power from their technical expertise because the roles of educational administrators (starting with the superintendent) evolved out of a growing complexity of task for those who were to oversee the educational needs of the community. Teaching, supervision, and administration have become specialized professions. Board members have found that they cannot compete with this professional knowledge. Wiles and Conley (1974) note that often, when board members try to apply their own beliefs to a decision-making situation, "professional opinion

forces their statements into 'emotional' judgments" (p. 312). This same dilemma was pointed out by Pois (1969):

The layman who "takes on" the professional frequently assumes a calculated risk of being rebuffed decisively-- if not put to rout--by the expert who has ready access to the pertinent data or background material. (p. 430)

Control of information by school administrators stems not only from their technical or professional expertise but also from the fact that the lines of formal authority usually place top administrators in the role of the information "gatekeeper" (Cistone, 1977; Haught, 1970; Pettigrew, 1973; Pois, 1969). Through the process known as "uncertainty absorption" (March & Simon, 1958) and because of the potential to bias information (Pettigrew, 1973), the gatekeeper is in a position to determine who gets what information and the accuracy of that information.

Agenda control is often overlooked or underrated as a source of power for school administrators. However, through the use of meeting agendas, administrators are generally able to control the selection of issues and the definition of alternatives (Cistone, 1977; Kirst, 1972; Pois, 1969). Schattschneider (1960) made reference to the definition of alternatives as "the supreme instrument of power" (p. 68). In their investigation of school districts across the nation, Zeigler and Jennings (1974) found that in 70% of the districts, agenda setting was primarily the responsibility of the superintendent. In 66% of those districts the superintendent was "solely" responsible for agenda setting.

These findings demonstrate that superintendents occupy powerful gatekeeping positions with respect to the

definition of issues and that they have the potential power to exert persuasive influences on the board to define prosuperintendent educational political markets. (p. 190)

As indicated, the administrator's base of power is significantly more limited than that of the board of education but potentially more effective. The reason for this potential for effectiveness is that the board usually "under-utilizes its resources and the administrator usually maximizes his" (Cistone, 1977, p. 97). The result is (or appears to be) a reversal of the normal role where, instead of representing the community to the school administration, the board finds itself representing or legitimizing the administration to the community (Cistone, 1975; Kerr, 1964; Wirt & Kirst, 1975; Zeigler, 1974; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974; Zeigler & Tucker, 1976).

It is this phenomenon which has caused some social scientists to express concern for the nature of educational governance. There is a fear that education is not governed democratically at all, but by very autocratic school administrators. It was just such a conclusion that led to Zeigler and Jennings (1974) making the assertion that we have "taxation without representation" in education (p. 41).

On the other hand, less pessimistic investigators acknowledge the fact that administrative dominance in educational policy-making is "irrefutable" (Cistone, 1977, p. 97), but recognize also that this dominance is not completely unchecked. No matter how powerful an administrator may appear, he/she is still hired by a board which represents and is responsive to the community. The community will allow the administration (or the board for that matter) to operate within

a certain "zone of tolerance" (Boyd, 1976; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Lutz & Iannaccone, 1969; Rosenthal, 1969; Zald, 1969).

Boyd (1976) asserts that "schoolmen usually seek to avoid conflict, it is unlikely that they will very often attempt to give the community other than what the community wants" (p. 552). The work of Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) demonstrated through case study that community dissatisfaction was usually followed by incumbent defeat in board elections and that was usually followed by replacement of the superintendent. In other words, disregard for community by the powers that be in educational decision-making causes a change in the societal environment. That change, in turn, changes the composition of the school board. The change in board composition reduces the power base of the administration for a time and causes the board to maximize its resources (i.e., the power to hire and fire).

Summary

School governance, as we know it today, has its roots in colonial New England, where the selectmen in each colony assumed the responsibility for providing educational opportunities in their respective municipalities. By the mid-1800's, however, the gross inequities that developed between districts and the politicization that resulted from mingling education with other municipal functions forced the states to move to a more centralized structure of education. This change spawned the advent of school boards and the administrative position of general superintendent.

Due for the most part to the lack of clear-cut definitions of responsibility and function, the first half century of the new, more centralized structure of schools was marked by a significant struggle for power between boards and their chief school administrators. The results of this struggle saw the school administrators emerge as the dominant force in local education policy-making. Such is the case today, despite the fact that the scope of school politics has grown to include the interests and actions of a more involved citizenry.

The literature on the topic of social power, evolving out of the study of organizations and organizational behavior, demonstrates that decision-making is the crux of organizational activity and that studying decision-making is concomitant to studying power and influence relationships.

Although the terms "power," "influence," and "control" have often acquired synonymous meanings in the available research (and often being used interchangeably), authorities generally agree that power is an influence or exchange relationship that is prevalent in some fashion in the decision-making processes of all organizations. For the purpose of this investigation, "power" refers to the potential for influence; "influence" is defined as the act of changing the behavior of another or others in a desired direction; and "control" is considered to be the result of exercising influence.

The influence process is generally composed of five variables: resources, motivation, methods, target, and effectiveness. This investigation is primarily concerned with the resources available to school business officials in their attempts to influence boards of

education and the methods of influence which may be used. A rather recent model of power in organizations known as strategic contingency theory pulls together the available research on resources (bases of power) and methods of influence to substantiate the position that those who control scarce resources, information, and information flow; and whose functions are most critical to the overall work flow are in positions to wield the most power. This power is a direct result of others in the organization (even superiors) being dependent upon those who control those resources, information, and instrumentalities.

With regard to the school board-school administrator relationship, the literature acknowledges that even though they have the potential for "supreme" power (through formal authority to direct, reprimand, hire, and fire administrators), boards typically underutilize their resources and administrators usually maximize theirs. Hence, through the use of various methods (professional expertise, information control, agenda control, control of policy implementation, etc.) school administrators have irrefutably come to dominate educational policy-making.

Although the review of the literature clearly establishes that "key" administrators and, especially, superintendents have come to dominate educational decision-making, little has been written about the topic as it pertains specifically to school business officials. The exercise of power and influence by subordinate administrators in general has been addressed to a certain extent by investigators such as Gittell (1973), Gittell and Hollander (1968), Haught (1970), and

Rogers (1969), but only within the context of large, city-wide school districts (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, etc.).

The focus of this investigation is more specific. It seeks to examine the basic distributional characteristics of the power of the school business officials in "average" size Michigan school districts. Further, the investigation examines the differences in this power, as perceived by the school business officials themselves and as perceived by the school board presidents. The study focuses on the school business official's potential for influence in more detail by examining differences due to professional orientation (either business or educational) and by identifying relationships between the degree of perceived influence and the amount of experience the school business official has--both in educational administration and in his/her current school district.

Chapter III describes in detail the methodology that was used to examine the administrator-board influence relationship as it pertains to school business officials and their respective boards in specific Michigan school districts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The literature clearly demonstrates that significant potential for influence (power) does exist for school business officials in the decision-making processes of boards of education. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the nature and extent of that potential for influence. More specifically, the investigation attempted to determine the basic distributional characteristics of the school business official's power and examined the differences in that power with regard to differing perceptions, amounts of experience, and types of professional orientation.

This chapter contains a detailed description of the method of study used to conduct the examination. Specifically, the chapter includes discussion in six major areas of methodological development: (a) description and rationale for the research design, (b) description of the research setting, (c) description of the research population and sample, (d) development and design of the research instruments, (e) general research procedures, and (f) statement of research hypotheses and methods of statistical analysis.

Research Design

The fundamental independent variable in this investigation was the role that respondents played in school board decision-making. Further, the primary levels of the independent variable were the

school business officials and the school board presidents of specified Michigan school districts. As stated in Chapter I, for the purpose of this investigation, the school business official was the central office administrator whose responsibilities included the business related functions of budgeting, accounting, insurance and risk management, negotiations, investments, plant management, and supervision of noncertificated personnel.

Questionnaires were utilized for gathering data to constitute the dependent variable, a measure of perceived power or potential for influence of the school business official in board of education decisions.

In order to further examine the concept power or potential for influence as it pertained to school business officials and board decision-making, the questionnaire used with school business officials sought certain demographic data. These data facilitated the introduction of secondary independent variables into the investigation. More specifically, these independent variables were: (a) the professional orientation of the school business officials--either business or education--and (b) his/her amount of experience in educational administration and in the district.

Although much of what we read from research on the concept of power is laboratory based, Griffiths (1959) in his "classic" work entitled Administrative Theory called for the use of more field techniques. This investigation sought to examine differences in power or potential for influence as perceived by the respondents. And, since the respondents (and, likewise, their perceptions) were categorized

according to previously established rôle identities and not manipulated or controlled by the researcher, this investigation can best be described as an ex post facto field study.

The inability of the investigator to adequately control and/or manipulate independent variables has been a primary criticism of ex post facto research designs. When conducting field studies, however, attempts at manipulation of the independent variable and random assignment of subjects to groups becomes inadvisable. Complete control of concomitant variables involved in complex social situations is unlikely and it becomes difficult to generalize findings beyond the bounds of the specific situation.

As previously stated, much of the available research on power is laboratory based. "This probably reflects the fact that previous research on power has tended to treat it as a general phenomenon and neglected its relationship to the day-to-day functioning of organizations" (Mowday, 1975, p. 89). The high degree of control over extraneous variables in the laboratory often results in "sterile" study situations which do not actually reflect the complex interrelatedness of variables in a problem. Or, to put it in the terminology of Campbell and Stanley (1963), the increased internal validity afforded through laboratory techniques may often result in decreased external validity.

In defense of utilizing the technique, Kerlinger (1973) describes ex post facto research as "systematic, empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because

they are inherently not manipulable" (p. 379). He further states that "inferences about relations among variables are made, without direct intervention, from concomitant variation of independent and dependent variables" (p. 379).

This and other literature shows that attempts to simulate social phenomena and to isolate the complex, interrelated variables that comprise them have had mixed results. In such situations ex post facto research, carried on within the framework of defined hypotheses and related theory, is a highly accepted practice (Hillway, 1969; Stanley & Hopkins, 1972; Thorndike & Hagen, 1969; Wiles, 1972).

The strength of utilizing the questionnaire as the primary method of data collection lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to gather large amounts of data from a large number of sources with relatively minimal costs and expenditure. This method has a serious disadvantage, however, when used for studying concepts such as power in organizations. That is, the concepts of political power and influence relationships often hold negative connotations. Many people shy away from responding to pertinent questions for fear of disclosing their own participation in influence relationships or for fear of the political consequences of disclosing the participation of others.

This serious disadvantage of the method (and other less serious ones) can be overcome by making attempts to lessen the magnitude of problems inherent in studying sensitive topics. Such attempts include extensive efforts to insure the respondents that completed questionnaires will be held in the strictest confidence and that

reporting results would not in any way serve to identify individual responses. In short, anonymity must be maintained.

These efforts, extensive preplanning for dealing with questionnaire return problems, and high validity of questionnaire items can make this method of data collection an appropriate and highly accepted practice in scientific research (Mowday, 1978; Pettigrew, 1973; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977; Stanley & Hopkins, 1972; Thorndike & Hagen, 1969; Wiersma, 1975).

As previously indicated, the focus of data collection or the dependent variable for this investigation was a measure of the school business official's power or potential for influence as perceived by the respondents, the school business officials and their respective board of education presidents. Some authorities would argue that scientific approaches to the topic should utilize more "objective" measures than perception because, after all, perception is specific to the perceiver.

Perceptions, though, are of primary behavioral significance and much justification exists for relying on perceptual judgments rather than on "objective" measures of the situation (March, 1955; Tannenbaum, 1968). In actuality, it is a person's perception of a situation that affects his behavior--not necessarily the reality of the situation (Griffiths, 1959; Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Stogdill, 1959, 1974; Wiles, 1972).

In his study of the exercise of influence in organizations, Mowday (1975) stated, "In terms of how others behave toward a manager, it is less important that the manager actually possess a high amount

of power than that others believe he or she is powerful" (pp. 92-93). March (1955) stated that this method of measuring influence is simple and particularly valid so long as the response categories are relatively broad. He further elaborated on its advantages and stated that through measuring perceived influence, "it may be possible to distinguish real influence from pseudo-influence" (p. 445).

The validity of utilizing perceptual judgments has been verified by many researchers in many research settings. Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) noted that they have studied dozens of very different organizations, including universities, research firms, factories, banks, retailers, and so on. In all of these settings they found individuals very capable of rating themselves and their peers on a scale of influence or power, both in specific decision situations and in situations of general impact on organizational policies. "Their agreement was usually high, which suggests that distributions of influence exists well enough in everyone's mind to be referred to with ease-- and we assume with accuracy" (p. 4).

Since a primary interest of this investigation was to examine the nature and extent of the school business official's potential for influence, it was thought that perceptual judgments would provide the most appropriate information upon which to test the hypotheses.

Research Setting

As cited in Chapter I, the most recent statistics placed the national average for school system size at 2,700 students. The state of Michigan had 529 K-12 public school districts which at the time

ranged in size from 80 students to 220,042 students. The focus of this investigation was on K-12 Michigan school districts linked to the national average by virtue of their size. Specifically, the districts under study were those identified in the 1980 Michigan Education Directory as being within a range from 2,200 students to 3,200 students.

This restriction or limitation on the scope of the investigation was designed to minimize a great deal of the variability that would have been found if all Michigan's school districts had been studied. Student population is a variable which directly affects a multitude of concomitant variables or characteristics within a school district (Lieberman, 1977). For example, a quick glance at the personnel lists for public schools in the Michigan Education Directory demonstrates very clearly that job responsibilities vary a great deal according to school district size. The smallest districts have only one central office administrator who must perform in both the curriculum and business areas. The larger districts have multiple central office administrators and the business responsibilities may be spread among many individuals.

Further, the state of Michigan (through statute) and its Department of Education (through administrative rules and guidelines) apply varying requirements and standards for operation to schools--solely on the basis of school district size. Schools of similar size are generally governed the same and, consequently, operate in much the same manner.

The use of "average size" as a point of reference for this investigation, therefore, produced similarities in administrative structure and methods of operation. In more scientific terms, it produced a more homogeneous grouping of districts. This homogeneity positively affected the external validity of the study by allowing generalization across all schools within the general range of study. It also affected the internal validity by controlling concomitant variables associated with heterogeneous school district size.

In addition to the advantages connected with studying school districts which are similar in structure and methods of operation, the focus on "average size" districts was of particular importance because this is the size of district about which little is known. As has been stated earlier, the literature leaves little doubt that school system size directly affects the amount of control which is able to be exercised by the board of education. Boards in small districts have much greater control than boards in very large school districts (Cistone, 1977; Kerr, 1964; Mechanic, 1962; Rogers, 1969; Wiles & Conley, 1974; Zald, 1969). The literature does not directly address the issue with specific reference to the wide array of sizes between the extremes.

Research Population and Sample

The 1980 Michigan Education Directory listed 80 school districts as being within the population for this study as defined in the previous section. Since ex post facto research design precludes control or manipulation of the independent variable through random assignment

of subjects, random selection of subjects becomes necessary. In order to maintain a 95% confidence level, a research population of 80 units requires a research sample of 66 units (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970, pp. 607-610).

The method of determining the research sample for this investigation is termed by Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (1979) as a simple random sample without replacement and is one in which all possible samples of a given size have the same probability of selection (p. 123). Sample school districts were selected from the list of eligible school districts through the use of the table of random numbers and the method prescribed for its use provided by Glass and Stanley (1970, pp. 212-213).

Based upon similarities found when comparing characteristic data of the population (Table 2) and of the sample (Table 3), the extracted sample was judged to be adequately representative of the population defined for this investigation.

More specifically, a comparison of these data shows that the average number of central office administrators for the sample districts and for the population districts to be the same ($\bar{X}_A = 2.29$). Further, the mean size of the sample districts (2,710) is very similar to the mean size of the population districts (2,704); and the percentage of total breakdowns by number of central office administrators demonstrate obvious similarities.

Table 2
Population District Characteristics

Number of central office administrators	Number of districts	Percent of total	Mean size of districts
1	6	7.5%	2,321
2	48	60.0%	2,644
3	23	28.8%	2,752
4	3	3.7%	3,100
$\bar{X}_A = 2.29$	$N = 80$	100.0%	$\bar{X}_S = 2,704$

Table 3
Sample District Characteristics

Number of central office administrators	Number of districts	Percent of total	Mean size of districts
1	6	9.0	2,321
2	38	57.7%	2,659
3	19	28.8%	2,762
4	3	4.5%	3,100
$\bar{X}_A = 2.29$	$N = 66$	100.0%	$\bar{X}_S = 2,710$

Research Instruments

As previously indicated, the primary method of data collection for this investigation was the questionnaire, and the fundamental independent variable was the role that respondents played in school board decision-making. The primary levels of the independent variable were school business officials and school board presidents.

Similar questionnaires were administered to school business officials and school board presidents. The board presidents were asked to give their perceptions of the influence of their school business official in 15 specific board decision-making situations, three for each of five topical issues. The school business officials were asked to provide self-perceptions of their influence in the same decision-making situations.

The questionnaire items represented contemporary decision-making situations typically faced by boards of education. The items were assigned to a 5-point, Likert-type response scale indicating varying degrees of perceived influence. The response scale was as follows: (1) no influence, (2) little influence, (3) some influence, (4) considerable influence, and (5) great influence.

In addition to the self-perceived influence portion of the questionnaire, school business officials were asked to provide specific demographic data having to do with their professional training and years of experience.

Instrument Construction

The questionnaires utilized in this investigation sought to identify the degree of influence in board decisions that was perceived to be possessed by school business officials. In addition to completing the perceived influence portion of the questionnaire, the school business officials from all sample districts were asked to provide brief demographic data.

Issue identification. The questionnaire items for this investigation evolved from specific issues of current importance and concern to boards of education and school administrators in Michigan.

In order to identify issues which were both contemporary and relevant to board decisions in Michigan school districts, eight issues were drawn from topics of interest found in recent editions of the biweekly publications of the Michigan Association of School Administrators and the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASA Fortnightly, 1980-1981; MASE Headlines, 1980-1981). Further, selection of issues was made from areas generally considered to be pertinent to the previously established role responsibilities of the school business official.

The issues identified through this process were: (a) energy conservation, (b) purchasing procedures, (c) financial and budgetary considerations, (d) declining enrollment, (e) political involvement, (f) collective bargaining, (g) insurance/unemployment compensation/workers' compensation, and (h) borrowing/investing needs and problems.

Item construction. After the eight issues of current importance had been identified, five representative questionnaire items were written for each issue. Each item was written in the form of a situational statement relative to one of the decision-making issues of boards of education. For example, a situational item related to the issue of energy conservation was, "When the school system is considering the conversion of school buses from traditional fuels to propane." Another item from the same issue was, "When the school system is considering whether or not to eliminate or cut back on security lighting as a cost saving move."

Validation process. In order to further substantiate their relevance and appropriateness, the 40 proposed questionnaire items, categorized in eight issues, were submitted to a validation panel of five school superintendents and five school board members who were not to be included in the study. It was thought that since these persons were directly involved with the issues and the board decision-making processes, they could adequately evaluate the appropriateness of proposed questionnaire items.

Members of the validation panel were solicited in person or by telephone and asked to complete a prescribed evaluation process for all proposed questionnaire items. The cover letter, information, and specific instructions provided to the validation panel are found in Appendix A.

The panel was asked to evaluate each of the specific issues and their respective items according to the following criteria:

1. Issue relevance: Is this issue of contemporary importance to school board members and school administrators in Michigan?
2. Item clarity: Is the statement clear and concise?
3. Item readability: Is the terminology used appropriate for the target audience (i.e., school business officials and board of education presidents)?
4. Item representativeness: Does the situational item statement adequately represent the issue from which it was derived?
5. Item pertinence: Does this item pertain to the job responsibilities of the school business official?
6. Item answerability: Can the item statement be responded to in terms of amount of influence perceived in that particular situation?

Evaluation of each proposed issue and item was accomplished through the use of a 5-point, Likert-type scale, anchored at each end with a description indicating the extreme limits for varying degrees of each respective evaluative criterion. An example of the evaluation forms used by the validation panel is found in Appendix A.

Suggestions for construction, refinement, and application of Likert-type rating scales suggested by Stanley and Hopkins (1972, pp. 282-301) and by Thorndike and Hagen (1969, pp. 420-447) were followed in the construction of the validation instrument and the research questionnaires.

Following the validation process by the panel, the scores for each issue in terms of its relevance to board members and administrators were totaled. The five issues receiving the highest total score

were used on the research instrument. Those issues were: (a) energy conservation, (b) financial and budgetary considerations, (c) declining enrollment, (d) collective bargaining, and (e) borrowing/investing needs and problems.

Within those five selected issues, the three item statements receiving the highest total scores in terms of clarity, readability, representativeness, pertinence, and answerability were included on the research instrument. During the validation process, panel members had an opportunity to make comments or ask questions relative to proposed questionnaire items. Then, after the final 15 items (three from each issue) were identified, each of their scores with regard to clarity and readability were reviewed in an attempt to identify and correct any problem areas. Any item which had one or more individual scores of three or less for either of these two criteria was rewritten to reflect suggested clarification or wording. The results of the validation process are presented in tabular form in Appendix A.

Final form. The perceived influence portion of the final form questionnaire was constructed with each of the five issues heading a page. The three situational item statements were listed with the 5-point, Likert-type response scale immediately below each item. This portion of the questionnaire used with school business officials was exactly the same as the questionnaire used with school board presidents with the exception of the wording of the basic instructional question on each page. That question for school business officials was, "What degree of influence do you believe you, as the

school business official, would possess in the outcome of the following specific decision-making situations?" The wording used for school board presidents was, "What degree of influence do you believe your school business official would possess in the outcome of the following specific decision-making situations?"

Demographic data. Questionnaires submitted to school business officials sought certain demographic data. These data were:

1. Official position title.
2. Years experience in educational administration.
3. Years experience in this school system.
4. Professional orientation: (a) training and experience more in the field of business than in education, or (b) training and experience more in the field of education than in business.

These demographic data were used in classification of independent variables (training and experience) according to amount of experience and professional orientation, thus facilitating the breakdown of the secondary independent variables into levels.

Pilot Testing

The proposed research instrument, consisting of issues and items retained through the validation process, was pilot tested with 10 school business officials and 10 school board members not included in the study. Subjects chosen for the pilot study were asked to complete the appropriate proposed questionnaire and to make evaluative comments about it.

Appendix B contains a copy of the cover letter and instruction sheets sent to pilot subjects, an example of the pilot study questionnaire form, and a copy of the questionnaire form used to solicit demographic data from school business officials in the pilot study.

There are three main purposes for conducting the pilot study. First, a pilot study provides an opportunity to implement the pre-established administrative procedures as a check for misunderstandings, ambiguities, or mechanical difficulties. Pilot subjects were asked to make evaluative comments about the proposed instrument. Multiple concerns for a specific portion of the proposed instrument were considered grounds for revision on the final form.

Second, a pilot study makes it possible to establish the probable reliability of the instrument. It was predetermined that after statistical analysis of pilot test results, the final form of the instrument would be considered reliable if it resulted in a Cronbach alpha coefficient of at least .60 (Stanley & Hopkins, 1972, p. 126).

And third, the results of the pilot study enable the researcher to identify the adequacy and discriminability of questionnaire items. A standard index of item discrimination is the coefficient of correlation of the respondents' scores on an item with their total scores on the rest of the questionnaire. It was predetermined that in order for an item to be retained for use on the research instrument, item analysis must result in no negative item-total correlations (Stanley & Hopkins, 1972).

Nineteen of the 20 potential respondents in the pilot test returned questionnaires. As a result, the data from 18 respondents

(nine matched pairs) were analyzed. This analysis of pilot data showed all positive item-total correlations between .3981 and .8713, and a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .92.

A tabular report of the results of the tests for reliability and discriminability of the pilot instrument is found in Appendix C.

General Procedures

The basic sampling unit for this investigation was the school district. The school business officials and the board presidents from each of the 66 sample districts were asked to complete questionnaires. A complete data set for each school district consisted of a completed questionnaire from both the school business official and the board of education president.

Questionnaires with cover letters and stamped return envelopes were sent via the United States Postal Service, one addressed to the school business official (office address) and one addressed to the board of education president (home address) in each sample district. Neither the cover letter nor the instructions sought to inform potential respondents that another from their district was being asked to participate in the study. The questionnaires did not seek the identity of the respondents, but each was number-coded to facilitate data management.

Appendix D contains copies of the cover letter, instruction sheets, and final form questionnaires used for actual data collection.

Because of the potential sensitivity of the topic, the cover letters sought to ensure the respondents that:

1. Participation in this investigation was voluntary but, if they chose not to participate, return of the questionnaire and a reason for not participating would be appreciated.

2. Responses would be held in the strictest confidence. No one would be allowed to see the individual responses other than the researcher and anonymity would be strictly maintained.

3. The results of the study were to be reported in such a way that no individual's response could be identified.

4. Names (of persons or of school districts) would not be used in any part of the investigation. Questionnaires were coded only to enable the researcher to manage data and to identify nonrespondents.

Three weeks after the original questionnaires were mailed, "reminder" postcards were sent to the 40 potential respondents who had not yet returned questionnaires. Two weeks after this second request, since the validity of the study was in jeopardy because of insufficient response by the sample (less than 80%), 19 of the remaining 24 respondents were contacted by phone in a final attempt to secure their help and participation in the study. Those who were contacted by phone and who indicated a willingness to participate were mailed duplicate questionnaires and return envelopes.

At the time that nonrespondents were contacted by phone, they were also questioned as to their reasons for not responding. This was done in an attempt to identify whether or not a systematic reason for nonresponse existed. The reasons given for nonresponse were generally of six types. Those reasons with frequencies shown in parentheses are listed below:

1. The questionnaire was sent back but must have been lost in the mail. (3)
2. The questionnaire was misplaced but will respond if sent another. (5)
3. The questionnaire was set aside and forgotten but will respond soon. (5)
4. Won't respond: Too busy for questionnaires. (3)
5. Haven't had time but will respond. (2)
6. Didn't receive the questionnaire. (1)

Hypothesis and Statistical Analysis

The research questions addressed in this investigation are found in Chapter I. Data gathered through the previously described processes were used in hypothesis testing (Questions 1, 2, and 3) and in descriptive analysis (Questions 4 and 5). A graphic representation of the variables and research questions addressed in this investigation is found in Figure 1.

The statistic used for testing the null hypotheses in Questions 1, 2, and 3 was the standard t test for independent samples. The assumptions involved in using this test statistic and the circumstances required in case of violation of assumptions as outlined by Glass and Stanley (1970) were taken into consideration during analysis. Results of these tests were considered significant at the .05 level.

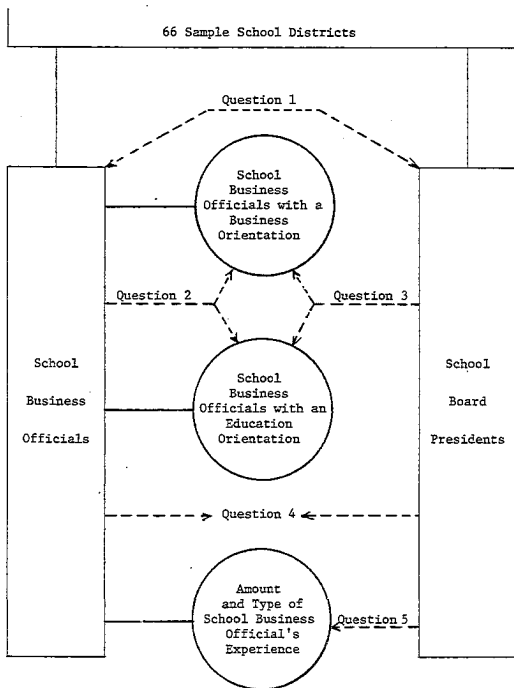


Figure 1

Graphic Representation of Variables and Research Questions Addressed in this Investigation

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference in the amount of power possessed by the school business officials as perceived by the school business officials themselves or by the presidents of their boards of education?

Null hypothesis. No significant difference will be found between the mean of the scores of school business officials rating their own degree of influence and the mean of the scores of board presidents rating their school business official's degree of influence.

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

Alternate hypothesis. A significant difference will be found between the mean of the scores of school business officials rating their own degree of influence and the mean of the scores of board presidents rating their school business official's degree of influence.

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

Research Question 2

When taking into account their professional orientation, either business or education, is there a significant difference in the amount of self-perceived power by school business officials?

Null hypothesis. No significant difference will be found between the self-rated mean scores of those school business officials

indicating a business orientation and those school business officials indicating an education orientation.

$$H_0: \mu_b = \mu_e$$

Alternate hypothesis. A significant difference will be found between the self-rated mean scores of those school business officials indicating a business orientation and those school business officials indicating an education orientation.

$$H_a: \mu_b \neq \mu_e$$

Research Question 3

When taking into account their professional orientation, either business or education, is there a significant difference in the amount of power possessed by school business officials as perceived by their board of education presidents?

Null hypothesis. No significant difference will be found between the mean score ratings by board presidents for those school business officials indicating a business orientation and those school business officials indicating an education orientation.

$$H_0: \mu_b = \mu_e$$

Alternate hypothesis. A significant difference will be found between the mean score ratings by board presidents for those school business officials indicating a business orientation and those school business officials indicating an education orientation.

$$H_a: \mu_b \neq \mu_e$$

Research Question 4

What is the distribution of the perceived potential for influence of the school business officials in the decision-making processes of their boards of education?

This research question was addressed by examining the frequency distribution of the variable "Total" (total over all items), broken down a priori into the same five categories used for scoring each individual item. That is, the distribution of total scores was categorized as follows:

<u>Total score</u>	<u>Category</u>
15-22	No influence
23-37	Little influence
38-52	Some influence
53-67	Considerable influence
68-75	Great influence

It is recognized that this a priori treatment of the dependent variable (nonnormed data) has serious limitations for the realm of scientific interpretation. Such treatment is open to criticism due to potential respondent acquiescence, the halo effect, and so on. Despite the shortcomings, the data interpretation described above was utilized simply to assist the reader in interpreting the findings and to provide consistency between the interpretation of the total score variable and the prescribed item score definitions.

Research Question 5

Is there a relationship between the amounts of power school business officials are perceived to possess by their board of education presidents and the amount and type of experience he/she has?

Since the variables involved were both measured on an interval scale, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used for examining the relationship between totals over all items by school board presidents and the years of experience indicated by school business officials, both in educational administration and in their particular school districts. The general "rules of thumb" for interpreting correlation coefficients as set forth by Hinkle et al. (1979, p. 85) were used.

Summary

The methodology used in this investigation can briefly be described as an ex post facto field study technique with the questionnaire having been used as the primary method of data collection.

The basic sampling units in the investigation were school districts in the state of Michigan which were termed "average size" by virtue of their being within 500 students of the national average size (2,700 students). The most recent information available pointed out that there were 80 such school districts in Michigan and 66 of those were included in the study by way of random selection.

The fundamental independent variable under investigation was the role that questionnaire respondents play in school board

decision-making. The primary levels of the independent variable were the school business officials and the school board presidents of the sample districts.

Data obtained through the use of the questionnaire provided numerical representation for the basic dependent variable, the amount of power (potential for influence) perceived to be possessed by school business officials in the decision-making processes of their boards. Classification of the school business officials through the use of various demographic data facilitated the division of the secondary independent variables into several levels for more in-depth investigation.

Specifically, the investigation examined: The difference in power as perceived by the two categories of respondents; the difference in self-perceived power with regard to professional orientation—either business or education; the difference in board perceived power with regard to professional orientation; the overall distribution of the perceived power; and the difference in perceived power with regard to the amount of experience of the school business official.

Chapter IV reports the results of the investigation as outlined here and those results are summarized through the statement and discussion of conclusions in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The initial portion of this chapter presents a descriptive look at the school districts and the respondents who provided data for statistical analysis in this investigation. The results of the data analysis as outlined in Chapter III is then presented with reference to each of the research questions. The data were analyzed through hypothesis testing (Questions 1, 2, and 3) and through descriptive techniques (Questions 4 and 5).

Profile of the Respondents

The information presented here includes, first, some pertinent characteristics of the school districts represented in the investigation and a general profile of questionnaire respondents. Next, more specific information is provided relative to the demographic data obtained from school business official respondents.

General Profile

The research population for this investigation consisted of the school business officials and the school board presidents of 80 school districts in the state of Michigan which were termed "average size" by virtue of their being within 500 students of the national

average size (2,700 students). Sixty-six of those districts were included in the research sample by way of random selection. The data for this investigation were gathered through the use of "perceived influence" questionnaires.

The basic sampling unit for the investigation was the school district and the primary levels of the independent variable were the school business officials and the school board presidents from those sample districts. Because of this sampling structure, a complete data set for analysis purposes was considered to be a completed questionnaire from both the school business official and the school board president in a district. Further, this restrictive definition of a complete data set was used to insure that the perceived influence ratings used at each of the levels of the independent variable were from the same environment. Accepting nonmatched data, although matched data were never actually compared, would have introduced contaminants which were school district specific.

Following the general procedures outlined in Chapter III, questionnaires were ultimately returned by 122 (92.4%) of the 132 potential individual respondents. Within that number of respondents there were 58 (87.9%) out of the 66 potential complete data sets. Five of the questionnaires within the matched sets contained missing data for one or more questionnaire items, thereby eliminating those data sets for analysis purposes. As a result, 53 (80.3%) of the 66 potential data sets were used in the data analysis for this investigation. Pertinent characteristics of the school districts that were represented by the respondents and a comparison of those districts to the

sample and population districts are found in Table 4.

The data in Table 4 demonstrate obvious similarities between the respondent districts, the sample districts, and the population districts. More specifically, the average number of central office administrators in the 53 respondent districts was 2.19, as compared to 2.29 in the sample and population districts. The mean size of all districts represented by the respondents was 2,719, as compared to 2,710 and 2,704, respectively, in the sample and the population. These figures are also similar to the previously established "average size" (2,700) for school districts nationwide.

During the data gathering process, nonrespondents were contacted in an attempt to secure their help and participation in the study. At that time, the nonrespondents who were able to be contacted (19 out of 24) were asked to indicate why they had not responded. The replies given did not demonstrate any systematic reason for nonresponse except simple negligence on the part of the potential respondents. Most indicated a willingness to participate and gave various excuses for not having done so already. Only three potential respondents indicated that they were unwilling to participate. None of those questioned indicated any hesitation due to the nature of the questionnaire items.

Having carefully examined these characteristic data and having evaluated the reasons given for nonresponse, it was concluded that the respondents' districts did adequately represent the population under investigation; and, further, there was no evidence found to indicate a systematic reason for nonresponse nor any particular bias

Table 4
 Comparison of Respondent Districts with Sample and Population Districts

Number of central office administrators	Number of districts			Percentage of total districts			Mean size of districts		
	Resp.	Samp.	Pop.	Resp.	Samp.	Pop.	Resp.	Samp.	Pop.
1	6	6	6	11.3	9.0	7.5	2,321	2,321	2,321
2	33	38	48	62.3	57.7	60.0	2,652	2,659	2,644
3	12	19	23	22.6	28.8	28.8	2,828	2,762	2,752
4	2	3	3	3.8	4.5	3.7	3,074	3,100	3,100
Resp. $\bar{X} = 2.19$ Samp. $\bar{X} = 2.29$ $N_R = 53$ Pop. $\bar{X} = 2.29$ $N_S = 66$ $N_P = 80$				100.0	100.0	100.0	$\bar{X}_R = 2,719$	$\bar{X}_S = 2,710$	$\bar{X}_P = 2,704$

on the part of nonrespondents.

Demographic Profile

As previously indicated, the school business official respondents were asked to provide specific demographic data which was used to facilitate the introduction of secondary independent variables. The data resulting from this division were used for analysis purposes with Research Questions 2, 3, and 5. Tabular presentation and discussion of these data is given here simply to provide the reader with a more thorough profile of the pertinent characteristics represented by questionnaire respondents.

Official titles. School business officials were asked to designate their official titles. The distribution of those responses is found in Table 5. The number of respondents who specified that they were superintendents (16) does not necessarily indicate the existence of only one central office administrator in those districts. It simply indicates that the superintendent is the administrator who handles the business related functions as defined for this investigation.

Amount of experience. School business officials were also asked to indicate their years of experience in educational administration and their years of experience in their current school districts. With regard to their administrative experience, respondent experience ranged from 1 to 33 years, with a mean experience factor of 13.21 years. Similarly, experience in the current districts ranged from 1 to 34 years, with a mean of 11.02 years. These data are presented

Table 5
 Official Titles of School Business
 Official Respondents

Code	Title	Number of respondents	Percentage of total
1	Superintendent	16	30.2
2	Assistant superintendent	13	24.5
3	Business manager	18	34.0
4	Administrative assistant	4	7.5
5	Director of business	1	1.9
6	Other	1	1.9
		<u>N</u> = 53	100.0

in more detail in Table 6.

Professional orientation. Each school business official was also asked to indicate his/her professional orientation--either business or education. Of the 53 respondents, 20 (37.7%) indicated that their training and experience was more in business than in education. Thirty-three (62.3%) indicated an education orientation.

Hypothesis Testing

The data analysis technique utilized for Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 (and their respective hypotheses) consisted of testing for statistical differences between means. The test statistic used was the standard t test for independent samples. Results of these tests

Table 6

Experience of School Business Official Respondents

Range in years	Administrative experience		Current district experience	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of total	Number of respondents	Percentage of total
1-5	10	18.9	25	47.2
6-10	11	20.7	4	7.5
11-15	17	32.1	9	17.1
16-20	5	9.4	4	7.5
21-25	7	13.2	4	7.5
26+	3	5.7	7	13.2
	$\bar{N} = 53$	100.0	$\bar{N} = 53$	100.0
	Mean = 13.21		Mean = 11.02	
	Std. Dev. = 7.68		Std. Dev. = 9.88	

were considered significant at the .05 level.

In each of these cases, prior to evaluating the results of the t test for difference between means, an F test of sample variance was used to determine on which variance estimate (pooled or separate) to base the t test. The results of the F tests were also considered significant at the .05 level..

Research Question 1

The first research question addressed in this investigation sought to examine the probability of there being differing perceptions

of the amount of power possessed by school business officials: the self-perceived power and the board president-perceived power. The null hypothesis stated that no significant difference would be found between the two perceptions. The nondirectional alternate hypothesis indicated that a significant difference would be found.

The statistical analysis data shown in Table 7 indicate that the probability for F (.97) is greater than alpha. Hence, the two groups are assumed to have the same variance and the t test is based on the pooled variance estimate. Accordingly, the t test resulted in a probability (.18) which is greater than alpha and the null hypothesis of no significant difference cannot be rejected.

These data demonstrate that the school business officials under investigation (with a mean score over all items of 57.66) perceive themselves to have "considerable" influence and the school board presidents (with a mean score of 55.32) perceive their school business officials to have "considerable" influence. But, the observed difference between sample means (2.34) is not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Research Question 2

The second research question addressed in this investigation proposed the examination of self-perceived power by school business officials when taking into account their professional orientation. The null hypothesis stated that no significant difference would be found between the self-rated mean scores of those school business officials indicating a business orientation and those school business

Table 7
Research Question 1 t Test for Difference Between Means

Group	N	Mean	Stand. dev.	Stand. error	F Value	Prob.	Pooled variance estimate		
							t Value	df	Prob.
School business officials	53	57.66	9.01	1.24	1.01	.97	1.34	104	.18
School board presidents	53	55.32	8.97	1.23					

*Alpha = .05.

officials indicating an education orientation. The alternate hypothesis was nondirectional and stated that a significant difference would be found.

The data analysis results depicted in Table 8 show that the probability of F (.045) for evaluating homogeneity of variance is less than alpha and, thus, the separate variance estimate is used for the t test. That is, given the unequal number of respondents in the two groups, the t test would not be robust with respect to violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption. And, since the probability associated with t (.55) is greater than alpha, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between means is not rejected.

This analysis indicates that school business officials with a business orientation and a mean score over all items of 56.80 perceive themselves to have "considerable" influence in board decision-making, and school business officials with an education orientation and a mean score of 58.18 perceive themselves to have "considerable" influence. However, the observed difference between these means (1.38) is not considered to be statistically significant at the .05 level.

Research Question 3

As with the previous situation, the third research question involves an examination of the differences in perceived power according to professional orientation. Here, however, the examination is made based upon the perceptions of the school board presidents. The null hypothesis was that no significant difference would be found. The

Table 8

Research Question 2 t Test for Difference Between Means

Group	N	Mean	Stand. dev.	Stand. error	F Value	Prob.	Separate variance estimate		
							t Value	df Prob.	
Business orientation	20	56.80	6.59	1.47	2.43	.045	-.60	51	.55
Education orientation	33	58.18	10.27	1.79					

*Alpha = .05.

corresponding nondirectional alternate stated that a significant difference would be demonstrated.

The data analysis results shown in Table 9 indicate that the probability associated with the F test for sample variance (.13) is greater than alpha and, therefore, calls for the use of the pooled variance estimate with the t test. Accordingly, the probability associated with t (.20) is greater than alpha and the null hypothesis for Research Question 3 is not rejected.

These results indicate that board presidents rating school business officials with a business orientation perceive those persons to have "considerable" influence (a mean score over all items of 53.3). Likewise, the board presidents rating school business officials with an education orientation also perceive their business officials to have "considerable" influence (a mean score of 56.55). The difference between these means (3.25), however, is not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Descriptive Analysis

Data analysis for Research Questions 4 and 5 in this investigation does not involve the use of hypothesis testing. Rather, the analysis is done through the examination of frequency distributions (Question 4) and correlation coefficients (Question 5).

Instrument Characteristics

It was reported in Chapter III that analysis of pilot test data with respect to adequacy and discriminability of questionnaire items

Table 9
 Research Question 3 t Test for Difference Between Means

Group	N	Mean	Stand. dev.	Stand. error	F Value	Prob.	Separate variance estimate		
							t Value	df	Prob.
Business orientation	20	53.30	10.53	2.35	1.82	.13	-1.28	51	.20
Education orientation	33	56.55	7.80	1.36					

*Alpha = .05.

revealed all positive item-total correlations between .3981 and .8713. Further, the probable reliability of the instrument was established through the use of the Cronbach alpha coefficient and found to be .92.

Likewise, these analyses were performed on the actual study data. Item-total correlations were found to be all positive and between .4707 and .7051. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was found to be .87.

Although an analysis of the specific questionnaire items (either as a group or within the predefined issues) was not proposed for this investigation, the distribution data for perceived influence by item over all respondents are presented in Table 10. These mean score data can be interpreted in relationship to the prescribed item response scale as stated in Chapter III. Specifically, this scale was: (1) no influence, (2) little influence, (3) some influence, (4) considerable influence, and (5) great influence. This information is provided simply to help in the evaluation of the results.

Research Question 4

The topic of concern in Research Question 4 is actually the basis for this entire investigation. The question proposed the examination of the distribution of perceived power (potential for influence) for school business officials in the decision-making processes of their boards of education. The question is addressed here in two ways: (a) from the viewpoint of the school business officials under study, and (b) from the viewpoint of the school board presidents.

Table 10

Distribution of Perceived Influence by Questionnaire Item

Issue area	Item number	Key words descriptor	Item mean	Standard deviation
A	1	Cut back on security lighting	3.86	.88
A	2	Elimination of field trips	3.62	.82
A	3	Roof repair-replacement	4.22	.79
B	4	How much cash reserve	4.11	.94
B	5	Pay-to-play athletics	3.32	.91
B	6	Administrative pay raises	3.12	1.07
C	7	Secondary class sizes	2.97	1.13
C	8	Enrollment of tuition students	3.13	1.06
C	9	Call back of employees	3.35	1.20
D	10	Who is chief negotiator	3.47	1.25
D	11	Cost-of-living escalator	3.80	.99
D	12	Teacher salary and benefits	3.99	.92
E	13	How much and when to borrow	4.67	.72
E	14	State aid or tax anticipation	4.61	.74
E	15	Distribution of investments	4.24	.92

The questionnaire used to gather perceived influence data from both categories of respondents utilized a 5-point, Likert-type response scale to indicate the degree of perceived influence in specific decision-making situations. The dependent variable used for data analysis is the total score over all items, representing a measure of the school business officials' power or potential for influence.

For analysis purposes relative to this research question, the total score data were broken down a priori into five categories, corresponding to the same response categories used for each individual decision-making situation represented on the questionnaire. Those categories, as described in Chapter III, are as follows:

<u>Total score range</u>	<u>Corresponding degree of influence</u>
15-22	No influence
23-37	Little influence
38-52	Some influence
53-67	Considerable influence
68-75	Great influence

School business official perceptions. The distribution of influence information demonstrated in Table 11 represents the self-perceived power of the school business officials under investigation. Total scores fell within a range from 25 to 75. The mean score over all school business official responses was 57.66, corresponding to the "considerable influence" response category. Forty-two (79.3%) of the school business official respondents rated their own degree of

influence either "great" or "considerable."

Table 11
Distribution of Perceived Influence
by School Business Officials

Total score range	Corresponding degree of influence	Number of respondents	Percentage of total N	Cumulative percentage
15-22	No influence	0	0.0	0.0
23-37	Little influence	2	3.8	3.8
38-52	Some influence	9	17.0	20.8
53-67	Considerable influence	39	73.6	94.3
68-75	Great influence	3	5.7	100.0
		$N = 53$	100.0	

Note. Mean = 57.66.
Std. deviation = 9.01.

School board president perceptions. Table 12 presents the distribution information relative to the school business officials' power as perceived by the school board presidents. Total scores ranged from 30 to 68. The mean score over all school board president responses was 55.32, corresponding, also, to the "considerable influence" response category. Thirty-four (64.2%) of the school board president respondents rated their school business official's degree of influence either "considerable" or "great."

Table 12
 Distribution of Perceived Influence
 by School Board Presidents

Total score range	Corresponding degree of influence	Number of respondents	Percentage of total <u>N</u>	Cumulative percentage
15-22	No influence	0	0.0	0.0
23-37	Little influence	2	3.8	3.8
38-52	Some influence	17	32.1	35.8
53-67	Considerable influence	31	58.5	94.3
68-75	Great influence	3	5.7	100.0
		<u>N</u> = 53	100.0	

Note. Mean = 55.32.
 Std. deviation = 8.97.

Research Question 5

This research question sought to discern whether or not a relationship existed between the board presidents' perceptions of the power of the school business officials and the amount of experience possessed by the school business officials; first, in educational administration; and second, in their current school district.

As previously indicated, the amount of experience in educational administration possessed by respondent school business officials ranged from 1 to 33 years. The amount of influence perceived by their school board presidents had a minimum total score of 30 and a

maximum of 68. The correlation coefficient for the relationship between these two measures was .17, thereby indicating that little, if any, relationship actually exists, since only 2.89% of the variance is shared. Similarly, the amount of experience within their current school districts that was indicated by the school business officials ranged from 1 to 34 years. The correlation coefficient between this factor and the amount of perceived influence by the board presidents was .14. The size of this coefficient also indicates that little, if any, relationship actually exists between the two measures, since only 1.96% of the variance is shared.

Summary

This chapter has presented a profile of the respondents who participated in this investigation and a report of the statistical analysis of the results with reference to each of the five basic research questions.

A comparison of specific characteristics for the school districts represented by 106 respondents led to the conclusion that the respondents' districts did adequately represent the population under investigation. Further, an examination of the reasons for non-response resulted in no evidence to indicate that a systematic reason for nonresponse existed or that a contaminating bias on the part of the respondents was involved.

Hypothesis testing for the difference between means was utilized for data analysis for the first three research questions. In all three cases, both categories of respondents indicated perceptions of

"considerable" influence, but the differences between means were all statistically not significant and the null hypotheses were not rejected. Descriptive analysis for the fourth and fifth research questions demonstrated that school business officials are perceived to possess a "considerable" amount of influence in board decision-making, but there was little, if any, relationship between the board presidents' perceptions of amount of influence and the school business officials' amount of experience--either in educational administration or in their respective school districts.

The next and final chapter provides a summary of the entire investigation, statements and discussion of conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter contains a brief summary of the investigation from its inception through the statistical analysis of questionnaire data, the statement of conclusions drawn as a result of the data analysis, discussion about those conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

Initial readings in the area of school governance and decision-making led to the impression that a problem exists relative to the concept of policy control. That is, the dramatic growth in school district size and the increased technical complexity within which school systems must operate have forced local boards of education into a dependence relationship with their key administrative personnel. It was believed that the school business official has come to "center stage" in this relationship because of the technical aspects and uncertainties associated with the responsibilities of that specific role function.

Consequently, the school business official was thought to be in a position to exercise considerable influence in the decision-making processes of boards of education. It is the nature and extent of this potential for influence which was the focal point of this

investigation.

More specifically, the purpose of the investigation has been to examine the nature and extent of the school business official's potential for influence in "average size" Michigan school districts by seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the amount of power possessed by school business officials as perceived by the school business officials themselves or by the presidents of their boards of education?

2. When taking into account their professional orientation, either business or education, is there a significant difference in the amount of self-perceived power by school business officials?

3. When taking into account their professional orientation, either business or education, is there a significant difference in the amount of power possessed by school business officials as perceived by their board of education presidents?

4. What is the distribution of the perceived potential for influence of the school business officials in the decision-making processes of their boards of education?

5. Is there a relationship between the amounts of power school business officials are perceived to possess by their board of education presidents and the amount of experience he/she has?

A much more extensive review of the literature clearly established that, through maximizing available resources and utilizing various methods, "key" school administrators (especially superintendents) have come to dominate educational decision-making. The

literature, however, was virtually void of a specific reference to school business officials and their role in educational decision-making. A few studies (e.g., Gittell, 1966; Gittell & Hollander, 1968; and Haught, 1970) made reference to subordinate central office administrators. These investigations, though, were conducted in very large, city-wide school districts.

The methodology used for this investigation was an ex post facto field study with the questionnaire used as the primary method of data collection. The basic sampling units for the study were school districts in Michigan which were termed "average size" by virtue of their being within 500 students of the national average size (2,700). There were 80 such districts in Michigan and 66 of those were included in the research sample in order to achieve a 95% confidence level. The primary levels of the independent variable were the school business officials and the school board presidents of these specific districts.

Research hypotheses were developed for each of the first three research questions. The null hypotheses and their nondirectional alternates proposed the testing of significance for the difference between means. The test statistic used was the standard t test for independent samples and alpha was set at the .05 level. It was determined that Research Questions 4 and 5 would be analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics; frequency distributions and correlation coefficients, respectively.

Questionnaires were developed which would yield a numerical representation for the basic dependent variable under investigation--.

the amount of power (potential for influence) perceived to be possessed by school business officials in the decision-making processes of their boards of education. Questionnaire items were validated by a panel of five superintendents and five school board members not used in the actual investigation. The questionnaire was pilot tested with 10 school business officials and 10 school board presidents from districts not included in the research sample. Analysis of the pilot study data resulted in a total response rate of 95% and a complete data set (a completed questionnaire from both the school business official and the school board president of a district) response rate of 90%. Further, the pilot data revealed no negative item-total correlations and an overall reliability coefficient of .92.

Final form perceived influence questionnaires were sent to the school business officials and school board presidents in the 66 sample districts. In addition, school business officials were asked to provide specific demographic data which facilitated the introduction of other independent variables for data analysis pursuant to Research Questions 2, 3, and 5. Analysis of the data for the study was based on a complete data set response rate of 80.3%.

A general profile of the questionnaire respondents revealed that the respondent districts were adequately representative of the sample districts and of the population districts, and that no contaminating, systematic reason for nonresponse existed.

Conclusions

This section will provide a set of five conclusions which evolved out of hypothesis testing (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3) and through descriptive analysis (Research Questions 4 and 5).

Research Question 1

The first research question addressed the topic of differing perceptions of school business official power. The null hypothesis predicted that no significant difference would be found between the school business officials' perceptions and the school board presidents' perceptions. The alternate hypothesized that a significant difference would be found.

Data analysis revealed a sample mean of 57.66 for school business officials and a sample mean of 55.32 for school board presidents. When tested for significance, however, the difference was not found to be statistically significant at the .05 level and the null hypothesis of no significant difference could not be rejected.

Conclusion 1. Given that power is the potential for influence in board decision-making, there is no evidence to indicate that a difference exists between the school business official's self-perceived power and the school board president's perception of that power.

Discussion. Since the topic of differing perceptions of the school business official's potential for influence is not directly

addressed in the literature, this specific conclusion does not serve to substantiate nor contradict other empirical findings. Some investigators (e.g., Cartwright, 1965; Kipnis, 1974; and Mowday, 1975), however, have emphasized the importance of self-perceptions of power as a critical factor in the motivation behind influence. It has been found that the anticipation of success in a potential influence situation is a motivational factor behind the attempt. That is, if a person perceives that he/she will succeed, it is more likely that the influence attempt will be made.

Acknowledging limitations with measuring perceived influence and prescribing the interpretation of the results, these data can still be useful for expanding the understanding of the literature. The fact that school business officials are perceived to have "considerable" influence and that there is no evidence to indicate that this potential for influence is perceived differently by the school business officials themselves or by their school board presidents lends credence to the notion that school business officials do attempt to influence board decision-making. And, at least within given areas of responsibility, they are successful in their attempts.

Research Question 2

The second research question dealt with the topic of differences in self-perceived power, depending upon the school business official's professional orientation--either business or education. It was hypothesized, first, that there would be no significant difference between the self-perceived mean scores of the two categories of

respondents. The alternate hypothesis anticipated that there would be a significant difference.

An analysis of the data for self-perceived influence showed a mean of 56.80 for those with a business orientation and a mean of 58.18 for those with an education orientation. The test for significance in this situation found the difference between the two means to be statistically insignificant and the null hypothesis of no significant difference was not rejected.

Conclusion 2. In average size Michigan school districts there is no evidence to indicate that school business officials with a business orientation perceive themselves to have any more or any less power than school business officials with an education orientation.

Discussion. Since Research Questions 2 and 3 both involve the examination of differences in perceived power with regard to professional orientation, the discussion of the conclusions drawn from this investigation for these two questions will be combined and is found following the statement of the third conclusion.

Research Question 3

As with the previous research question, the topic of Research Question 3 is the difference in perceived power with regard to professional orientation. This question, however, examines the topic from the perspective of the school board president.

It was hypothesized in the null form that no significant difference would be found between the mean of the scores by board

presidents rating business oriented school business officials and the mean of the scores by board presidents rating education oriented school business officials. The alternate hypothesis was nondirectional in that it predicted a significant difference but did not anticipate which would be greater.

The data analysis indicated a mean of 53.30 for those who were rating business oriented officials and a mean of 56.55 for those who were rating education oriented officials. The t test, however, did not find this difference to be significant at the .05 level and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Conclusion 3. In average size Michigan school districts there is no evidence to indicate that school board presidents perceive school business officials with a business orientation to have any more or any less power than school business officials with an education orientation.

Discussion. The professional orientation variable for this investigation was derived by having the school business official respondents indicate whether their training and experience was more in the business related fields or more in the field of education. The existence of school business officials in one or the other of these two professional orientations is acknowledged in the literature (Hill, 1970; Hill & Colmey, 1964), but the extent to which either is predominant is not actually documented. It is felt by those who have written model certification codes for the profession that a mixture of both orientations is ideal (Hill, 1970). It would appear from the

results of this investigation, however, that having one or the other orientation as defined by each respondent is not necessarily a determining factor in an individual's potential to influence board decision-making.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question addressed in this investigation proposed the examination of the distribution of perceived power (potential for influence) for school business officials in the decision-making processes of their boards of education. Data pursuant to this topic were analyzed descriptively through the use of frequency distributions corresponding a priori to the 5-point rating scale used by respondents for each decision-making situation on the perceived influence questionnaire.

The mean of the total scores by school business officials was 57.66. The mean of the total scores by school board presidents was 55.32. Both of these mean scores fell within the total score range corresponding to the item-rating score of "considerable influence."

Conclusion 4. Given an a priori interpretation of perceived influence data, school business officials in average size Michigan school districts have considerable influence in the decision-making processes of their boards of education.

Discussion. These findings are consistent with those set forth in the literature by Cistone (1975, 1977, 1978), Gittel (1973), Baught (1970), Kirst and Mosher (1969), Lutz and Iannaccone (1969),

Skippen (1964), Wynia (1973), Zeigler and Jennings (1974), Zeigler and Tucker (1976), and others.

Based upon what was found in the literature (see Chapter II) it was concluded that the primary base (or source) of power for school business officials is their expertness (i.e., the extent to which boards depend upon them for information and advice prior to decision-making). Similarly, the method by which school business officials are able to exert influence is through access to and control of information. With this documentation as a basis and the results of this investigation as substantiation, it can reasonably be stated that there is an indication that school business officials fall within that group of "key" school administrators which the literature has established as being dominant in educational policy-making.

Research Question 5

The fifth and last research question addressed in this investigation proposed the examination of the relationship between the amount of board-perceived power possessed by school business officials and the amount of experience possessed by those same school business officials. The experience variable was addressed in two areas: (a) years of experience in educational administration, and (b) years of experience in the current school system.

Respondent data were analyzed by means of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to determine whether or not any relationship was evidenced. The correlation coefficient for the relationship between perceived power and experience in educational

administration was .17. Similarly, the correlation coefficient for the relationship between experience in the district and amount of perceived power was .14.

Conclusion 5. In average size Michigan school districts there is little, if any, relationship between the board perceived power of the school business official and the amount of experience possessed by the school business official.

Discussion. As with the nature of Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, the amount of experience possessed by administrators as it relates specifically to their ability to influence others is not directly addressed in the literature. Consequently, these findings neither substantiate nor conflict with other empirical data.

It seems reasonable to assume, however, since it is substantiated in the literature (e.g., Cistone, 1977; Kerr, 1964; Pettigrew, 1973; Pois, 1969; Zeigler, 1974; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974; and Zeigler & Tucker, 1976) that a base of power for school business officials is his/her expertness, that expertness in some way reflects experience—either in the field or in the district. But, since this assumption is not substantiated by the results of this investigation, it may well indicate a need for further study.

Recommendations for Future Research

It has been stated on numerous occasions throughout this dissertation that the literature clearly demonstrates that superintendents and other "key" administrators are in a position (i.e., have both the

resources and the means) to not only influence educational decision-making, but to dominate it. This investigation has done little more than substantiate the notion that this general statement of empirical findings also applies specifically to the school business officials of average size Michigan school districts. It is the opinion of this investigator, though, that the topic of power as it relates to school business officials and board decision-making needs much further investigation.

Suggestions for related research in four general areas are presented here for consideration: (a) evaluation of the business orientation/education orientation ratio, (b) the examination of power within the specifically defined issue areas, (c) the effect of the superintendent on the power of the school business official, and (d) the personal characteristics of the successful school business official.

Business/Education Orientation Ratio

This investigation revealed that 37.7% of the school business official respondents classified themselves as having a business orientation as opposed to the 62.3% who indicated an education orientation. There is at this time no available literature to indicate whether or not the percentage of business oriented administrators is higher, lower, or the same as in recent years. The most likely source for such information, Hill's (1970) book entitled The School Business Administrator (A.S.B.O.'s Bulletin #21) is hopelessly out of date and the 1980 rewrite is not yet available.

Even though no significant difference in perceived power was found between the two categories in this investigation, the topic is of great concern to the profession. So great is the concern that a symposium on the topic was conducted at the most recent annual convention of the Association of School Business Officials in Kansas City. There are those of us who theorize that the percentage of business oriented administrators is on the rise. This ratio needs to be monitored and the implications of its change evaluated.

Power Within Issue Areas

It was observed during the data collection process for this investigation that some of the magnitude in total scores could be attributed to the variability between the predefined issues (see Table 10). It is thought that this phenomenon exists partially due to the wide variety of responsibilities that may or may not be included in the specific job descriptions of the school business officials represented in the investigation.

Although this observation does not necessarily indicate a design defect for this investigation, future research in the field should attempt to ascertain specific job responsibilities and examine the topic of the potential for influence within a more narrow context.

The Effect of the Superintendent

Of the 53 school business official respondents represented in this investigation, 16 (30.2%) indicated that they were, in fact, the superintendent of schools for that district. Thirty-seven (69.8%) of

the respondents were subordinate administrators in the central office whose access to or relationship with the board of education may or may not have been affected by the superintendent.

Because of the "modus operandi" of the superintendent, the school business official may have little, if anything, to do with the definition of alternatives (agenda control) and may or may not have direct access to the board for providing them with information. Hence, the superintendent has the potential to reduce the resources and methods available to the school business official with respect to his/her ability to exert influence on the board of education.

It is suggested that future investigations be conducted to investigate the effect that the superintendent and his/her "modus operandi" have on the school business official's potential for influence in board decision-making.

Personal Characteristics

As so clearly pointed out in the review of the literature, many attempts at the classification of variables involved in the influence process make reference to a "formal" power structure and an "informal" power structure (e.g., Dahl, 1970; Mechanic, 1962; Tannenbaum, 1968; etc.). The former refers to variables which are specific to the role and the organization. The latter refers to variables or characteristics which are specific to the individuals involved.

This investigation and most others which have addressed power and influence in the school setting have addressed only a few variables and those were part of the "formal" power structure. It is

suggested that future investigations which address the personal characteristics of school business officials would be very beneficial to the profession.

More specifically, it is suggested that school business officials who are deemed to be very successful (whether through successful influence attempts or by other criteria) be evaluated with respect to their professional orientation, experience, and other more personal characteristics, in an attempt to identify those variables which lead to success and optimum performance.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Validation Process Documentation

Berrien
Springs

PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(616) 471-2291

October 1, 1981

Dear

As indicated during our recent conversation, I am in the process of constructing a research instrument to be used in conjunction with my doctoral dissertation. It is my hope that you will be able to help me with the identification and validation of questionnaire items by completing a prescribed evaluation process for each of eight topical issues and their respective item statements.

The first page of the enclosed packet provides you with some general information about the proposed investigation and the goal for this particular step in the construction of the instrument. The second page contains the instructions you will need in order to complete the evaluation process. The remaining pages (pink) are each headed with one of eight topical issues and each contains one situational item statement. Using the instructions and criteria provided, please evaluate each issue and each item statement. Your evaluation responses should be recorded on the pink sheets simply by circling a number (1-5) for each evaluation criterion.

When you have finished the evaluation process, please return all pages containing your responses to me or notify me and I will pick them up.

Thank you very much for helping. The time and effort you contribute will be of valuable assistance and is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Robert D. Fein
Assistant Superintendent

Joe A. Schaefer, Superintendent of Schools
Robert D. Fein, Assistant Superintendent
Aurelia R. Holman, Director of Community Education
Lola Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Topash, Coordinator of Special Education
Bonita Paustian, Supervisor of Health Services

GENERAL INFORMATION

PURPOSE: The final form questionnaire evolving from this process will be administered to the presidents of boards of education and the school business officials of selected Michigan school districts. These individuals will be asked to make responses indicating varying degrees of perceived influence in specific decision-making situations. The task of this validation process is to define those specific decision-making situations.

THE SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIAL: Although the official title may vary from situation to situation, for the purpose of this investigation the school business official is the central office administrator whose responsibilities generally include budgeting, accounting, insurance and risk management, negotiations, investment of surplus funds, plant management, and supervision of noncertificated personnel.

Because of your specific involvement in education you are being asked to aid in the process of determining if the issues specified herein are relevant and whether or not certain situations evolving from those issues pertain to the job responsibilities of the school business official.

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION: The terminology used to describe this group of individuals varies also; but in Michigan the term refers to the seven-member governing board for each local school district.

Boards of education generally consist of representatives of the community who are not trained in the field of education. And, since board presidents are to be respondents in this investigation, the validation process must help provide assurance that questionnaire items are clear, concise, and free of educational jargon.

FINAL FORM RESPONSE SCALE: During the actual data collection process respondents will be asked to react on a 5-point response scale as to amounts of influence perceived in each specified decision-making situation.

The 5-point response scale utilized for each questionnaire item will be as follows: (1) no influence, (2) a little influence, (3) some influence, (4) considerable influence, and (5) a great deal of influence.

INSTRUCTIONS AND DEFINITIONS
OF EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Step 1: Each of the following pages is headed with a topical issue. On the scale provided, please indicate your impression as to the relevance of that issue. More specifically:

Relevance: Is the issue of contemporary importance to school board members and school administrators in Michigan?

Step 2: Each of the following pages contains a situational item statement related to the topical issue which heads the page. On the scales provided, please evaluate each item as to its clarity, readability, representativeness, pertinence, and answerability. More specifically:

Clarity: Is the item clear and concise?

Readability: Is the terminology used appropriate for the target audience (i.e., school business officials and board of education presidents)?

Representativeness: Does the situational item statement adequately represent the issue from which it was derived?

Pertinence: Does this item pertain to the job responsibilities of the school business official?

Answerability: Can the item statement be responded to in terms of amount of influence perceived in that specific situation?

Notes: While performing the evaluation process, please feel free to refer back to these instructions and definitions of evaluative criteria.

Any comments or questions you may have about an issue and/or the items listed may be written on that page. But, please mark your responses in each category first.

Issue H: BORROWING / INVESTING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

Item H-2: When the Board is considering whether to borrow against state aid or against anticipated tax revenues

CLARITY: 1 2 3 4 5
*Unclear,
 Not Concise* ←————→ *Very Clear,
 Concise*

READABILITY: 1 2 3 4 5
*Not
 Appropriate* ←————→ *Very
 Appropriate*

REPRESENTATIVENESS: 1 2 3 4 5
*Not
 Very Well* ←————→ *Very
 Well*

PERTINENCE: 1 2 3 4 5
*Not
 Pertinent* ←————→ *Very
 Pertinent*

ANSWERABILITY: 1 2 3 4 5
*Not
 Very Well* ←————→ *Very
 Well*

Table 13
Validation Process Results
Issues A-C

Issues and Items	Board Panelists					Superintendent Panelists					Totals
	B-1	B-2	B-3	B-4	B-5	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	
ISSUE A ^a	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	45
Item 1	21	25	17	19	24	25	22	23	23	21	220
Item 2 ^b	25	24	21	22	23	21	23	24	23	23	229
Item 3	25	23	17	21	19	18	20	25	23	21	212
Item 4 ^b	25	23	22	13	24	23	25	25	24	25	229
Item 5 ^b	25	25	16	21	24	16	25	24	25	25	226
ISSUE B	5	4	5	2	3	4	4	3	4	5	39
Item 1	23	16	20	25	16	14	19	17	17	19	186
Item 2	25	25	23	25	23	23	18	16	25	25	228
Item 3	25	20	18	13	22	24	23	20	25	25	215
Item 4	25	20	23	22	24	17	21	20	25	25	222
Item 5	25	19	21	20	22	16	19	23	21	23	209
ISSUE C ^a	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	50
Item 1 ^b	25	25	25	25	24	19	17	19	25	23	227
Item 2	25	22	19	15	23	22	25	20	25	16	212
Item 3 ^b	25	21	25	21	22	23	19	18	20	21	215
Item 4	25	25	25	20	24	16	23	18	19	19	214
Item 5 ^b	25	21	23	21	22	22	25	21	23	23	226

^a Issue retained for use on instrument.

^b Item retained for use on instrument.

Table 14
Validation Process Results
Issues D-F

Issues and Items	Board Panelists					Superintendent Panelists					Totals
	B-1	B-2	B-3	B-4	B-5	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	
ISSUE D ^a	5	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	5	5	47
Item 1 ^b	25	25	21	16	22	23	25	18	16	19	210
Item 2	25	24	17	11	21	19	17	18	16	22	190
Item 3	25	18	17	21	23	20	22	19	15	20	200
Item 4 ^b	25	22	16	21	25	23	14	18	22	20	206
Item 5 ^b	25	24	23	18	25	15	23	18	20	19	210
ISSUE E	5	5	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	41
Item 1	23	20	22	25	21	14	15	18	22	22	202
Item 2	25	19	18	21	25	16	13	21	25	22	205
Item 3	21	21	21	17	24	21	17	19	19	22	202
Item 4	25	19	25	25	25	17	25	21	22	22	226
Item 5	21	20	18	12	24	23	21	23	20	20	202
ISSUE F ^a	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	3	5	46
Item 1 ^b	25	21	25	20	24	24	25	25	22	23	234
Item 2 ^b	25	19	24	25	25	22	25	19	23	25	232
Item 3	25	19	23	20	25	23	25	23	24	22	229
Item 4	16	22	21	19	24	24	19	24	23	21	213
Item 5 ^b	25	19	23	25	25	25	20	25	24	25	236

^aIssue retained for use on instrument.

^bItem retained for use on instrument.

Table 15
Validation Process Results
Issues G-H

Issues and Items	Board Panelists					Superintendent Panelists					Totals
	B-1	B-2	B-3	B-4	B-5	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	
ISSUE G	5	5	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	5	40
Item 1	23	25	19	21	21	16	18	14	24	25	206
Item 2	25	24	24	18	24	19	16	22	24	23	219
Item 3	25	21	24	20	23	25	20	21	24	25	228
Item 4	25	25	24	19	20	17	20	19	25	24	218
Item 5	25	21	25	15	17	21	21	20	25	22	212
ISSUE H ^a	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	48
Item 1 ^b	25	24	25	25	25	24	24	20	25	25	242
Item 2 ^b	25	25	23	25	25	22	24	19	25	25	238
Item 3	25	21	23	25	25	25	17	18	25	22	226
Item 4 ^b	25	21	21	25	22	23	22	18	25	25	227
Item 5	25	23	24	25	21	21	18	16	25	25	223

^aIssue retained for use on instrument.

^bItem retained for use on instrument.

Appendix B

Pilot Test Documentation



Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

College of Education
Department of
Educational Leadership

I am in the process of pilot testing the research instrument to be used in conjunction with my doctoral dissertation at Western Michigan University. It is my hope that you are willing to help in this process by completing the enclosed questionnaire. It should only take about 20 minutes of your time.

Due to the ever-increasing complexity of the social, financial, technical, and political environments in which school systems must function, school boards are having to rely more and more on the expertise of key administrative personnel during decision-making. The school business official, especially, has come to "center stage" in board decision-making because of the technical aspects and uncertainties associated with the responsibilities of that job. It is the nature and extent of that reliance relationship which is the focal point of my doctoral investigation.

Your participation in this study is, of course, optional. If you choose not to participate, though, I would appreciate very much having you give me some sort of indication as to the reasons. I can assure you that all questionnaire responses will be held in the strictest confidence. Data gathered via this instrument and similar ones will be reported only in summary form and in no way will serve to identify individual respondents or their school districts. Questionnaires are coded for data management and follow-up purposes only.

Your responses are very important! Please take the time to complete the questionnaire and return it today.

I thank you in advance for your valuable assistance and a prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Fein
Assistant Superintendent
Berrien Springs Public Schools

Richard E. Munsterman, Ph.D.
Professor of Educational Leadership

INSTRUCTIONS

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

NOTE: This questionnaire is to be completed by the school business official.

The school business official may be known by any number of titles, such as assistant superintendent, business manager, administrative assistant, or even superintendent. For the purpose of this study, the school business official is the central office administrator whose responsibilities lie primarily with the business related functions of budgeting, accounting, investments, negotiations, insurance, plant management, and supervision of noncertificated personnel.

Part I

The first portion of the attached questionnaire (yellow) seeks to determine the degree of influence you believe you would have in fifteen (15) specific board decision-making situations. For clarification purposes, the situations are categorized (three each) into five issues.

Read each situation carefully. Circle the number (1-5) which best indicates the degree of influence you believe you would have in determining the outcome of each specific situation.

Part II

The last page of this questionnaire (green) seeks specific demographic data about you. Please be sure to answer all questions. Feel free to write comments anywhere on the questionnaire.

Use the enclosed, stamped envelope to return the questionnaire.

ALL RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY!

Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me:

Bob Fein, Assistant Superintendent
Berrien Springs Public Schools
Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

(616) 471-2891 or (616) 471-7533

INSTRUCTIONS

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NOTE: This questionnaire is to be completed by the school board president.

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* * * * *

The attached questionnaire seeks to determine the degree of influence you believe your school business official to have in fifteen (15) specific board decision-making situations. For clarification purposes, the situations are categorized (three each) into five issues.

Read each situation carefully. Circle the number (1-5) which best indicates the degree of influence you believe your school business official would have in determining the outcome of each specific situation.

Feel free to write comments anywhere on the questionnaire.

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Berrien Springs Public Schools
Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

(616) 471-2891 or (616) 471-7533

Issue E: BORROWING/INVESTING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

What degree of influence do you believe you would have in determining the outcome of the following decision-making situations?

Situation 13: When the school board is considering how much and when the school system should borrow to meet cash flow obligations

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 14: When the school board is considering whether to borrow against anticipated state aid or against anticipated tax revenues

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 15: When the school board is considering whether or not the district's surplus cash should be distributed among several banking institutions and which institutions should be included

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. What is your official title? _____
2. How many years experience do you have
in educational administration? _____
3. How many years have you been employed
in your current school system? _____
4. If you had to categorize your professional
orientation, which of the following would
you choose?
 - _____ training and experience more in the
field of business than in education
 - _____ training and experience more in the
field of education than in business

THANK YOU.

Appendix C

Analysis of Pilot Test Results

Table 16

Analysis of Pilot Test Data: Item-Total Correlations
and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients

Item number	Item-total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
1	.5938	.91575
2	.6470	.91431
3	.3981	.92005
4	.7181	.91267
5	.8713	.90639
6	.7598	.90985
7	.6556	.91509
8	.7836	.90887
9	.6450	.91624
10	.7381	.91312
11	.7674	.91000
12	.7358	.91090
13	.6418	.91431
14	.6684	.91355
15	.7207	.91156
$\bar{X} = .6896$		Overall Alpha = .91826

Appendix D

Final Form Questionnaires



Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

College of Education
Department of
Educational Leadership

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Read each situation carefully. Circle the number (1-5) which best indicates the degree of influence you believe you would have in determining the outcome of each specific situation.

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Use the enclosed, stamped envelope to return the questionnaire.

ALL RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY!

Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me:

Bob Fein, Assistant Superintendent
Berrien Springs Public Schools
Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

(616) 471-2891 or (616) 471-7533

Issue A: ENERGY CONSERVATION

What degree of influence do you believe you would have in determining the outcome of the following decision-making situations?

Situation 1: When the school board is considering whether or not to eliminate or cut back on security lighting as a cost saving move

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 2: When the school board is considering the curtailment or elimination of out-of-district field trips

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 3: When the school board is considering a roof repair/replacement plan

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Issue B: FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

What degree of influence do you believe you would have in determining the outcome of the following decision-making situations?

Situation 4: When the school board is considering the level at which to hold the district's liquid fund equity (cash reserves)

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 5: When the school board is considering whether or not to implement a "pay to play" policy to supplement the costs of interscholastic athletics

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 6: When the school board is considering the time to grant administrative pay raises and the size of those raises

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Issue C: DECLINING ENROLLMENT

What degree of influence do you believe you would have in determining the outcome of the following decision-making situations?

Situation 7: When the school board is considering the establishment of a minimum for student enrollment in a class at the secondary level

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 8: When the school board is considering whether or not to take steps to encourage the enrollment of tuition students from other districts

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 9: When the school board is trying to establish, in the absence of contractual definitions, what criteria should be used in determining which laid-off employees are brought back when positions become available

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Issue D: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

What degree of influence do you believe you would have in determining the outcome of the following decision-making situations?

Situation 10: When the school board is considering who will be their chief negotiator

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 11: When the school board is considering whether or not they should be bound by a cost-of-living escalator in employee contracts

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

Situation 12: When the school board is considering how much is "too much" with regard to bargaining teacher salaries and benefits

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Little Influence</i>	<i>Some Influence</i>	<i>Considerable Influence</i>	<i>Great Influence</i>

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Situation 12: When the school board is considering how much is "too much" with regard to bargaining teacher salaries and benefits

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Situation 14: When the school board is considering whether to borrow against anticipated state aid or against anticipated tax revenues

1	2	3	4	5
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