ABSTRACT
         Perceptions of the political behavior of
superintendents in New Mexico vary widely throughout the state.
Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather information from
superintendents, school board chairmen, and state legislators
concerning the frequency, extent, and kinds of political activity in
which superintendents were involved. Four kinds of activity were
assessed: involvement in issue definition and proposal formulation,
the mobilization of support for or opposition to policy proposals,
attempts to influence policy as an individual rather than as a member
of an association, and activity affecting specific fiscal issues.
Superintendents were classified on a continuum from highly active to
relatively inactive. The degree to which a superintendent was active
was taken to reflect the superintendent's own beliefs concerning
appropriate levels of political activity as well as those of his
community and school board. Superintendents at both ends of the
continuum saw themselves as less active than they were perceived to
be by either legislators or board chairmen. The training and
experience levels of superintendents appeared to affect the extent of
their activity. Those closer to the state capitol proved more active
than those located farther away, perhaps reflecting greater community
support for political activity. Five pages of references are
appended. (PGD)

INFLUENCING STATE FISCAL POLICYMAKING:

THE SUPERINTENDENT AS LOBBYIST

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Overview

Public education has long been influenced by interactions among local, state and federal political systems. As local school districts have relied more heavily on state and federal sources of revenue, and as the federal government has endeavored to turn responsibility for programs and funds to states, an even more pronounced role in education has emerged for state legislatures and departments of education (see, for example, Campbell and Mazzoni, 1976; Iannaconne, 1982; Lutz and Hess, 1982; Fuhrman, 1982).

Indeed, given state constitutional responsibility for the establishment and operation of public schools, the state political system is the "major arena for making educational policies." (Thompson, 1976, p. 95) State legislatures, having plenary power over local school systems, play a vital role in the determination of educational policy. As observed by Aufderheide (1976, p. 202), "decisions of major impact, especially financial ones, are the substance of legislative activity."

The critical importance of superintendent involvement in state-level fiscal policymaking has been recognized for several decades. The superintendent is the "critical nexus" (Kirby, 1971, p.1) between the local district and outside agencies. Bailey et al. (1962, p. vii) predicted early in the 1960's that if state aid to education were to expand, it would be "because politically active schoolmen have the knowledge and skill to marshall effective political power." While it is acknowledged that superintendents have assumed a more active role in state-level policymaking, the action zone (McGivney and Moynihan, 1972; Boyd, 1976) of acceptable behavior in the political arena remains obscure.

The purpose of this study of the involvement of New Mexico superintendents in legislative fiscal policymaking for education is to examine this action zone and "linkages" (Iannaconne, 1967; Volp and Greenfield, 1978) between superintendents and legislators. Surveys of all state legislators, school board chairpersons, and superintendents in the state provide insights into factors which shape political behavior of superintendents. Subsequent interviews with these key actors from selected school districts, and with officials in various state educational and legislative agencies, yield a better understanding of the action zone.

Superintendent Political Behavior: An Evolution

Historical studies (Gilland, 1935; Reller, 1935: Griffiths, 1966: Callahan, 1967; and Campbell, et al., 1980) identify phases in the evolution of the superintendency during which expected political involvement shifted from "apolitical" to "active". While assuming greater responsibilities during the first stage from 1837 to 1909, superintendents were to remove themselves from the political arena. The "businessman" superintendent, emerging during the

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second period from 1910 to 1945, placed primary emphasis on efficiency in operations. As "custodians of schools", superintendents were to refrain from political activity.

The third period, from the 1940's to 1960's is identified by Griffiths as "one of ferment" (p. vii). Expectations for superintendent behavior varied sharply from rural to urban and from small to large school districts as the nation's economy continued its transition from farm to industry. Roles of superintendents and school boards in making and implementing policy at the local level were the subject of study (see Gross, et al., 1958), and superintendent involvement in state-level decision making continued to be discouraged.

From the 1960's to the present, superintendents have expanded their role as chief executive officers within local school systems, to become the principal liaison between local schools and other levels of government. Superintendents' views of themselves shifted from being soley directors of the organization to serving as a link between school and society (Goldhammer, et al., 1967, p. 135).

Throughout this evolution, superintendents themselves have maintained an image that education is apolitical (Bailey, et al., 1962; Iannaconne, 1967; Scribner and Englert, 1977; Wirt and Kirst, 1972 and 1982). Professional associations such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) counseled superintendents to "keep out of politics" in their literature as late as the 1960's. It was suggested by the AASA that contacts with state officials be limited to obtaining interpretations of laws, statutes or rulings. While many educators themselves believe this apolitical myth (Iannaconne, 1967), in reality "the belief that politics and public education are separate or even separable, could not be further from the truth" (Masters, et al., 1964, p. 3). Indeed, education is "one of the most thoroughly political enterprises in American life" (Bailey, et al., 1962, p. vii).

As the ideas about "schoolmen" and politics changed, so did the literature on the proper spheres of activities for superintendents. Initially, according to Scribner and Englert (1977), superintendents were encouraged to understand and participate in state legislative fiscal policymaking (e.g., Johnson, 1956; Bailey et al., 1962; Hunt, 1968; Wiley & Burlingame, 1969). Active involvement was deemed essential by the mid 1970's, as evidenced in a National School Board Association (NSBA, 1977) survey on roles of urban school superintendents. A large majority (80%) of respondents agreed it is crucial for superintendents to maintain direct contact with state legislators. Yet, as with the contrary view of the other twenty pecent of respondents, many superintendents today are not inclined to invade the state's turf (Wirt and Kirst, 1982, p. 231).

Superintendents use political activity in an attempt to manipulate the environment (Campbell, et al., 1980) in which schools function. Reporting findings of an interview with a retired superintendent in New York State, Volp and Greenfield (1978) stressed the political character of the superintendent's work environment, and the importance of linkages between local school superintendents and state legislators.

While these researchers note the importance of superintendents' political

involvement at the state level (see also Billy, 1978, and Hanson, 1979), their effectiveness as lobbyists has been questioned. Several early investigations framed Moore's (1970) conclusion that superintendent associations were either not active at the state level or were ineffective in influencing legislators' views on educational issues. Similarly, superintendents were viewed by legislators as ineffective in politics both as group and as individuals in subsequent analyses by Robinson (Nebraska, 1971), Depree (Michigan, 1971), Dunkin (Iowa, 1974), Pigg (Missouri, 1975), and Beavers (Mississippi, 1979). A common finding surfaces from these studies: superintendents, as perceived by legislators, are not as involved in or as effective in influencing policy development as they intended to be or as they reported themselves to be.

Shaping Superintendent Political Behavior

Activities associated with the control of policy and decision making fall within the sphere of political behavior. Superintendents involve themselves in politics whenever they "elicit support from, appease the demands of, or communicate with an individual, group or organization" (Kirby, 1971, p.2) to promote the interests of public education.

For purposes of this study, political behavior, also termed political involvement, is limited to active lobbying of state legislators by superintendents. Lobbying refers to "any activities engaged in by superintendents in attempting to influence state action" (Billy, 1978, p. 70). Activities studied are limited to open, forthright attempts to influence legislators, rather than another type of political behavior termed "sinister" by Rozelle (1968). While this might occur in state-level policy development, this aspect of political behavior is not the focus of this investigation.

Political behavior of superintendents is shaped in large part by community expectations. What Charters (1953) referred to as a "margin of tolerance", was termed "zone of tolerance" by McGivney and Moynihan (1972) and later defined by Boyd (1976, p. 551) as "The latitude or area of maneuverability granted (or yielded) to the leadership of the schools by the local community." Behavior is a function of perception, defined by Nord (1976, p. 22) as the process by which an individual gives meaning to his environment. Thus, actions of participants in politics are largely a function of perceptions of other participants' actions and attitudes (Wright, 1978, p. 10).

A superintendent's political behavior appears to be limited by two sets of perceptions -- his/her own beliefs about the degree to which involvement should (or could) be tolerated, and beliefs of other participants in local and state political systems as to acceptable superintendent actions. According to this view, a superintendent "acts" somewhere between these perceptions -- that is, within an "action zone" of acceptable behavior.

To understand limits of behavior in state-level policymaking, one must be aware of political cultures of the state and its various communities. Political culture consists of assumptions about the political world: "It's a short hand expression for a mind set which has the effect of limiting attention to less than the full range of alternative behaviors, problems and solutions which are

logically possible." (Elkins and Simeon, 1979, p. 128) In essence, people in a given culture will take for granted a particular course of action or consider only a few alternatives.

It is the synthesis of three subcultures--individualistic, moralistic and traditionalistic--which largely shapes a state's public policy (Elazar, 1966, 1972, 1980; Sharansky, 1970; Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976; Thompson, 1976; Wirt, 1976; Kincaid, 1980; and Garcia & Hain, 1981). Policy development at both local and state levels reflect regional and state values and expectations expressed within these subcultures; resulting policy decisions are generally consistent with regional and state norms (see, Thompson, 1976; Wirt, 1976).

States and localities, by virtue of political subcultures, have certain dominant traditions about what constitutes appropriate governmental action and acceptable political behavior of public officials. One would anticipate that superintendents' perceptions of local community and state values, beliefs and expectations would partially shape their behavior in the political arena.

If one assumes that public school superintendents have a continuum of choices, ranging from being actively a part of state legislative fiscal policymaking to merely being custodians of local school districts as dictated by others, choices made by superintendents fall within an "action zone" of political behavior. Limits placed on this action zone appear to be defined in large part by superintendents' perceptions of acceptable behavior as defined by others in the political arena. Moreover, characteristics of individual superintendents themselves and of school districts within which they work further define this zone of maneuverability (see, for example, Wiley, 1966; DePree, 1971; Billy, 1978; and Beavers, 1979). This "action zone" and forces which appear to shape or define limits on superintendent political behavior are depicted in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 ab ~ here

An Analysis of Superintendent Political Behavior

The action zone of political involvement of superintendents is the core of this study of politics in New Mexico. Political behavior of superintendents--the dependent variable in data analyses--is determined by perceptions of superintendent involvement in state fiscal policy formulation. Superintendents, school board chairpersons and legislators identified behaviors of superintendents on a Political Response Survey (modeled after Wiley, 1966; DePree, 1971; and Billy, 1978).

Perceptions of political behavior are analyzed within the construct of policymaking processes discussed by Campbell and Mazzoni (1976). An additional category of behavior includes activities related to specific fiscal issues of concern to educators in 1984. The analysis which follows is thus framed by perceptions of political behavior in four classifications:

1. Issue Definition/Proposal Formulation is the process by which preferences of individuals and groups become translated into political issues which may then be developed into specific proposals for legislative action (Campbell and Mazzoni, 1976, p. 7; Billy, 1978, p. 71). Perceptions of superintendents' political behavior in this area is determined by scores on 15 items of the Political Response Survey.

2. Support Mobilization is the process by which individuals and groups are activated to support or oppose alternative policy proposals (Campbell and Mazzoni, 1976, p. 7; Billy, 1978, p. 72). This aspect of political activity includes the use of informal networks and formal organizations, and the encouragement of staff, school board members and citizens to contact legislators to lobby for or against specific issues. A total of 17 items of the survey instruments provide insights into superintendent political behavior related to Support Mobilization.

3. Individual Political Activity refers to a superintendent's behavior as an individual (as opposed to participation in networks or associations) to influence policy development. Behavior associated with Individual Political Activity is depicted by responses to 29 items of the questionnaires.

4. Specific Fiscal Issues is a category of political behavior focused directly on those concerns of educators which received state-level attention prior to or during the 1984 legislature. Funding of New Mexico public schools is largely the responsibility of the state legislature, particulary since passage of an equalization formula[2] in 1974. Proposals for modifications in the formula each year are the subject of intense analysis during the interim between legislative sessions. Political behavior related to fiscal issues, as of great interest to local school boards and superintendents, complements Campbell and Mazzoni's three classifications of policy development activities, and contributes to a more complete understanding of superintendent involvement in the formulation of fiscal policy at the state level.

Specific Fiscal Issues includes eight concerns to school districts: the "per unit" funding level within the funding formula; teacher and administrator salaries; funding for the Critical Capital Outlay Act; receipt of P.L. 94-142 funds for special education; merger of the administration[3] of educational program and finance within one state agency; the Governor's tax reform package; the service requirement of the Education Retirement Act; and the size of districts' cash balances. Perceptions of superintendent political behavior related to these issues are identified in responses to 10 items of the survey forms.

The study thus investigates the significance of differences between and among perceptions of superintendent political behavior by three groups of actors: superintendents, school board chairpersons and legislators. The analysis of perceived political behavior within the action zone focuses on involvement in three policy formulation processes and in regard to eight fiscal issues. It was hypothesized that:

There is no difference in political behavior of superintendents as

perceived by superintendents themselves, by legislators or by school board
chairpersons, for the following categories of activity:

    Issue Definition/Proposal Formulation;
    Support Mobilization;
    Individual Political Activity; and
    Specific Fiscal Issues.

Beyond describing the action zone of superintendent political behavior, the
study examines forces which shape this "zone of maneuverability". Various
individual and district characteristics (as depicted in Figure 1) are
independent variables in data analyses. It was hypothesized that:

There is no difference in political behavior of superintendents as
perceived by superintendents themselves on the basis of the following
characteristics:

Individual

    Age;
    Recency of Degree;
    Type of Higher Education Degree;
    Total Years Administrative Experience;
    Total Number of Years as a Superintendent; and
    Years in Current Superintendency.

District

    Community Population;
    School District Enrollment;
    Community Isolation;
    Distance from the Capitol;
    Distance from an Interstate; and
    Political Culture.

A combination of survey and case study methodolgies (encouraged by Zeigler,
1972) is employed to collect data on political behavior. Legislators,
superintendents and school board chairpersons in all New Mexico school districts
were sent similar forms of the Political Response Survey following the 1984
legislative session. Of the 88 school district superintendents and board
chairpersons and of the 112 state legislators surveyed, a total of 60 (68%)
superintendents, 14 (16%) chairpersons, and 37 (33%) legislators responded with
completed questionnaires.

The three forms of the Political Response Survey consisted of a five-point
Likert Scale designed to assess perceptions of subjects as objectively as
possible. Following a pilot test with a group of twenty-five prospective school
superintendents, care was taken to word items on instruments to obtain true
attitudes and perceptions, thus ensuring the validity of responses. Subsequent
to data collection, reliability coefficients were computed from a covariance
matrix for each political area. This added check on reliability was

necessitated since several items fit (and were used in) more than one category of political activity. Reliability coefficients were: Issue Definition/Proposal Formulation, .93; Support Mobilization, .91; Individual Political Activity, .96; and Specific Fiscal Issues, .93. Each of the four subareas of the Political Response Survey thus had reliability coefficients of over .90, which, according to Gay (1976), is "acceptable for any test".

Selection of superintendents for the second phase of data collection was facilitated by a panel of ten "experts", including three directors of state education or legislative agencies, three directors of professional associations, one former legislator, one former superintendent, and two university professors. Each was interviewed regarding superintendent political behavior, and was asked to identify which superintendents were most and least politically active. From a composite ranking, two sets of districts (two active and two inactive superintendents in districts matched by community size and political culture) were selected for followup interviews with respective superintendents, board chairpersons, and legislators to add richness and amplify findings from the survey data analyses.

Of the subjects interviewed, all superintendents and two each of the legislators and board chairs had previously returned their forms of the survey instrument. The four superintendents had quite similar backgrounds. They had taught from 7 to 10 years in at least two other New Mexico districts, had been principals in the same district in which they initially became superintendents, and had earned Masters degrees within the state. As might have been anticipated, one difference in career patterns was detected: the politically active superintendents moved through the ranks more quickly than did their less politically active counterparts.

Although totally unexpected, it was reassuring (given the low response rate to the survey) that board chairpersons interviewed had similar educational backgrounds, were of similar age and had similar board of education experiences to those chairs who participated in the survey. The legislators chosen for interviews had diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from completing high school to earning a doctorate. Three legislators had prior education-related professional experience.

While structured by an interview schedule, discussions were sufficiently unstructured to permit the subject or interviewer to amplify particular topics. Contrary to initial expectations, less active superintendents and their board chairs were not reluctant to discuss state-level political involvement. Comments from those interviewed provide an additional dimension to analyses of survey data.

Political Behavior of New Mexico Superintendents

Differences in perceptions of superintendents, school board chairs, and legislators are analyzed for two groups: "high involvement," those with political response scores in the top 20% of scores for the four categories of political behavior; and "low involvement," those with scores in the bottom 20% for each of the four classes of political involvement. Measures of central

tendency and t-tests for each separate group of respondents are presented in Table 1. Due to the large variation within groups, the more conservative separate variance estimate, rather than a pooled variance estimate, is used to determine significance of differences.

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Insert Table 1 about here
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The wide range between means of scores of those who perceive "low" and "high" involvement of superintendents in each category of political behavior reveals a large action zone. Political activities of "low" involvement superintendents are clearly different from those of "high" involvement superintendents in the view of each respondent group. Differences in mean scores are most extreme for perceptions of legislators and superintendents themselves (as evidenced by levels of significance of .001 for all classes of political behavior). Differences in perceptions of superintendent involvement by their school board chairs, while statistically significant, are not as extreme as those evidenced by other respondents.

Superintendents were perceived to be more active in the categories of political behavior identified by Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) than in regard to specific fiscal issues of concern in 1984. More detailed analysis than that evident in Table 1 reveals that the following issues stimulated greatest involvement of superintendents: determination of the guaranteed funding level, adequacy of salaries, receipt of P.L. 94-142 funds, service requirement of the retirement act, and tax reform proposals. In contrast, several issues received only limited attention by superintendents in their legislative contacts: critical capital outlay act, merger of the administration of educational program and finance in one agency, and district cash balances. Mean scores of high and low involvement groups were lower for fiscal issues than for other areas of behavior; nevertheless, differences in superintendent involvement related to this area again demonstrates the wide range of behavior permitted.

To the degree to which these survey items define an action zone of political behavior, findings reported in Table 1 indicate that the "zone of maneuverability" in the State of New Mexico is perceived by superintendents, board chairs and legislators as permitting a wide range of political activity. Superintendents are seen as engaging in widely divergent activities associated with the development of proposals, with mobilization of support or opposition to proposed policy, with direct individual involvement, and with political involvement around fiscal issues of immediate concern. The latitude in permissible behavior appears to be quite large—much larger than originally anticipated. Moreover, while differences between mean scores are about 100 for respondent groups in three areas of political behavior, a larger range in scores in Individual Political Activity is evidenced.

These differences in perceptions within respondent groups is more dramatic than differences between participating superintendents, board chairs and legislators. Comparisons between perceptions of superintendents and legislators, board chairs and legislators, and superintendents and board chairs,

Political Behavior and Respondant Group (n)	Political Response Score		Separate Variance Estimate	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Test	2-Tailed Probability
I. Issue definition/proposal formulation				
Superintendent				
Low involvement (18)	22.22	10.36	± 10.20	0.001[a]
High involvement (10)	124.80	30.86		
School board chair				
Low involvement (3)	15.00	13.07	± 5.41	0.007[b]
High involvement (4)	137.25	42.60		
Legislator				
Low involvement (8)	16.13	9.58	± 11.24	0.001[a]
High involvement (9)	146.44	33.25		
II. Support mobilization				
Superintendent				
Low involvement (12)	11.50	7.86	± 10.01	0.001[a]
High involvement (14)	105.28	34.00		
School board chair				
Low involvement (3)	12.00	10.39	± 3.38	0.040[c]
High involvement (4)	136.25	72.54		
Legislator				
Low involvement (7)	6.29	3.09	± 17.85	0.001[a]
High involvement (8)	131.88	19.63		
III. Individual political activity				
Superintendent				
Low involvement (12)	26.00	15.63	± 7.76	0.001[a]
High involvement (13)	194.92	76.81		
School board chair				
Low involvement (3)	20.00	19.97	± 3.94	0.024[c]
High involvement (4)	224.00	100.82		
Legislator				
Low involvement (7)	21.71	13.36	± 12.53	0.001[a]
High involvement (8)	271.13	54.46		
IV. Specific fiscal issues				
Superintendent				
Low involvement (13)	10.15	7.50	± 9.00	0.001[a]
High involvement (15)	82.40	30.01		
School board chair				
Low involvement (3)	15.00	13.08	± 4.68	0.009[b]
High involvement (4)	101.50	33.75		
Legislator				
Low involvement (7)	6.00	6.00	± 13.21	0.001[a]
High involvement (8)	133.63	26.57		

[a] Significant at p<.001   [b] Significant at p<.01   [c] Significant at p<.05

reveal quite similar perceptions of superintendent political behavior (see Table 2). These first two comparisons include all respondents; the latter comparison is made between superintendents and board chairs of the ten districts for which both officials responded with usable data.

Insert Table 2 about here

For each category of political behavior, it appears that school board chairs and legislators, as well as the superintendents and board chairs from matched districts, view the involvement of superintendents similarly. There is little difference between mean responses of groups, and only one statistical test reveals a significant difference (p<.10) between responses. In general, these representatives of communities perceive superintendent behavior in much the same way as do superintendents themselves.

The one area of political behavior for which a significant difference is apparent between responses of superintendents and legislators is Individual Political Activity. While there is a tendency for legislators to view superintendents to be more active in each of the other categories than do superintendents themselves, it is only this area for which the difference in means scores is statistically significant.

Interviews with political actors in the four selected school districts substantiate this finding. Legislators and board chairs consistently viewed superintendents to be more politically active (and influential) than did the superintendents. When asked about personal contacts made during the past year to express opinions on education-related issues, for example, active superintendents responded that they had initiated such contacts with about ten different legislators. Their counterpart legislators and board chairs reported that these superintendents had contacted between twenty and thirty different legislators. In contrast, less active superintendents contacted only one to four legislators (all of whom served their respective districts); again, their board chairpersons and legislators reported these superintendents to have contacted five or more legislators.

Purposes of contacts were discussed by legislators as related to Issue Definition/Proposal Formulation, Individual Political Activity, and Specific Fiscal Issues. Superintendents, on the other hand, uniformly viewed these contacts to be primarily tied to Support Mobilization. It is interesting to note that both in the data analysis (see Table 2) and in interviews, legislators viewed superintendents to be more actively engaged in Individual Political Activity than did superintendents.

The panel of experts discussed the importance of professional associations and informal networks in state-level policymaking. First, issues are often raised and discussed within such groups before being raised in the political arena. Often it is inappropriate for a superintendent to contact a legislator on a given issue; yet an administrator association can raise the issue with no fear of backlash. Second, superintendents of comparable districts exchange information to help in decision making or in public relations. Clearly,

Table 2. Perceptions of Superintendent Political Behavior--
Differences _Between_ Respondent Groups

Political Behavior and Comparison Groups (n)	Political Response Score		Separate Variance Estimate	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Test	2-Tailed Probability
I. Issue definition/proposal formulation				
A. Superintendent (60)	55.28	37.75	± 0.68	0.497[e]
Legislator (37)	61.48	46.67		
B. School board chair (14)	61.93	42.19	± 0.03	0.97[e]
Legislator (37)	61.49	46.67		
*C. Superintendent (10)	73.70	50.65	± 0.17	0.87[e]
School board chair (10)	77.10	39.38		
II. Support mobilization				
A. Superintendent (60)	50.68	37.91	± 0.15	0.879[e]
Legislator (37)	52.11	48.11		
B. School board chair (14)	67.29	60.11	± 0.85	0.41[e]
Legislator (37)	52.11	48.11		
*C. Superintendent (10)	71.10	51.06	± 0.52	0.61[e]
School board chair (10)	84.50	62.54		
III. Individual political activity				
A. Superintendent (60)	90.33	69.86	± 1.77	0.081[d]
Legislator (37)	122.54	95.80		
B. School board chair (14)	111.79	94.20	± 0.36	0.72[e]
Legislator (37)	122.54	95.81		
*C. Superintendent (10)	127.80	110.31	± 0.29	0.77[e]
School board chair (10)	141.30	94.40		
IV. Specific fiscal issues				
A. Superintendent (60)	38.77	31.15	± 1.06	0.294[e]
Legislator (37)	48.27	48.79		
B. School board chair (14)	57.64	39.07	± 0.71	0.482[e]
Legislator (37)	48.27	48.79		
*C. Superintendent (10)	60.50	49.38	± 0.19	0.85[e]
School board chair (10)	64.40	39.73		

* Comparison between responses of superintendents and school board chairs in ten matched districts.
[d] Significant at p<.10
[e] Not significant

networks are products of interest group activity, and reflect the need for
groups to form coalitions to augment their influence (see Harris, 1980;
Campbell, et al., 1980). New Mexico superintendents are most likely to form
coalitions around common needs of school districts in their region of the state.
The panel expressed agreement that networks are identified more with geography
than with issues, thus supporting Garcia's inclusion of an emergent
individualistic subculture to describe New Mexico politics in most regions of
the state.

An interesting difference between active and inactive superintendents
relative to association activities was noted in interviews. Less politically
active superintendents appear to rely more heavily on associations than do their
more active counterparts. While reporting it is "inappropriate to talk to
politicians in the community" or to "go chasing off to Santa Fe", less active
superintendents stated it is permissible to "work through professional
associations." Moreover, they noted that since legislators attend special
meetings of the associations, direct contact is not essential.

Politically active superintendents, on the other hand, are often asked by
the superintendents' association to contact legislators on particular issues of
concern. Their board chairs were unaware of, and their lesser active
counterpart superintendents had not received, such requests. Despite this
apparent high regard by associations for the ability of these more active
superintendents to mobilize support through such networks, these superintendents
appear to gravitate toward individual political involvement. In part they
expressed dissatisfaction with associations; one superintendent described the
superintendent association as too active and representative of only a limited
number of districts. This sentiment was echoed by a legislator who preferred to
hear from "his superintendent". He stated that when he heard from "more than
one superintendent" on a particular issue, and they said the same thing, he knew
that "the educational associations were in cahoots. It was not what the
superintendents thought--it was what the directors of the associations and a
small group of superintendents thought". These views of active superintendents
and this legislator confirm the observation of Pogrow and Garcia (1981, p. 192)
that New Mexico school administrators "appear to lobby primarily through their
legislators on a district-by-district, self-interest basis rather than by
relying on their statewide organization."

An active superintendent was described by the experts as being the "head of
a command post". The politically active superintendent makes sure legislators
receive information, establishes regular contact in a variety of settings, uses
opportunities to communicate needs of schools, shares positive aspects of school
programs with legislators, and promotes networks of other groups (principals,
parents and teachers) to communicate with legislators. A retired superintendent
who serves as director of an association commented, "they should and they do
build their relationships at home whenever the opportunity avails itself."
A large range of differences in behaviors of active and inactive
superintendents is apparent in comments of these educational and legislative
leaders. They observed that the majority of superintendents are only lightly
involved in state-level policymaking, commenting that they "lack an
understanding of" or do not "have the stomach" for state-level politics. The

majority of the experts questioned whether or not these superintendents even understand the state finance formula.

In contrast, they agreed that there is a group of superintendents which is extremely influential in public school finance. One agency official commented, "they seem to have an inordinate amount of influence with the legislature." The former legislator observed that these superintendents have so much influence that "they can really shut off something if they don't want it." A former superintendent who directs a state agency noted the legislative trust for this small group of well-respected superintendents:

> They're acknowledged as leaders and as knowledgeable
> persons. Legislators frequently do not want to talk to
> teachers. They believe that superintendents know the large
> scale issues, know what the needs are and will give them
> accurate information.

These insights support the findings of the survey data analyses. First, there is a very large range in political involvement of superintendents, and, second, superintendents (especially the politically active ones) rely primarily upon Individual Political Activity to influence legislators' views on issues of importance to schools. Indeed, the importance of being politically active is discussed by the director of a state-level association:

> We have small school districts. And that makes local
> elected officials close to the people that run the schools.
> Superintendents go out of their way to meet and deal with
> legislators. Superintendents understand very well the
> necessity for doing that. A superintendent understands that
> legislators are the people who make decisions about money
> matters.

Individual and District Characteristics Related to Political Behavior

A number of variables are included in this New Mexico study to assess relationships between perceived political behavior and traits of superintendents and school districts. Data on most of the characteristics are logically grouped into three or more categories, and thus Analysis of Variance is the most appropriate (see Gay, 1976, p. 254) statistical test. ANOVA is applied to superintendents' response scores to identify significance in differences among superintendents grouped by various individual and district characteristics for the four categories of political behavior (see Tables 3 and 4).

Age. Hyman (1959) suggests that as people become older, they become less tolerant about opposing views. Older superintendents may not consider political behavior to be an appropriate activity (see Kirby, 1971), while younger superintendents may be more inclined to view it as appropriate. If age impacts superintendents' behavior as Hyman (1959), Kirby (1971), Billy (1978) and Beavers (1979) suggest, then one might anticipate superintendents to be more politically conservative and less involved as they become older.

Table 3. Superintendent Political Behavior and Characteristic

Political Behavior and Characteristic		n	Political Response Score		Analysis of Variance	
			Mean	Standard Deviation	F_{df}	p

I. Issue definition/proposal formulation

Political Behavior and Characteristic		n	Mean	Standard Deviation	F_{df}	p
Age	34-44	12	50.16	22.76		
	45-54	30	61.90	39.19	$F_{2,57}=.9352$	.3985[e]
	55 or over	18	47.66	42.81		
Year degree received	1950-62	23	63.73	42.10		
	1964-73	25	55.16	36.96	$F_{2,57}=1.6862$	.1943[e]
	1976-84	12	39.33	26.27		
Highest degree earned	Masters	39	63.87	41.27		
	Specialist	11	47.45	25.40	$F_{2,57}=3.7344$	.0299[c]
	Doctorate	10	30.40	18.77		
Years in current supt'cy	1-3	25	49.64	31.91		
	4-9	22	67.68	47.95	$F_{2,57}=1.9990$	1449[e]
	10-19	13	45.15	22.06		

II. Support mobilization

Political Behavior and Characteristic		n	Mean	Standard Deviation	F_{df}	p
Age	34-44	12	52.33	26.04		
	45-54	30	51.80	37.55	$F_{2,57}=.0768$	.9662[e]
	55 or over	18	47.72	46.16		
Year degree received	1950-62	23	63.08	47.13		
	1964-73	25	43.88	29.30	$F_{2,57}=2.0929$	.1327[e]
	1976-84	12	41.08	29.38		
Highest degree earned	Masters	39	59.48	41.02		
	Specialist	11	37.90	26.58	$F_{2,57}=3.3551$	.0419[c]
	Doctorate	10	30.40	23.21		
Years in Current supt'cy	1-3	25	40.96	29.18		
	4-9	22	65.13	47.78	$F_{2,57}=2.7208$	.0744[d]
	10-19	13	44.92	27.41		

III. Individual political activity

Political Behavior and Characteristic		n	Mean	Standard Deviation	F_{df}	p
Age	35-44	12	73.58	36.47		
	45-54	30	101.13	66.09	$F_{2,57}=.7837$	.4616[e]
	55 or over	18	83.50	90.40		
Year degree received	1950-62	23	100.86	81.67		
	1964-73	25	95.80	67.83	$F_{2,57}=1.5961$	.2116[e]
	1976-84	12	58.75	37.47		
Highest degree earned	Masters	39	104.84	79.17		
	Specialist	11	69.81	33.86	$F_{2,57}=2.6418$	.0799[d]
	Doctorate	10	56.30	39.18		

[a] Significant at p<.05
[b] Significant at p<.10
[c] Not significant

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Table 3. continued

Political Behavior and Characteristic		n	Political Response Score		Analysis of Variance	
			Mean	Standard Deviation	F_{df}	p
Years in	1-3	25	77.64	57.32		
current	4-9	22	115.00	90.34	$F_{2,57}=2.2789$	.1117[e]
supt'cy	10-19	13	73.00	36.88		

IV. Specific fiscal issues

Age	35-44	12	32.75	25.83		
	45-54	30	42.16	31.01	$F_{2,57}=.4196$	.6593[e]
	55 or over	18	37.11	35.29		
Year	1950-62	23	43.73	34.42		
degree	1964-73	25	41.20	28.47	$F_{2,57}=1.7292$	.1866[e]
received	1976-84	12	24.16	27.70		
Highest	Masters	39	46.23	34.20		
degree	Specialist	11	28.27	20.84	$F_{2,57}=3.6316$	.0328[c]
earned	Doctorate	10	21.20	14.80		
Years	1-3	25	32.96	29.49		
current	4-9	22	51.59	36.16	$F_{2.57}=3.2775$	.0449[c]
Supt'cy	10-19	13	28.23	15.82		

[c] Significant at p<.05
[d] Significant at p<.10
[e] Not significant

Data presented in Table 3 appear to confirm these prior studies. While not statistically significant, differences in means suggest that the oldest superintendents tend to be less politically active than their younger colleagues. Similar comments were made by persons interviewed; superintendents in the state who were close to retirement were seen as least active politically.

However, a strict linear relationship between age and perceived political involvement did not emerge as anticipated. Instead, superintendents in the 45-54 bracket appear to be more politically active in Issue Definition/Proposal Formulation, Individual Political Activity and Specific Fiscal Issues. The youngest superintendents (35-44) are somewhat more politically active in Support Mobilization than are superintendents in the other age groups. This group is not, however, the most politically active overall.

Professional Training. Billy (1978) notes that many superintendents with recent degrees, as well as other superintendents who regularly participate in legislative/political workshops, demonstrate an active interest in politics. He hypothesized that there is a "spin off" effect of recent training--these superintendents are more interested and active in politics. Superintendents with recently earned degrees and with higher degree attainment might be expected to better understand political processes, to view ideal superintendents as being politically active, and, thus, to become more active themselves.

Contrary to Billy's observation, superintendents who earned degrees most recently have the lowest mean scores in each of the four categories of political behavior. While not significantly different, these mean scores appear to form a linear relationship such that those who earned their highest degree before 1962 are more politically active than other superintendents. Moveover, the range in mean scores is much larger than one might anticipate given the narrower range in mean scores among the various age groups reported above.

More surprising, perhaps, is the direction and strength of the relationship between degree attainment and political activity. Superintendents who had earned a Masters degree had significantly higher mean scores in each category of political activity. Those who earned a specialist degree were the next most politically active, while those with doctoral degrees perceived themselves to be less politically active. Of all the personal characteristics tested, it appears that the type of higher education degree a superintendent has earned does impact perceptions of political behavior in New Mexico.

One might speculate that superintendents with higher degree attainment are selected by school boards for different reasons than their political saavy. Furthermore, mastery of knowledge in a specific field evidenced by attainment of a doctorate may not carry the same weight in communities of this largely rural, as compared to a more urban, state. Indeed, at the time of the 1984 legislative session the superintendents of the most populated school district and of the district serving the state capitol did not possess doctoral degrees.

Administrative Experience. Billy (1978) theorized that the longer that superintendents occupy positions of administrative responsibility, the more likely they are to have been exposed to state-level policymaking. Moreover,

Kirby (1971) concluded that "the longer a superintendent has lived in a place, the more likely he is to claim to know the reputed and positional members of the power structure." (p.89) Thus, a higher degree of political involvement was anticipated for those superintendents with more years total administrative experience, with longer tenure in the superintendency, and with more years in their current positions.

With regard to the length of service in educational administration, it cannot be concluded that greater involvement in the political arena necessarily accrues. While differences in mean scores are not significant and thus are not reported in Table 3, those superintendents with 12 to 18 total years of administrative experience perceived themselves to be more active politically than did those with 19 to 30 years, who in turn were more active than those with 1 to 9 years of administrative experience. Not surprisingly, this pattern parallels the findings reported above for the variable age.

Similarly, respondents with 4 to 10 years experience in the superintendency perceived themselves to be the most politically active overall. As with findings for age and total administrative experience, those with 1 to 3 years in the superintendency were the least politically active. Differences in mean scores are not, however, significant, and are not reported.

Of the three measures of experience, only the number of years in the current superintendency yield differences in mean scores which are statistically significant (see Table 3). Political activity in areas of Support Mobilization and Specific Fiscal Issues is related to the length of time superintendents have occupied their positions. Unlike the anticipated direct relationship, however, superintendents with 4 to 9 years in their current positions reported themselves to be the most politically active. This pattern parallels findings for the variables of age, total administrative experience and total years experience as a superintendent. Further, superintendents with the most tenure in their current position were the least politically active in all areas except Support Mobilization. It appears that a peak of political involvement—a time when a superintendent is highly regarded in the political arena and when energy and enthusiasm drive the superintendent to maintain a high level of activity—might occur.

The experts were asked to describe the relationship between administrative experience and political activity. Several agreed that the longer a person occupies the superintendency, the greater the desire to maintain the status quo. Yet, older more experienced superintendents seem to be more effective in the political arena, as they "know the ropes" and thus have learned how to have more influence. Moreover, the longer superintendents have occupied their positions, the more familiar they become with community expectations for political involvement.

In order to assess such presumed relationships with political activity, various characteristics of school districts are analyzed (see Table 4).

Community Size. Similar patterns of political involvement were anticipated among superintendents who serve communities and school districts of similar size. Large nonpublic (e.g., parochial, other private and Bureau of Indian

Table 4. Superintendent Political Behavior and Selected District Characteristics

Political Behavior and Characteristic		n	Political Response Score		Analysis of Variance	
			Mean	Standard Deviation	F_{df}	P
I. Issue definition/proposal formulation						
Community population	202-888	15	39.26	29.70	$F_{3,56}=3.8028$	.0149[c]
	1,022-2968	13	42.15	29.32		
	3,012-6868	1₊	78.85	41.30		
	7,173-331,767	18	59.77	38.35		
District size (ADM)	105-393	16	38.81	28.50	$F_{3,56}=3.2478$	.0285[c]
	440-899	14	43.42	28.35		
	1,307-3,088	13	69.07	43.14		
	3,303-72,517	17	70.00	40.81		
Miles from capitol	0-74	14	74.07	51.73	$F_{1,58}=4.81$	.0322[c]
	83-339	46	49.57	30.86		
Region of state	Nothern & Central	18	65.38	39.76		
	Eastern	21	49.95	32.93	$F_{2,53}=1.7964$	.1759[e]
	Southern	17	44.35	29.33		
II. Support mobilization						
Community population	202-888	15	35.33	29.55	$F_{3,56}=1.7276$	.1718[e]
	1,022-2968	13	49.92	26.77		
	3,012-6868	14	66.78	43.65		
	7,173-331,767	18	51.50	43.39		
District size (ADM)	105-393	16	39.06	31.09	$F_{3,56}=1.4681$	.2331[e]
	440-899	14	42.57	25.88		
	1,307-3,088	13	58.46	33.65		
	3,303-72,517	17	62.35	51.12		
Miles from capitol	0-74	14	70.28	51.14	$F_{1,58}=5.23$	.0258[c]
	83-339	46	44.71	31.19		
Region of state	Nothern & Central	18	59.72	39.43		
	Eastern	21	43.14	30.74	$F_{2,53}=1.3130$	.2776[e]
	Southern	17	45.47	30.81		

[c]Significant at p<.05
[d]Significant at p<.10
[e]Not significant

Table 4. continued

Political Behavior and Characteristic		n	Political Response Score		Analysis of Variance	
			Mean	Standard Deviation	F_{df}	P
III. Individual political activity						
Community population	202-888	15	56.60	40.28	$F_{3,56}=3.2136$	0296[c]
	1,022-2968	13	70.00	46.26		
	3,012-6868	14	121.64	77.08		
	7,173-331,767	18	108.77	84.01		
District size (ADM)	105-393	16	56.93	39.87	$F_{3,56}=4.0201$	.0116[c]
	440-899	14	71.21	44.96		
	1,307-3,088	13	100.07	82.27		
	3,303-72,517	17	130.05	81.22		
Miles from capitol	0-74	14	121.71	98.31	$F_{1,58}=3.86$	.0541[d]
	83-339	46	80.78	56.63		
Region of state	Nothern & Central	18	92.77	61.09	$F_{2,53}=.2521$	.7781[e]
	Eastern	21	80.23	62.70		
	Southern	17	80.47	59.44		
IV. Specific fiscal issue						
Community population	202-888	15	21.80	16.77	$F_{3,56}=2.5915$	.0617[d]
	1,022-2968	13	39.76	36.92		
	3,012-6868	14	52.07	32.43		
	7,173-331,767	18	41.83	30.95		
District size (ADM)	105-393	16	23.12	16.36	$F_{3,56}=2.3923$	.0781[d]
	440-899	14	39.57	36.60		
	1,307-3,088	13	41.30	33.31		
	3,303-72,517	17	50.88	31.60		
Miles from capitol	0-74	14	47.57	41.03	$F_{1,58}=1.47$	.2302[e]
	83-339	46	36.08	27.47		
Region of state	Nothern & Central	18	36.94	30.51	$F_{2,53}=6539$	.5242[e]
	Eastern	21	32.14	27.54		
	Southern	17	43.23	31.47		

[c] Significant at $p<.05$
[d] Significant at $p<.10$
[e] Not significant

Affairs) school enrollments in many communities in New Mexico are not reflected in a single measure of size (that of school district enrollment), and thus total population of the community served is also examined.

While superintendents in the mid-range of community population (3,012 to 6,868) perceive themselves to be most active, it is the superintendents of the largest school districts (3,303 to 72,517 ADM) who view themselves to be most involved (see Table 4). Upon closer examination of means, however, it appears that superintendents of the larger communities (above 3,012) and districts (above 1,307) are much more politically active than their counterparts in the smaller communities (below 2,968) and districts (below 899).

The common finding is that community and district size does impact political behavior of superintendents. Significant relationships are apparent for all categories of political behavior except Support Mobilization. Superintendents from larger communities and school districts do indeed perceive themselves to be more politically involved in all but Support Mobilization.

Community Isolation. A community's proximity to a metropolitan area can effect the degree of political participation of its citizens (Verba and Nie, 1972). Following this logic, it might be assumed that distance from population centers impacts superintendents' political behavior. Moreover, superintendents of districts which are furthest removed from the state capitol might take less advantage of opportunites for involvement in state-level policy development. Similarly, participation in such activities might be hindered in this geographically large but sparsely populated state if travel time is excessive due to remoteness from one of the two major interstate highways. With circuitous routes framed by the state's geography (e.g., mountainous regions, Indian reservations, restricted government areas), distances are represented by actual miles driven rather than by concentric circles in each analysis.

Differences between means of respondent groups are not significant for either the distance from a population center or from an interstate; analyses of relationships between these variables and superintendent political behavior are not presented in detail. As anticipated, superintendents within 26 miles of a metropolitan center (population 20,000 or more) tended to be more active, followed by those between 33 and 47 miles. Interestingly, those superintendents furthest away (83 to 202 miles) reported themselves to be most politically active, while those between 55 and 78 miles perceived themselves to be least active. A more nearly linear relationship between political behavior and distance from an interstate was observed; superintendents of school districts closer to an interstate perceived themselves to be most politically involved. Yet, mean scores for each of these groups of superintendents are not significantly different, and thus the tendency for those closest to population centers and interstate roads to view themselves as more active must be interpreted cautiously.

Of the three community isolation variables, only distance from the state capitol appears to be significantly related to superintendent political activity (as is reported in Table 4). Superintendents of districts within 74 miles of Santa Fe perceived themselves to be much more actively involved in state-level

policy development than did their more distant colleagues. These differences
are significant for all areas of political behavior except Specific Fiscal
Issues. Furthermore, distance from the capitol is the only community
characteristic for which the area of Support Mobilization was significant.

These findings lend credence to the existence of a "Rio Grande Corridor" of
politically active superintendents. Perhaps those located closer to Santa Fe
(home of the State Board of Education, Public School Finance Division,
Legislature and various other agencies and professional associations) find it
more convenient to participate in policy development. Perhaps association
officers rely upon these active superintendents more frequently to contact
legislators and others of influence (as discussed previously) due to their
proximity to Santa Fe. Personal charactertistics and political cultures cannot
be ignored in this analysis; perhaps these superintendents' personalities and
their communities' expectations coincide in tolerating or encouraging high
levels of political activity.

Region of the State. Community expectations for superintendent political
behavior are examined for several of the areas of the state for which Elazar
(1966, 1972) and Garcia (1981) typified political culture. Districts are
grouped into several regions, following Garcia's observation that New Mexico has
"an interesting pattern of political subcultures in the different geographic
areas of the state." (p. 14)

Three of the regions identified by Elazar and Garcia yield sufficient data
for this study of political behavior (see Table 4). The Northern and Central
region was typified by Elazar and Garcia as both traditionalistic (persons of
Mexican-Spanish ancestry continue to control local government as they have for
the past 300 years) and moralistic (residents are fairly liberal on
socioeconomic matters and on the role of government in school finance). Garcia
further described an emerging individualistic subculture, given active
participation in politics and intense competition among parties and interest
groups particularly at the state level.

In contrast, the Eastern region tends to be quite conservative; it was
described by both authors as a blend of traditionalistic and individualistic
subcultures. The Southern region, characterized by these authors as primarily
traditionalistic, evidences a beginning individualistic subculture as noted by
Garcia. Unfortunately, superintendents' responses in three areas of the
state—Northwestern Region and Los Alamos and Bernalillo Counties—are not
included in analyses due to the limited number of districts located in these
regions.

While not significant, differences in means between responses of
superintendents in the three regions listed in Table 4 provide insight into
perceptions of political behavior. Means of response scores of superintendents
in the Northern and Central region are higher for Issue Definition/Proposal
Formulation, Support Mobilization and Individual Political Activity than are
perceptions of superintendent political behavior in the other regions. These
findings appear to support Garcia's (1981) description of this region as one of
very active participation in state-level politics.

Superintendents' responses from the Eastern and Southern regions are very nearly the same in each category of political behavior, and evidence more conservative political activity. It is only in response to items concerning Specific Fiscal Issues that superintendents in the Southern region appear to become more politically involved. This heightened activity might be explained, in part, by the nature of funding concerns expressed recently by districts in this area of the state. Political involvement of many southern school leaders was accelerated by the 1981 change in the funding formula to recognize particular funding needs of districts having high schools with enrollments between 200 and 500. The response of nineteen districts with extremely small high schools, those with fewer than 200 ADM which did not benefit from this additional funding, was to lobby actively for additional funding for these "very small" school districts (see Swift, 1982). Leadership for this movement emerged from several southern districts where many of the nineteen are located. Such political activity supports Garcia's observation that the political culture of the Southern region of the state is becoming more individualistic.

The four superintendents, legislators and board chairpersons who were interviewed referred candidly to forces within the community which shaped political behavior. Their responses reveal a much stronger role for community expectations in shaping superintendent political behavior than does the above analysis of survey responses. The contrast in views is evidenced in advice given to new superintendents: one active superintendent advised, "know your legislators and be as active as you can within the constraints of your district," while an inactive superintendent cautioned, "know your community's taboos—you might get into trouble by being too involved."

All interviewees agreed that contacting legislators is an expected component of the superintendent's role, especially if an issue is of importance to the district. Politically active superintendents and their school board chairpersons listed legislative contacts as being among several means for increasing funding for the district—legislators viewed direct contact as the only way. Involvement in the political arena is critical in the role defined for one active school superintendent who confided: "Superintendents have to be political to survive and to get what is coming to their districts. We are at the mercy of the legislature. You have to work for it."

Interviewees from districts with less active superintendents viewed political behavior very differently. They reported that legislative relations is primarily the responsibility of the school board, and that superintendents do not have time to be involved in politics. The legislators noted that superintendents are employed to run the schools—not be politicians. One legislator noted that school board members—not superintendents—are the proper representatives to communicate needs of school districts. A superintendent confessed, "this community does not approve of me going off to Santa Fe." Nevertheless, these less active superintendents are "permitted" to participate in activities of professional administrator associations. Unlike their more active colleagues, these superintendents were not encouraged to make legislative contacts by individuals within or outside the community (e.g. from associations). It is apparent that they are to remain apolitical in their roles

as superintendents, and that these expectations are communicated to others in the political arena.

Politically active superintendents and their legislators cited both school boards and communities as being very influential in shaping what a superintendent does politically. As one legislator commented, "if a superintendent is not political when he starts, he becomes that way". Less active superintendents and their school board chairpersons viewed the board as being the major influence on superintendent political behavior. These superintendents felt that school board members "filtered the pressures of the community" before reaching them, confirming the report of board chairpersons that superintendents have no time to get involved with political controversy. These comments parallel findings from an early study by McCarty and Ramsey (1971), who concluded that school boards play extremely important roles in shaping superintendent political behavior.

The director of one professional association stressed the importance of the board in shaping political involvement:

> Superintendents understand for whom they work.
> They work for the local board. Therefore, the
> local board will influence how the superintendent
> functions politically — they'll tell him how to
> operate -- although perhaps not overtly. Clearly,
> the relations cause the superintendent to act at
> the will of the board.

Comments from Nonrespondents

As revealing of expected superintendent behavior as these data from interviews, are comments received from those individuals who chose not to participate in the study. Three superintendents returned unanswered questionnaires with notes expressing, "political activity of school people in (their) districts is not prudent."

One board chairperson wrote a note with his own completed survey saying that his "superintendent is too new to the position to participate in the study, and so I am returning his questionnaire." Three school board chairpersons telephoned and stated that they would not participate because each of their superintendents was "above such actions described in the questionnaire." Therefore, they saw "no need for the study". Further, they implied that the researcher was trying to "stir up" superintendents into doing things that they should not be engaged in.

Four school board chairpersons returned questionnaires with notes that they did not appreciate surveys of this type. One of the four added that "he and the board did not monitor the personal activities of the superintendent". Another chair wrote that "his superintendent did not have to soil himself in politics--the state provides more than adequately for education."

Five legislators called, and one wrote a note, stating that they "supported

the project but could not participate due to primary election demands". Three legislators noted on their unanswered questionnaires that since they were "not on education or finance committees, no superintendents contacted them at all".

The support of legislators for studies of superintendent political behavior is apparent both in these comments and in the relatively high rate of return (33%) of survey instruments. In sharp contrast are the above remarks of eight school board chairpersons and the lower response rate (16%). The interview data and these informal responses suggest that political behavior of superintendents is tied to attitudes and expectations of school boards.

Concluding Comments

Understanding the action zone of political involvement is essential to enable school superintendents to reinforce or modify their behavior to maintain effective legislative relations. Furthermore, information about political linkages (Iannaconne, 1967) among all involved in state-level decision making processes is critical as superintendents participate in fiscal policymaking. The significance of studies of politics of education at the state level was expressed in one interview: "All superintendents have to learn how to be more effective with their legislators--they need more political saavy and knowledge about how decisions are made in this state."

Perceived involvement superintendents in state-level policy development in New Mexico parallels findings of Campbell, et al. (1980), Feilders (1979), and Pitner (1978). As the foremost spokesperson for the school district, the superintendent in New Mexico is indeed the "critical nexus" (Kirby, 1971) between the district and external agencies.

Yet the degree to which superintendents involve themselves at the state level is not consistent throughout the state. Behavior of active superintendents is clearly different from that of inactive superintendents, as reported by school board chairs, legislators and superintendents (see Table 1). The action zone of permissible behavior of New Mexico superintendents is in fact quite large throughout the state. This observation is particularly true for behavior related to Individual Political Activity. It may be that superintendents avail themselves of greatly varying degrees of political involvement, that they are permitted such latitude for maneuverability by communities or boards, or that respondents are more sensitive to varying behaviors in this category of political behavior.

When perceptions of superintendents and legislators are compared (see Table 2), a difference in perceived political involvement is noted: legislators report superintendents to be more highly involved in the political arena than do superintendents themselves, particularly with regard to Individual Political Activity. While reinforced in interviews with active and inactive superintendents and their respective legislators, this finding is contrary to those of Moore (1970) and DePree (1971). Whether unique to the state of New Mexico, or evidencing altered perceptions of involvement of superintendents during the intervening decade, this shift in perceived activity warrants further study.

Through the first century and a quarter of the evolution of the role, superintendents were expected to refrain from involvement in the political arena. Like their predecessors, inactive superintendents in New Mexico receive very definite signals from school board chairs to remain apolitical. Their state-level political activity is best described as attendance at legislative meetings sponsored by professional associations, and limited direct contact with legislators.

More in line with recent trends outlined by Griffiths (1966) and Campbell, et al. (1980), active superintendents in New Mexico assumed very direct involvement in state-level policymaking. These active superintendents tend to rely less upon professional associations to represent their views in the capitol, and exhibit a high degree of individual political involvement. Less active superintendents tend to contact legislators directly only to oppose pending bills; more active superintendents maintain linkages, making frequent contacts throughout the year to propose and react to possible legislation.

Politically active superintendents in New Mexico tend to be <u>between 45 and 54 years old, to have earned a Master's degree prior to 1962, and to have served from four to nine years in their current superintendency</u> (see Table 3). This description of superintendents who perceive themselves to be more involved in state-level policy development suggests the existence of a peak of political activity.

Similarly, active superintendents are <u>located in large communities and school districts within 74 miles of the state capitol</u> (see Table 4). It appears that superintendents who desire to be politically active gravitate toward Santa Fe, or that communities nearest the capitol expect high degrees of involvement of their school leaders.

Less than adequate findings are reported in Table 4 for political culture identified in various regions of the state. The exclusion of superintendents' responses from several regions of historically high involvement of school officials in state-level politics, and the lack of direct measures of communities' expectations for superintendent political activity, limited the analysis.

Interview findings contribute to an understanding of the degree to which community expectations define limits for political involvement. Comments from superintendents, board chairs, legislators and the panel of educational and legislative leaders suggest strongly that <u>community political culture (particularly as expressed by the school board) shapes political behavior.</u> Nevertheless, this dimension of superintendent political activity warrants further research.

Political behavior related to Specific Fiscal Issues evidenced somewhat less involvement of superintendents than did other categories of behavior. Higher degrees of involvement in more general political activities suggest that New Mexico superintendents may have concentrated lobbying efforts on educational issues of concern in a broader context, such as those programmatic concerns

raised by various national commissions. Such speculation suggests a reformulation of the conceptualization (see Figure 1), to include expectations for political involvement generated outside the community and state.

In summary, it is evident that perceptions of political behavior of New Mexico superintendents vary widely throughout the state. Differences in perceptions of active and inactive superintendents' behavior define a very large zone of maneuverability for superintendents to influence state fiscal policy making. Yet the degree which a superintendent is involved is shaped by individual and community characteristics. Superintendents' training and experience impact political activity, with a peak of involvement reported during the fourth to ninth years of the superintendency. Moreover, proximity to the state capitol as well as the size of the community and district contribute to the involvement of superintendents in state-level politics. Finally, community expectations for superintendent involvement appear to play a substantial role in defining limits on behavior.

The significance of this study is its contribution to understanding factors which shape political behavior of public school superintendents at the state level. An understanding of the action zone and of limits on superintendent political behavior is critical as educational policy development continues to shift from local and federal to state-levels.

Notes

1. The authors acknowledge insights from Richard Lawrence, F. Chris Garcia and Ernest Stapleton in both the design of the study and interpretation of findings.

2. The New Mexico school finance formula is a foundation plan which guarantees a per-unit level of funding regardless of local wealth. State revenue accounts for approximately ninety percent, while a minimal (0.5 mill) uniform statewide property tax levy accounts for less than 5 percent, of operational revenue (see, Statistics, New Mexico Public School Finance Division, Office of Education, 1984).

3. Educational program and finance in New Mexico are administered by two legally separate agencies; the State Department of Public Instruction and the Public School Finance Division of the Department of Finance and Administration, respectively. This bifurcation of control further enhances the legislature as the "natural arena" for fiscal policymaking (see Wiley and Burlingame, 1969; Pogrow and Garcia, 1981).

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*                    *
*     PERSONAL       *
*   CHARACTERISTICS: *
*                    *
*       Age          *
*     Training       *
*    Experience      *
*                    *
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**********************************
*                                *
*      AN ACTION ZONE OF         *
*      POLITICAL BEHAVIOR:       *
*                                *
*      Issue Definition &        *
*      Proposal Formulation      *
*                                *
*      Support Mobilization      *
*                                *
*  Individual Political Activity *
*                                *
*      Specific Fiscal Issues    *
*                                *
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*                    *
*     COMMUNITY      *
*   CHARACTERISTICS: *
*                    *
*       Size         *
*     Isolation      *
*  Political Culture *
*                    *
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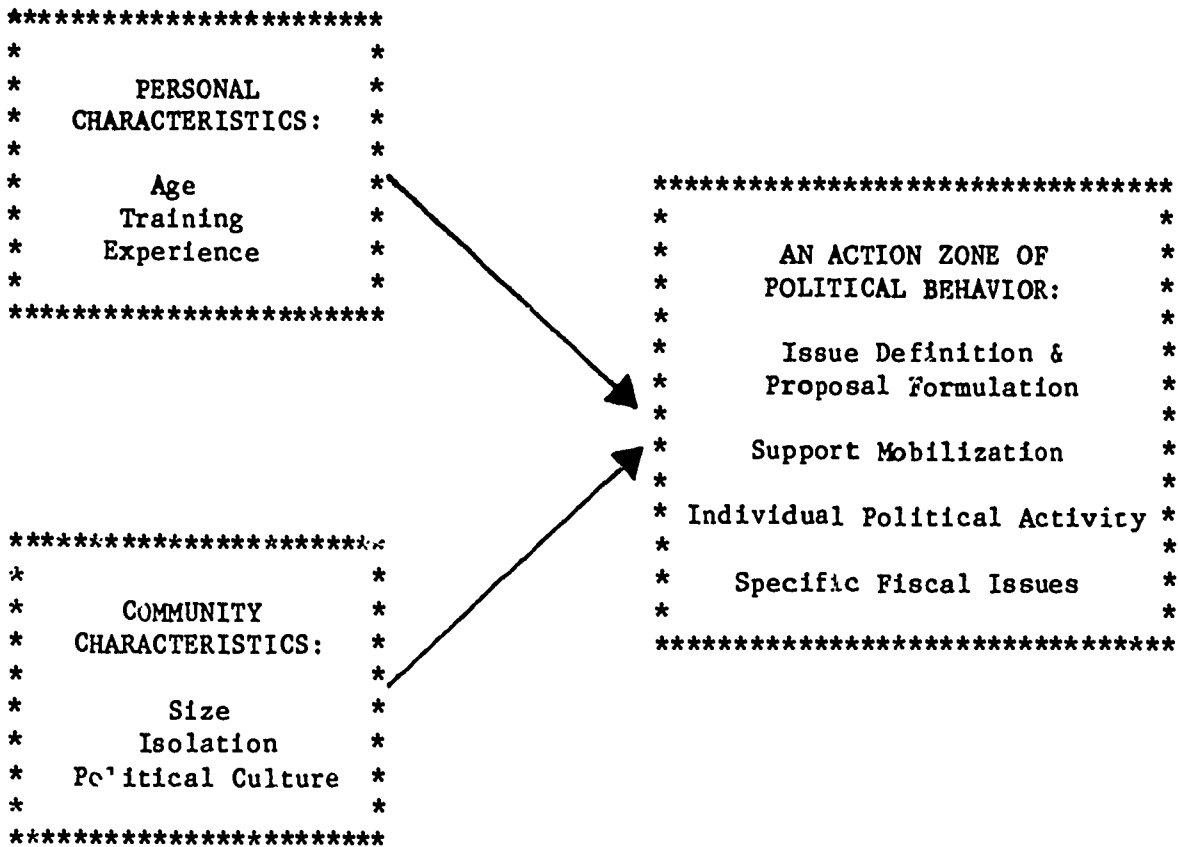
Figure 1. Shaping the Action Zone of Political Behavior

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