INCUMBENT SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER DEFEAT AND SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER IN OKLAHOMA, 1978-1987

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
December, 1988

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As in the case of all studies of similar detail and scope, this study was accomplished only because of the generosity of time and effort on the part of many individuals. It is impossible to name all of those to whom acknowledgments are due. It must be stated, however, that in the course of gathering data and material for this study, many individuals took time from their busy and pressing schedules to help me. These include district superintendents, their secretaries, consultants, board members and former board members, and college professors and doctoral candidates. Dr. James Key was especially helpful in the statistical analysis.

I wish to express my appreciation to each of my committee members for their time and effort on my behalf. First, my long time friend, Dr. Kenneth King and I began school together at the age of six in Reydon, Oklahoma. It is a privilege to again be associated with him at this point in my education. Second, Dr. John Gardiner's writing ability has been a great inspiration to me. His strong convictions in both his personal life and professional work have greatly influenced me. Third, the critical analyses of Dr. Gerald Bass, in all phases of my efforts, were a constant driving force and an inspiration to excellence. I am deeply indebted to him for his help and guidance. And, finally, the patience, generosity of time, effort, and energies of Past President Robert Kamm helped me to believe that I could do it. His advice, perceptions, and

friendly direction kept me on track. It is impossible with mere words, to express my gratitude and indebtedness to these men.

Lastly, I must thank my wife, Andrea Beth, my five children, and my other family members for their patience and support during the time of this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic society, education must be provided through public control of the educational process and, at the same time, administered through the best available technical expertise. The American concept provides for a lay school board and a professionally trained superintendent. Both perform important functions.

> The functions of the board of education and the superintendent of schools dovetail into each other and should as far as possible be considered as a unitary procedure in the administration of schools (Graves, 1932, p. 7).

Throughout history there has always been someone, or some group, responsible for directing the educational processes of the schools. During the colonial period of American history, the civil and religious interests of the citizenry were so intertwined that the local minister was in complete control of the educational program, and the town fathers simply provided a facility in which to house the educational program (Noble, 1954). Near the end of the colonial period, increasingly more difficult and complex educational, religious, and civil functions dictated the need for locally selected school boards to manage the affairs of the schools. Throughout the nineteenth century these local school boards controlled virtually all of the functions of the school. However, as some large city school districts grew and became more complex, the local boards began to assign responsibilities to another individual, the superintendent, who became the administrative arm of the school board,

carrying out its direction. At the beginning of the twentieth century very few of the smaller school districts had a superintendent. As this new position became more common and the responsibilities became greater, the position shifted from that of a subordinate to that of a chief executive of the local school board, with responsibility for the management of the entire school district under the general direction of the board (Grieder, Pierce, and Rosenstengel, 1961).

During the past two decades, schools have been involved in policy changes resulting from several major issues, from serving the disadvantaged child in the early 1960's, to integration in the late 1960's and early 1970's, and more recently to a returning emphasis on the basic skills (Steele, Working, and Biernacki, 1981). These and other changes in policy direction within the public schools have come from pressure groups and through political interaction among individuals and groups. This interaction has meant that those in leadership positions must be able to understand the political process and use it to their advantage. Walden (1966, p. 65) contended that "All who are involved in policy determination must be politically oriented, indeed they must be politicians." If there is a superintendent responsible for the continued overall progress of a local school district, this position must be one of strength. For a local school district to make continual progress, there must also be strong leadership from the school board. If these two entities begin to work against each other, however, their strengths are cancelled out and lack of eductional development is the result. A school system works and makes progress when the strengths of the superintendent and the school board are focused on the problems confronting the school district, not on each other (Gaines, 1978).

Walden (1966) stated that, with the increased complexities of school decisions, the local school board is no longer in a position to have the knowledge needed for sound decision making and policy determination. The superintendent, in the capacity of adviser, has frequently become the most important person in establishing the school district's direction. A superintendent with a keen sense of timing can, in reality, be the policy maker for the school district even though it might appear to the general public that the local school board is making the policy decisions.

Many additional issues confront school leaders today. The school district population fluctuates, school financing becomes more difficult, accountability becomes an ever-increasing demand, employees become unionized, salaries do not keep pace with those in private industry, inflation grows, and bond issues are rejected. Thus, outside pressures from the general public on the school board and on the superintendent continue to grow.

In addition, the political nature of local school boards and the public's perception of the superintendent as leader create difficulties for both board and superintendent when a disparity exists between what the people perceive as needed and what the school board provides. Many superintendents have found themselves out of a job as a result of this disparity (Griffith, 1964).

Superintendents leave their positions for both positive and negative reasons. Some leave after being promoted to larger, more prestigious positions, and some retire, but others leave because they cannot cope with the pressures of the position, become disenchanted with the office, are dismissed, or are fearful of being terminated. The 15% to 25% annual turnover rate as reported by most studies has generated concern by both board members and superintendents.

Fowler (1977) quoted Cleveland superintendent Paul Bridges, who has 12 years in that position.

> [Superintendents] bear many resemblances to endangered wildlife. The breeding grounds have been fouled up, those selected for survival are the least likely to survive, and it is open season all year round . . . when he is bagged, the superintendent isn't even considered a prize (p. 21).

The decision of continued employment for a superintendent rests in the hands of a relatively small number of citizens, a board of education that is usually composed of five to seven members. Whenever a majority of the board becomes dissatisfied with the superintendent, the superintendent can expect that the current contract will not be renewed. Community pressure will often provide the superintendent with temporary protection. Most boards, however, will find a way to dismiss a superintendent with whom they have become disenchanted (Burbank, 1965).

The superintendent often has the undivided support of virtually the entire community when assuming a new post. As political, social, philosophical, and educational incidents occur that bring the superintendent into conflict with individuals or groups, public confidence begins to erode. Too often the superintendent is in a position to make more enemies than friends and, as time passes, the superintendent's position within the community and with the board is weakened. Clark (1981, p. 168) reported that "When a superintendent assumes his position, he knows that identifying and maintaining support will help determine how long he keeps his job."

With the loss of support, the superintendent's effectiveness is reduced. Krajewski (1982) suggested that the superintendent should move on before the superintendency becomes useless. "They should look upon the superintendency as similar to the role of a baseball manager:

Neither expects his appointment to last forever" (Krajewski, 1982, p. 30).

Fifteen of the nation's most prominent school board members told how superintendents lose the support of their boards (Mullins, 1975). Superintendents embarrass and become embattled with school boards when they do not tell the boards everything the board members want to know. When a school board suspects the superintendent of circumspection or when the superintendent covers up information or the lack thereof, conflict and mistrust develop.

Heller (1978) suggested that the rapid turnover in the superintendency is due to unrealistic expectations by the school board. School boards tend to do the following:

1. Require the superintendent to represent the school board at all community meetings.
2. Demand irrefutable proof for every administrative recommendation.
3. Put embarrassing questions to their superintendent in public.
4. Agree with the shrieking critics who pounce on the superintendent with both feet.
5. Hold unofficial board meetings without the superintendent present.
6. Reject the superintendent's request for administrative assistants.
7. Demand V.I.P. treatment from the superintendents at conventions.
8. Gossip about the superintendent's faults.
9. Ignore the distinction between policy making, management and administrative authority.
10. Evaluate superintendent's compensation by comparing school administration with their occupation (Heller, 1978, pp. 25-27).

Fowler (1977) suggested that some superintendents are predestined for short stays in some superintendencies; that is, they are hired as a change agent or as a hatchet man. The conflict develops when changes occur, and the board begins to long for the former stability. The board then terminates the employment of the change agent/superintendent.

Hanson (1970) advised superintendents to hold the role of change agent in eschew. "The big city superintendent is caught in an urban nut cracker, and only a drastic change in his role will save him" (Hanson, 1970, p. 116).

> The superintendent's role has gradually evolved to that of a change agent, or as legions of citizens now fear, the leader of a revolution that will destroy their neighborhood schools. He is squarely out in front, associated in the public mind with such high octane programs as integration and mandatory busing, retention of dropouts, teacher pay increases, education centers, sex and drug education, and non-religious Christmas programs. He has become the symbol of the new and the strange, looming over the most sensitive subjects in the Western world--the child and the pocketbook (Hanson, 1977, p. 117).

An added pressure felt by the superintendent is the national sentiment toward schools. The National Commission on Excellence was created by the Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell, on August 16, 1981. This commission was established because of national concern over the quality of teaching and learning in American schools. Their report stated that "Our nation is at risk [because] the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). This reported helped to substantiate what many critics of education had previously been reporting.

Improving the relationship between superintendents and school boards is a very real concern for members of both groups throughout the United States. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (1982)

reported that 48.2% of the superintendents who had held more than one superintendency left for promotion and money. Approximately 24% left for a change of location, type of district, or position, and 11% cited "conflict with the board" as their reason for leaving. Over 4% said they were fired or were threatened with being fired. In the same AASA survey, the superintendents were asked whether they would choose to be superintendents if they could arrange their careers again. Only 54.6% said they would make the same career choice. In 1971, 71.4% of the superintendents would have elected to be superintendents if they had the opportunity to choose again (AASA, 1971). The attractiveness of the superintendency appears to have diminished substantially for many superintendents. In fact, the 1982 survey revealed that 25% of the responding superintendents viewed their status and prestige as having decreased in importance and influence.

The replacement of the person in the key position of any organization is potentially disruptive and even traumatic in some instances (Carlson, 1972).

> Executive succession often disrupts lines of authority and communication, disturbs power and decision-making systems, and generally upsets the organization's normal activities. At the least, executive succession dislocates several persons from their normal relationships with the organization, creating the additional disruption, if not painful, problem of relocating. [Executive succession] deals with change . . . executive succession often preceeds further organizational adaptation, development, and change. In fact, this is often the reason for the replacement of executives. The proverb 'a new broom sweeps clean' indicates the relationship between executive succession and organizational change (Carlson, 1972, p. 46).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a significant relationship existed between incumbent school board member defeat and

superintendent turnover in independent school districts in the State of Oklahoma between the years 1978 and 1987. The null hypothesis is stated as follows: There is no significant relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover.

Significance of the Study

At the present time there are little or no data available in the State of Oklahoma regarding length of service by superintendents and school board members. While there is considerable speculation regarding the average tenure of both, and also discussion relative to a connection between the two, there is no evidence from which to make objective statements. This study will begin the process of establishing answers to these questions, such as follows:

1. Is there a relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover?

2. How long does the average superintendent remain in a single school district?

3. What is the average length of service by Oklahoma school board members?

4. Does the size of the district make a difference in superintendent and/or school board member turnover?

Limitations

This study was limited to the 456 independent school districts in the State of Oklahoma. The time period studied was from 1978 to 1987. While school board turnover may be caused by many factors, some of which may relate to superintendent turnover more than others, this study was

limited to board turnover caused by defeat of an incumbent and the relationship of such defeat to the departure of the incumbent superintendent.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used for the purpose of this study:

Superintendent. A superintendent is the properly licensed executive officer of the board of education and the administrative head of an independent school district.

School Board Member. A school board member is an individual who has been elected to serve on the board of education of an independent school district.

Independent School District. An independent school district is an Oklahoma school district which provides an educational program for students from kindergarten through grade 12.

Summary

There is a considerable body of literature regarding the positions of school board member and of superintendent, as well as the relationships between them. Very little information exists, however, that is specific to Oklahoma. This study was completed to determine if there was a significant relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover in Oklahoma school districts from 1978 to 1987.

Chapter II provides a review of the relevant literature, while Chapter III contains a description of the research design and procedures. The data and analyses are reported in Chapter IV. Chapter V contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this review of selected literature was to gather into one document, existing material pertinent to and connected with the varied issues surrounding school boards and superintendents. The chapter is divided into five major parts: politics and educational policy making, the school board, the superintendency, school board/superintendent relationships, and school board member turnover and its relationship to superintendent turnover.

Politics and Educational Policy Making

The school district tends to be perceived as separate and distinct from other local government units because of its frequently unique boundaries. As a result, education in the United States has been viewed apart from other services to such an extent that education is usually thought of as being nonpolitical in nature (Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970). However, educational leaders must still be aware of the kind of decision-making or political structure that exists within their jurisdiction.

It has been found that most citizens perceive that their individual opinions do not make much, if any, difference in the policy decisions that are made by the local school board or the local school superintendent of their district (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978). This idea, in turn, gave rise to strong differences of opinion between local citizenry and the local school board on policy issues.

Subjective judgment is one basis for decision making in the educational setting. Walden (1966) contended that policy decisions in which the school board and the superintendent are constantly involved were decisions ultimately based on values. Facts were important, but in the final analysis, value judgments were the major contributory factors for basic policy decision making. This contention only emphasized the possible conflict which can arise between local school boards and their communities. Decisions reached by the school board may be based on values which do not mesh with the community members' value systems. Whenever these decisions did not mesh with the value system of the community, the result was that the community would forcibly make its wishes known to the school administration.

Because the local school board members are elected, local school systems are most vulnerable to pressure from society (Steele, Working, and Biernacki, 1981). They can be intimidated through veiled threats of declining support by the general public. Local school boards are very much in the eye of the public because they are social institutions. Generally speaking, all of their business is conducted in the open for public scrutiny.

According to Gross (1958), there is in most communities only one direct way in which the citizens can usually accomplish anything in regard to their desires for their local school district, and that is at the ballot box when either casting their vote or participating as a candidate for a school board position. When the individual has cast the ballot or has run for election, there is a commitment to the political process or even to attaining a position as one of the policy makers.

Politics may be defined as the contest which develops around the definition and control of policy. In the public schools this contest

takes many forms and appears in many places. Martin (1967) reported that there are four places that the individual citizen can participate directly in the selection of school policy: first, in the selection of school board members through the election process; second, in casting a ballot in a bond referendum; third, in actually attending and participating in the local school board meetings; and fourth, in the exertion of pressure on the local school administration firsthand.

> Public school doctrine concerns itself with the task of isolating education from all other public undertakings and in erecting for itself a structure that will render it invulnerable . . . it emphasizes the school's relation with the community rather than on the community's affairs per se (Martin, 1967, p. 94).

If this be the case, the community members have several avenues open for the expression of their desires to the local school board. They could appeal to the board, appeal to the superintendent, pressure the teachers, or conduct mass public meetings to gather support for a group action. A challenge at the ballot box by opposition candidates is a measure often taken.

Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) stated that every governmental or constitutional system tends to develop an equilibrium. Those that come closest to this are the ones which eliminate dissent and maintain the status quo. However, at least two things occur when this happens: the achievements of the local system are sacrificed and a gap develops and widens between the system and the society it serves. In other words, as long as the group in power had its members on the local school board and was able to keep whatever community element there might be with conflicting views either divided or submerged, the school-community relationship was characterized by harmony and stability. However, this is not consistently

possible and will eventually lead to conflict. The process of expressing divergent views generally follows a predictable pattern.

Many attempts have been made to label school districts according to their particular circumstances in regard to education. According to Iannaccone and Lutz (1970), there have been several sets of terms used in recent years. These include "sacred" and "secular." Sacred school districts are those which are slow to move and which tend to resist any type of change. The secular school districts are those which are open to, and place high value on, change. Two other classifications that also have been used are "structural pluralism" and "cultural pluralism." Structural pluralism occurs when cultural differences among individuals result in a type of class system that is rigid and the individuals, because of their culture, do not have the same opportunities as others. Cultural pluralism exists whenever different alternatives along different paths are provided to allow for equal opportunity and position consistent with cultural differences.

> Some educators may disagree with the idea that the relationship between the superintendent and the school board is political. . . . However, empirical research supports the view that there is a politics that encompasses the community, the board of education, and the bureaucracy (Kimbrough and Nunnery, 1976, p. 23).

Within the structure of any community there will be interest groups which will attempt to be heard as a part of the governing process.

> Interest groups serve two purposes, they are <u>inputers</u>--describing relevant conditions and perspectives within the framework of a particular problem area. They are also <u>critiquers</u>--they provide linkage-positive or linkage-negative between the school district and segments of the community (Steele, Working, and Biernacki, 1981, p. 92).

These interest groups from within the community can play differing roles such as defusing the impact of competing groups, generating a more accurate reflection of public opinion, maintaining support for an issue,

working with a singleness of purpose, joining together with other interest groups in a coalition, or making a large impact upon the community. This area of interest groups must be in the minds of both the local school board and the superintendent. They each must have a grasp of and a feeling for this area so that they may work with the community membership and understand their feelings rather than ignoring them and creating a potentially explosive situation.

If one looks at the individual communities and places them on a continuum, they would run from the completely monopolistic to completely competitive. Each community may vary from its established pattern from time to time. The community may be stable, then for a short period of time undergo a period of conflict before becoming stable again (Walden, 1966).

> Analysis has shown that power structures have unique characteristics and one cannot generalize from one district to another, although similar patterns may be found among districts of similar types of control (Kimbrough and Nunnery, 1976, p. 9).

Kimbrough and Nunnery (1976) found that the community power structure was continually undergoing change. Internally, new leadership was emerging, replacing old leadership. Such leadership potential can be acquiescent, awaiting the proper time to come forth and explode on the scene. Powerful external inputs also occur which will affect the power structure. This constantly changing process of becoming, being, and refocusing produces continual change so that no power structure is exactly the same today as it was yesterday.

A community power structure is a system of power relationships within a given policy, a system which is sustained over time; only by observing its operation can one predict the outcome of a particular community issue (Martin, 1962). As time passes, the structure of the

community changes, as do the individuals within it. Along with this, the focus of the community shifts to new values and directions that are not predictable today.

The local school board is a unique political instrument. Viewing the local school board from the perspective of the general public, one may be able to determine, to a degree, its method of operation. The ordinary citizen from within the community does not perceive that individual opinions count for very much; and, even when expressed, they make little, if any, difference in the outcome of the policy decisions ongoing at the time. These individual citizens are generally inclined to allow their professional educators to make the educational decisions necessary and reduce the power of the elected school board in comparison to other elected governmental officials (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978).

The School Board

> The culture of school boards holds that education is too important to become a political affair and that the school board members are trustees for the public, not representatives of the public (Lutz, 1975, p. 99).

Historical Background

The local school board, as a political body designed to manage the affairs of public education, is uniquely American. Few other countries provide for the election of lay citizens to control the public school system. Americans must exhibit great faith in the ability to control and govern themselves (Noble, 1954).

American public education was born and developed close to the people. Schools began to emerge in homes, churches, and even in the wagon trains traveling westward; anywhere there was a book, a wise

parent, and an interested child. In the American tradition, these were free schools for free people. Thus, as Dykes (1965, p. 45) stated, education was ". . . of, by, and for the people."

As towns began to develop, so did the need and opportunity for more formal education (Grill, 1978). Educational decisions were initially made in town meetings. As the towns grew, educational decisions became more complex and more time-consuming. In order to solve the twin problems of complexity and time and yet maintain local control of education, the townspeople began to elect representatives (called "selectmen") to handle school affairs.

Towns continued to grow in number and size. Eastern America became industrialized, with cities springing up along the rivers. From 1840 to 1850, the number of cities with over 8,000 population increased from 44 to 85 (Grill, 1978). The increase in population caused a natural increase in the complexity of governmental functions, including education. Direct responsibility for education thus became burdensome to the selectmen who were charged with that obligation. The selectmen began appointing temporary committees to handle specific functions, such as building a school or hiring a headmaster.

Continued increase in the demands of education eventually led the selectmen to appoint permanent committees to oversee educational matters. This was the birth of the permanent school committee, which later became known as the school board (Dykes, 1965). The school committees were charged with legislative, administrative, and supervisory responsibilities. They oversaw the operation of the schools to the smallest detail. The headmaster, however, began to gradually assume the administrative responsibilities for the operation of the school as the school's operation continued to grow in complexity. As the number of schools within

the cities increased, superintendents were employed. They were employees of the board, hired to handle specific administrative duties. By the early 1900's, the school board emerged as a policy-making legislative body and the school superintendent emerged as its executive officer (Grill, 1978).

In the early 1900's, the states' legislative assemblies delegated powers and responsibilities to variously named local governments for the purpose of providing education: the county, the New England town, the township, the city, and the school district (Knight, 1951). In many southern and western states, county boards of education were elected by the people or were appointed by other governmental bodies. The superintendent, with supervisory and/or adminstrative authority, was either elected by the citizens or was appointed by the school board to serve the schools outside the independent cities.

Some New England states used town or city units for educational administration (Dykes, 1965). This town system, which originated in Massachusetts and is primarily limited to the New England states, continues to manage all local governmental functions under one tax authority. The "town" may be a small community, a rural area, or both. The town school committee is elected by citizens to manage educational affairs. The committee may employ one or more superintendents, or two or more town school committees may employ a single superintendent to serve in a supervisory capacity and as an executive officer of the town school committees.

> The city unit has been popular throughout the United States. Although under direct legislative mandate by the state, the city unit promised flexibility for the school board to provide educational opportunities for students (Noble, 1954, p. 45).

Knight reported in 1951 that much of the rapid progress in American education had been largely due to the improvement of the city system in organization, administration, and direction. City school boards were either elected by citizens or were directly appointed by another governmental authority such as the city council.

When the city school unit started in Massachusetts in 1789, most such units were very small; however, as the cities grew, the need for additional schools increased, and new school districts were formed inside the city. Twenty or more school districts were developed within the boundaries of the largest cities. Each such district had its own tax base and administration. The lack of uniform opportunities led to demand for city-wide controls. The eventual solution was to centralize in each city under one school board, one superintendent, and one tax base. In 1826, New Orleans centralized three schools under the direction of a board of regents and one director. Other cities followed, including Buffalo, New York, in 1837; Louisville, Lexington, and Maysville, Kentucky, and Providence, Rhode Island, in 1838; St. Louis, Missouri, in 1839; and Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1840. By 1885, practically every large city had centralized control.

The township as a governmental unit was favored in the north central states and generally comprised a larger geographical area than did the New England town. Moreover, the township educational district was usually an area congruent with other governmental units. Knight (1951) stated that it was a less effective educational division than was the New England town system. Duke (1964) argued that the township system focused effort on systematic organization for education.

Characteristics and Perceptions of School Board Members

In most cases, the majority of local public school board members believe that they have been elected to run the local school system, acting in the capacity of trustee for the general community (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978). They do not report that they are to necessarily represent those who elected them to their positions of leadership. In reality, they apparently believe that they have been elected so that they can follow their own consciences. Furthermore, the more the school board is driven away from behaving in such a fashion, the more strongly it expresses its convictions.

In 1974, Blanchard reported on a survey of local school board members in the State of Kentucky. He found that 87% of those responding perceived that, in their capacity as elected school board members, they were not under any obligation to the general public to follow the wishes of those who placed them in office.

Observing the different types of procedures which the local school boards could follow in determining policy, it was generally found that the local school board wanted to seek consensus behind closed doors in the attempt to avoid public debate of issues involved (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978). This, of course, was an attempt to reduce the possibility of conflict. Therefore, in most cases, anyone who attempted to influence school boards to go in a direction other than the direction the school board was predisposed to take found every such effort thwarted.

Another way of classifying local school boards was proposed by Richards and Kuper (1971) when they used the terms "elite council" or "arena council." When a local school board is classified as an elite council it

will be discussing most of the actions in private, with the minority agreeing with the majority when going public to show a unanimous decision. The elite council members consider themselves to be trustees with little or no obligation to those who elected them to office. When the elite council is in action, the superintendent is integrated with the school board, and a consensus is needed before anything gets accomplished. The arena council, on the other hand, conducts all of its business in meetings open to the public, with only a majority vote required for action. It would be their perception that they must represent the public who elected them to office. The superintendent is thus separated from the school board and is simply assigned to carrying out the board's wishes. In the majority of cases, if all school districts were classified as elite or arena, most would be elite.

A nationwide study by Underwood, McClusky, and Umberger (1978) profiled an average school board member. The following seven points were identified in their study as descriptive of the respondents:

1. 92% of all school board members are elected to office, but geographically the South still appoints 24% of theirs.
2. Almost 25% of all school board members come from households earning $40,000 or more yearly, which is four times the median family income.
3. Over 61% of all school board members had served more than one term of office.
4. Only 23% had less than 12 years of education; the other 77% had some college training.
5. Female school board membership had risen from 12% in 1972 to 26% in 1978.
6. 42% of all school board members are between 40 and 49 years of age, with 22% younger and 25% between 50 and 59 and 11% older.
7. 37% of all school boards were suburban, 31% were rural, 21% small town, and 11% urban (p. 101).

A recent study of Oklahoma school boards revealed a profile of their members (Green, 1987). Based on the statistical information gathered in this study, the composite picture of an Oklahoma school board member is that of a 43-year-old, married, white male farmer or rancher earning more than $30,000 per year. The typical board member was raised in a rural setting by parents interested in school and/or community affairs and has children enrolled in the community's public school system.

According to Green (1987), members served on school boards because of a desire to affect school policy and operations and an interest in their children's education. Only a few individuals reported that they were interested in serving on a school board as a stepping stone to a higher political office. The most difficult problems confronting board members were decisions on the allocation of funds, capital improvements, and issues concerning athletic programs and student discipline. While the board members did not seem to have problems in coming to a majority decision on issues among themselves or with school administrators, almost 50% of the respondents said they had experienced repercussions from within their communities because of their board membership. Some reported other personal problems stemming from board membership.

> There are a number of conclusions we can make about public school board members in Oklahoma as a result of this study. For example, board members have extremely positive attitudes toward vocational education, extracurricular activities, staff development activities and a strong administrative authority. Most members agree that the superintendent and principal are the key personnel in running the school.
>
> Board members also seem to be comfortable with a positive emphasis on teaching the basic subjects, merit pay, administrative quality and the existing degree of discipline. However, they expressed negative attitudes on teacher tenure, negotiations and social promotion (Green, 1987, pp. 14-15).

Looking at the reasons people give for running for a local school board position, Gross (1958) found that the most frequently given

responses were: (1) a civic duty to get involved, (2) a certain segment of the community needed representation, (3) political experience was desired, (4) a personal disapproval of present situations, and (5) the local public schools needed improvement.

> The only role that anyone running for office should follow is: you cannot take anything for granted, or anyone for granted, and if you have an opponent, you'd better run like mad. There's no one who can't be beat . . . school board races are entirely different from what they used to be. We're seeing a more sophisticated, more educated, more professional type of person seeking school board seats now (Abel, 1981, p. 22).

In several instances, elected school board members choose not to run for re-election to office. Downey (1978) found that these individuals were experiencing a sense of frustration, powerlessness, and even bitterness. Reasons reported for such attitudes included: (1) outside regulatory interference, (2) inadequate school revenues, (3) demands of local teacher unions, (4) discord between the school board and the superintendent, (5) bickering among and between individual school board members, and (6) chronic hostility and suspicion that the community members cast on them. In addition, it was determined that 23% of those who left the school board had been planning to do so for over a year prior to their departure. However, 75% of those who left completed their terms of office before leaving. Downey also found that, of those individuals who had left their positions as school board members, 42% said they would serve again, 15% said they might serve again, 31% said they would not serve again, and 12% were undecided. Even with all the frustrations and problems, 98% of those leaving the position voluntarily expressed very strong support for local control of public education.

Role and Function of the School Board

Much has been written about the role and function of the school

board. The primary emphasis of the literature has focused on the school board as a policy-making body, since that is the generally accepted role of the school board (Dykes, 1965).

> The identification of appropriate responsibilities and functions of lay school boards is far from settled, and many boards today have not given up their administrative and executive functions (Dykes, 1965, p. 12).

Thames (1950) reported that there are many, both within the education profession and in the general public, who believed that public school progress has been retarded as the result of lay control. In a more recent study, Davis (1984) concluded that scholarly studies of school boards have persistently challenged the belief that they operate on a democratic basis and are responsive to an interested electorate.

Since Americans have historically been committed to the thesis that lay control of public education is essential and desirable, improvement in that lay control should also be desirable. "In forward-looking communities where alert school executives are employed, board members are constantly being upgraded" (Thames, 1950, p. 7).

Nolte (1984) reported that school board members wanted to be better board members but, because of a lack of training in the area of responsibilities and duties of their position, they became dissatisfied and resigned. He indicated that more attention should be given to preparing board members to become better board members.

> How well our public schools serve society and youth is heavily dependent upon the understanding, insight, and capacity of those who are rendering services as members of boards of education. Mere selection at a popular election does not insure excellent service. Too little attention has been given to the training of school board personnel, or to a program of orientation for them. The experience obtained through service on a board of education is, of course, of definite help where educational policies are excellent and modern. To rest upon increasing understanding and insight through experience RETARDS educational progress (Thames, 1950, p. 56).

> The stakes are too high, there is too much of a human and material value involved, for a board member to be indifferent to or uninformed of the requirements of the job, to play for personal power, to seek special favors for special interest, to encroach on the prerogatives of the board as a whole, or to ignore the real educational needs of the community. The responsibilities of board membership cannot be taken lightly (Mooneyham, 1981, p. 6).

Davis (1949) concluded that a local board member was not merely a local official, but also a state and a national official: "He is paid the highest compliment parents can bestow on him--they entrust the welfare of their children. It is not a job to be taken lightly" (p. 12).

School board members are selected, sworn in, and serving on a board of education within a matter of days or weeks of their election. Since it is the board's duty to form the policies for each school district, board members must be duly trained for the task for which they have been chosen.

> In a nation that prides itself on its system of education, that method of acquisition for a board member seems to be a backward way to go about the important task of helping people succeed in running the nation's elementary and secondary schools (Nolte, 1984, p. 15).

> The board of education is charged with the duty of establishing and operating a school system. This duty is assigned by the general assembly; each of the 50 states' general assemblies designates the school board to oversee the states' compelling interest in education. Most modern writers adhere to the belief that the most effective school systems have boards of education adopt broad, basic, policies and hire competent educational specialists to administer the schools. School boards are composed of lay leaders in the communities who are in close contact with the local citizens and can shape the general direction of the schools and oversee the education of the youth (Dykes, 1965, p. 16).

Morphet, Johns, and Reller (1982) outlined the important duties of the school board.

1. Selection of the chief administrator, the superintendent of schools

2. Establishment of policies and procedures in accord with which the educational services are administered and a range of programs are developed

3. Establishment of policies relating to planning improvements and to accountability

4. Adoption of the budget and the enactment of provisions for the financing of the schools

5. Acquisition and development of necessary property and the provision of supplies

6. Adoption of policies regarding personnel, including establishment of essential policies and procedures for collective negotiations and the approval of agreements relating thereto

7. Appraisal of the work of the schools and adoption of plans for development (p. 11).

School board members have complete legal authority and power only when the board is legally convened (Morphet, Johns, and Reller, 1982). When individual members are speaking to a citizen on the street, the board member can only speak as another citizen. School board members cannot independently make decisions or take action on behalf of the board. All legal action by the board must transpire in an announced, public meeting. Personnel matters may be discussed in executive session, but formal action must still generally be made in the legal, open meeting. Similarly, decisions made by the board of education are binding to all members of the board. Individual board members who were absent for the vote, abstained, or voted against the issue are still bound to the majority decision. A 4-3 board vote is just as binding in all matters as is a 7-0 vote. Therefore, a board of education must be unified body.

School Board Member Turnover

The process of being elected to the school board, becoming an effective school board member, and maintaining that position over a number

of years is, to a large extent, dependent upon political factors present and active within the local community (Lutz and Garberina, 1977). According to Lutz and Iannaccone (1978), the majority of school boards are locked into a perspective of their responsibilities that requires them to be trustees for all of their constituents and representative of none of them.

When this happens, frustration may develop within the community which would lead to a concentrated effort to effect change through the election process. Today there are more and more political challenges to incumbent school board members, and these challenges are involving more and more candidates. This fact may be an indication that the shifting national and state political focus on school policy has reached the local level (Mitchell and Thorsted, 1976).

Downey (1978) reported that the greatest single reason why school board members quit was the time it took as a school board member to do the job. Many school board members departed with the attitude that they had accomplished all they were capable of under the given circumstances. The decision these school board members made was generally based on their own judgments, although not the community's. This became even more apparent when educational background of the board member or size of the community was brought into focus.

The kind of community in which incumbent school board members are consistently re-elected or defeated has been explored extensively. Kirkendall (1966) tested relationships between community change and incumbent school board member defeat between 1951 and 1961 in four growing California counties which comprised 37 school districts. He focused on social, economic, and political indicators, using the variables of average daily attendance, assessed valuation, and number of votes cast in the

previous election. His research showed that 19 specific indicators of these three characteristics could discriminate at the .001 level of confidence between districts suffering incumbent defeat and those that did not. The strongest predictor of incumbent school board member defeat was the percentage change in the assessed valuation over a three year period. Consistently, the next strongest was the ratio of votes cast against incumbent school board members to total votes cast in the previous election.

Lopez (1976) replicated Kirkendall's 1966 research. Additional information showed that demographic shifts which involved a change in direction from positive to negative growth, from flat to upward or downward gorwth, or from upward to downward growth in socioeconomic conditions, assessed valuation, private employment, and family income had significant bearing on the elections in which there was a defeat of an incumbent school board member. Most important in Lopez's study was the direction of change in private employment, second was the middle-class vote, and third was direction of change in assessed valuation.

Thorsted (1974), also building upon Kirkendall's (1966) original work, developed a "predictive index" utilizing the percentage change in assessed valuation and the number of votes cast against the incumbents in the two previous elections. Using this predictive index, at least a 37% vote against incumbents was predicted in the 1973 election. A "challenger index" was then calculated from the number of losing candidates representing the extent of focusing among challengers. The findings revealed that incumbent defeat is significantly correlated (P=.0001) with the percentage of votes cast previously against the incumbents. If one ran in the previous election against strong opposition, he would more than likely be defeated in the next election.

LeDoux and Burlingame (1973) repeated Kirkendall's (1966) study in New Mexico using 66 school districts. Their findings showed a poorer predictive value of between 93% and 97%. One reason for this difference was that LeDoux and Burlingame included both growing and declining counties, while Kirkendall used only growing counties.

When 77 school districts in Massachusetts were studied, it was found that the Iannaccone-Lutz model of incumbent school board member defeat was valid and that the gap between community demands and school board response was an important factor (Lutz and Garberina, 1977). The variable of tax rate was important in determining this gap. The socioeconomic-political indicators of school district change selected by Kirkendall (1966) were also found to be related to incumbent school board member defeat.

Stetson (1980) found in the State of Alabama that the 10 most important influences leading to the election of a local school board member were: (1) campaign promises, (2) campaign organization, (3) educational and administrative experience, (4) family ties, (5) incumbency, (6) length of residence, (7) personal reputation, (8) position on issues, (9) professional reputation, and (10) race. Not many of these were related to community positions on educational issues, however.

While both the position and dissatisfaction with present school board membership inspire others to seek office, dissatisfaction is the most significant factor; furthermore, since elections in which all incumbents retire have more challengers than any other group of elections, it can be inferred that retirement of all incumbents can appropriately be considered as a defeat for the incumbents (Mitchell and Thorsted, 1976).

A study in New Jersey involved the amount of agreement or disagreement among stable school board members, defeated board members, stable

superintendents, and terminated superintendents in regard to their role expectations of a superintendent. Graser (1972) found that (1) both stable and terminated superintendents agreed to their role expectation as superintendent; and (2) school board members, stable and defeated, disagreed on their role expectations of a superintendent.

Incumbent school boards tend to become closed systems which must be forced open through vigorous political action. This tends to culminate in incumbent school board member defeat at the polls (Mitchell and Thorsted, 1976). When all incumbents run, they are less likely to face opposition. This suggests episodic opposition which tends to strike some school districts repeatedly and others not at all over a period of several elections. This episodic opposition could be the result of a growing difference of opinion between the educational leadership and the community in the direction the school district was pursuing.

With the passage of time and an open community, a gap will develop and widen between the local school board and the community. When the gap gets large enough, the community will act to change the structure of the local school board through the ballot box (Lutz and Garberina, 1977). Additional support for this conclusion came from research conducted in Kansas by Hass (1978), whereby he found that incumbent board member defeat occurs when the school board has been operating as if in a vacuum, with little or no thought given to its clientele. To ignore the parameters and constraints imposed by the community on the schools is to run the risk of the incumbent board members being rebuffed in the local school election.

"Incumbent school board defeat is both a result of and indicator of a struggle for power between an emergent power clique and an incumbent group" (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978, p. 131). The struggle for power

between these groups was a direct result of the ability or lack of ability of the school board to be attuned to the needs of the community.

The possibility for incumbent school board member defeat in any school system will become greater the more the incumbent school board denies the demands of the public it serves. This, in turn, may affect the length of the term in office of the superintendent.

> The response of the school board to community conditions shows a direct relationship between incumbent defeat and the demand-response of school boards. The superintendent's tenure is affected by the composition of the school board (Lutz and Garberina, 1977, p. 126).

There are many issues in the field of education in which decisions must be made. This gives direction and emphasis to the local school districts. As these decisions are reached, involvement is secured from numerous sources. Martin (1962) described politics as ". . . nothing more (or less) than the contest which develops around the definition and control of policy" (p. 76). The decision-making policy in the local public school districts has been traditionally one which operated under the scrutiny of the general public. Usually, decisions were made in a very informal fashion, excluding many of the individuals and groups which are affected by the outcomes of the board's actions. In a great number of cases the local boards, by their actions, actually discourage any input from individuals other than board members. District-wide discussion and debate pertaining to issues, particularly values with which the school board is dealing, are not encouraged because of the characteristic consensus politics of education (Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970).

The Superintendent

The superintendent is the individual who serves the school system as the chief administrative adviser, educational leader, and executive of

the school board. The individual in this position has been entrusted with the authority to manage the affairs of the school in accordance with appropriate local, state, and federal policies and regulations.

Historical Background

The position of local school superintendent originated in the United States approximately 150 years ago. Noble (1954) credited New Orleans as the first to employ a superintendent. In 1826, "New Orleans organized three schools under the administration of a director" (Noble, 1954, p. 100). According to Dykes (1965) and Campbell, Bridges, and Nystrand (1977), Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky, were the first cities to hire superintendents. Knight (1951) reported that Nathan Bishop, a tutor at Brown University, probably was the first full-time professional superintendent when the school committee of Providence, Rhode Island, employed him on August 1, 1839.

In 1838, the Kentucky legislature enacted a law that established a system of common schools. Louisville, Lexington, and Maysville then appointed agents to perform some of the duties of a superintendent. The yearly salary for the Louisville agent in 1840 was $800. A grammar school principal in Louisville that same year was paid $900, a hundred dollars more than the superintendent (Knight, 1951).

The trend toward professional administration spread rapidly to the other larger cities throughout the country and, by the turn of the century, superintendency was an almost universally accepted position in the organization of school administration (Noble, 1954).

> The superintendency was developed to satisfy the need for administrative authority over the schools. As the schools increased in number and grew in size, selectmen and committeemen could not provide adequate supervision, and since the subcommittee's plan proved unsuccessful, the superintendency position

developed. However, this evolution did not come easy (Dykes, 1965, p. 40).

City officials often viewed the expenditure of funds for a chief executive officer as wasteful. According to Campbell, Bridges, and Nystrand (1977), school boards were often hesitant to relinquish authority and questioned themselves for their failure to execute their elected duties. Even the teachers and principals resisted the superintendency's development and were opposed to direct, full-time supervision and control. According to the AASA (1952), this same skepticism remained pervasive for school administrators.

> Having found the job of school supervision impossible through their own combined efforts, boards expressed doubt that any single person could perform all the duties even if he did nothing else. Sometimes they resented, as a reflection upon themselves, the proposal for an executive officer. Board members tried vainly in various other ways to meet their expanding responsibilities, hesitantly appointed an executive officer, often abandoned the experiment, always returned to it (p. 39).

Wilson (1960) reported the development of the superintendency as follows:

> The position of school superintendent is a product of growth and necessity. It was fashioned; it was not born. It unraveled; it was not conceived. No great architect envisioned a problem and designed a quick solution. Rather, the problem of administering in an organized manner the new, ambitious, and growing dream of educating all youth was attached on many fronts by many citizens. As a model began to take shape in large cities concurrent of the Civil War era, it was copied indiscriminately by smaller communities in succeeding decades. By the turn of the twentieth century, the superintendency enjoyed almost universal acceptance. Not until this century has serious attention been given to its rational direction (p. 23).

The number of superintendents continued to increase through the early years of this century. Wilson (1960) documented a dramatic turnaround beginning in the early 1930's. The number of school systems in the United States began to decrease due to the consolidation of smaller systems. Such was the extent of consolidation that in 1932 there were

only about one-tenth the number of school districts that had existed in the peak years of the 1920's.

Superintendents have historically been among the best educated members of their communities. Except for a period during World War I, sufficient numbers of qualified administrators have been available for employment. The G.I. Bill created large college enrollments in the late 1940's and 1950's which produced an abundant supply of certified candidates for the superintendent positions of the 1960's. Superintendents with their more specialized training thus were sometimes employed in positions with less pay and status (James, 1982).

Roles and Characteristics of the Superintendent

According to the literature, superintendents have changed little from those at the position's historical inception. Most superintendents are married and are white males who strive for upward mobility. James (1982) stated that "Superintendents are generally native-born Protestants from rural, farming areas" (p. 24). Tyack (1976) described additional characteristics of the superintendents.

> Typically, they had long experience in education, beginning their careers as young teachers, going on to principalships, and then becoming superintendents (in larger communities they often became assistant superintendents along the way). In disproportionate percentages they have been older sons in larger than average families. Mostly they remained in the same states for their entire careers as superintendents. They have been joiners, participating actively in civic and professional groups. Most of them picked up their advanced education while they practiced their profession, with long gaps of time between their academic degrees. They have been disproportionately Republican and have generally been moderate to conservative in their social philosophies (p. 85).

In an Ohio study, Wilson (1980) asked superintendents to describe traits that were perceived to be common among successful superintendents. As determined in this opinion poll, the successful superintendent was

usually a male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-aged Republican who, although intelligent and academically able, was not gifted. This individual, who had earned a doctorate in education, came from a blue-collar family of average to below average means. When this person was a student in high school and college, he held an "A" or "B" average while participating in extracurricular activities. He held responsible leadership positions and worked at outside jobs while in school. "Personality, "friendliness," "hardworking," "nonsmoker," and "regular attender of church" were also descriptive terms of this person. In his political, social, or moral matters he was found to be slightly left of the middle of the road. He was strong willed, but flexible when the need arose, while being self-confident and results-oriented. He was found to be physically fit and had learned how to work with others efficiently and effectively. These individuals' backgrounds also had similarities in that they normally had five to six years of teaching experience, usually at the secondary level, and had not become a superintendent until the age of 40, older than the nationwide average. However, Ohio's superintendents tended to have longer tenure than the average. Knowing the importance of community involvement, these superintendents always bought a home in the school district and never had an unlisted telephone number. Their concern with public relations was shown by their participation in civic, social, and church activities. Remarkably, 35% of these superintendents had never lost an election and most had not experienced a teacher strike. Perhaps the most significant finding was that each of these administrators was perceived to have the ability to know when to include their school boards in decision-making, and when not to. Most of them had never aspired to be a superintendent during their early careers (Wilson, 1980).

In 1960, Wilson labeled the successful superintendent as the "new brand," a person who is professionally prepared for the superintendency. The trend at that time was away from advancing people through the system. Boards thus tended to discard the practice of promoting the best teacher to the superintendency after discoveries that good teachers did not necessarily become good administrators. The most desirable superintendent was perceived as, first, a person with successful teaching experience who developed leadership skills in a subordinate administrative post and who acquired specialized instruction in public school administration on the university graduate level. Second, the new superintendent was dynamic, aggressive, and a strong leader. "He has discarded the blue serge, severe demeanor, and professional reserve in favor of contemporary raiment, friendly helpfulness, and congeniality" (Wilson, 1960, p. 30). The superintendent placed trust in people and their ideas, taking the roles of salesman, diplomat, trial lawyer, and gracious host. Third, the new brand of superintendent was a utilitarian psychologist with the ability to understand human nature and to manage people, capable of sympathy and empathy but on guard against personal attacks. Fourth, the superintendent was a well-educated person who had sufficient knowledge and experience to deal comfortably with the business executive, the elected official, the sports enthusiast, the blue-collar worker, and the ladies' garden club. Finally, the new brand of superintendent was career-oriented and quickly passed from one superintendency to another, more prestigious one (Wilson, 1960).

Carlson (1972) referred to the superintendent as "career-bound" as opposed to the more traditional "place-bound" superintendent. The place-bound superintendents were persons promoted from within the district administration. The career-bound person usually served in administrative

positions in two or more districts and was available to move to areas where superintendent vacancies occurred.

Walden (1966) discovered that the superintendent usually is found in the foreground of the policy-making picture even though, officially, the superintendent is the school board's administrator of policies and not the determiner of them. The superintendent is the professional educator who, by offering professional judgments, advises the school board and provides them with alternative policy proposals. "The superintendent is the key figure in the structure established for the purpose of policy determination for the school district" (Goldhammer, 1959, p. 46).

Attempting to determine who has influence upon, and regular contact with, the superintendent, Pitner and Ogawa (1981) determined that the everyday communications by the superintendent are, to a very large degree, brief, fragmented bits of time spent with basically three groups of people: subordinates in the school system, school board members, and community leaders. The superintendent controls the major portion of the day through manipulation of the time and place at which these conversations occur. In terms of who has the most time with the superintendent, this study showed that the superintendent's subordinates were involved approximately 50% of the time, with the location of these meetings generally in the superintendent's office. In the majority of cases, these meetings were initiated by the superintendent and were usually one-on-one in nature. Superintendents utilize this time to secure information, decide on organizational procedures, formulate decisions, and answer requests and solicitations. This separation of informational sources places the superintendent squarely in the middle of the school district's communication network, a position from which the superintendent can exert a special, significant kind of influence. Since the vast majority of the

superintendent's time is spent in direct contact with people, only 20% of his time is spent doing desk work and travelling.

As he studied the superintendent's influence on a local school district, Goldhammer (1950) also determined that the local school superintendent was the hub of the decision-making process in the local school district because the superintendent alone was the possessor of vital information which the local school board needed to make valid policy decisions. The superintendent had access to the greatest variety of inside information concerning the needs and accomplishments of the local schools.

As the local school superintendent carries out his duties, he becomes a mediator, a referee who serves as a conciliator between elements of the social environment (Pitner and Ogawa, 1981). The superintendent is a vital link in this system, acting to manage and thereby influence the process by which shared ideas are brought into being. The superintendent communicates with a variety of individuals from the school and community in order to understand the opinions and preferences of the social system of which the superintendent is a member.

According to Carlson (1972), nearly every state required that superintendents have experience as classroom teachers. The most common path leading to the superintendency was through positions as teacher and principal. In some of the larger systems, the track involved experience as teacher, principal, assistant superintendent or director, and then superintendent. Carlson reported that most school boards preferred superintendents in the age range of 40-49 years. While most superintendents enter the superintendency during their forties, the average age of incumbent superintendents was 50.

According to Wilson (1981), school boards do not use consistent patterns to hire superintendents. While much literature was available to assist the boards with this important task, evidence indicated that available advice was frequently not followed. Some school boards let their incumbent superintendents hire a replacement. Others used an extensive search or hired consultants for this important function. The interviewing process was equally inconsistent. Some superintendents were hired without meeting the incumbent superintendent or even the school board. One superintendent reportedly was interviewed in a cocktail lounge and got the job. Other boards arranged for the prospective superintendent to meet almost the entire community.

Wilson (1981) also reported that the decision to hire a particular candidate may be based on unconnected or conflicting reasons, such as smoking habits, age (actual or appearance), military experience, business experience, doctoral degree, alluring wife, unmarried status, few school-age children (system was overcrowded), grades, affiliation with the Parent-Teacher Association, or experience in many or few superintendent positions.

In recent decades, professional organizations and universities have focused much attention on the training of educational administrators. Morphet, Johns, and Reller (1982) stated that the need was growing for action in the training process and for increased inservice training. New knowledge had been developed in the educational administration field, but concerted effort was needed to focus on the development of new theory and knowledge and increased cooperation between the school systems, universities, and professionals. A key to the future success of education, according to Morphet, Johns, and Reller may be the careful selection and controlled development of administrators.

A primary question, according to Morphet, Johns, and Reller (1982), focused on whether or not a superintendent should be an educator. The term "educator" in this context would refer to a person who understands the educational processes and can lead the staff in shaping the curricula and instruction. As the superintendency position began to develop in the nineteenth century, superintendents emphasized their skills as managers--those who deal with finances and facilities. Others were mostly concerned with matters of curricula and instruction. A third group, who were competent in the educational process, provided the necessary leadership to give services and programs based on educational needs.

Today, the administrator is pushed by many forces into becoming a manager with little time or energy to devote to child development or the learning process (AASA, 1982). Superintendents were asked to identify new skills or information they needed to be most effective. They reported the following:

1. General management skills
2. Human relations skills
3. Data management/technology
4. Financial skills
5. Knowledge of social and education change process
6. Other conflict resolution skills
7. Political skills
8. Research skills (p. 110).

Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) defined the three basic skills needed by administrators as technical, human, and conceptual.

> The technical skill requires an understanding of educational methods, processes, procedures, and techniques. It also requires a knowledge of finance, accounting, scheduling, purchasing, construction, and maintenance (p. 111).

They described human skill as the ". . . ability to work effectively and efficiently with other people on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting" (p. 113). This requires an understanding of oneself and an appreciation for others. Sergiovanni and Carver noted that conceptual skill requires the school executive to view the school, the district, and the total educational program as a unit:

> This skill includes the effective mapping of interdependence for each of the components of the school as an organization, the educational program as an instructional system, and the functioning of the human organization (p. 114).

The conceptual skill requires a balance of administrative theory, educational philosophy, and organizational and human behavior.

According to Hack et al. (1971), the way an individual performs a job depends on the orientation that the person brings to that job. Since educational administration involves a complexity of activities and relationships, it may be viewed from many directions. Some administrators view their jobs as fulfilling the purposes of the institution, while others look at the tasks that need to be completed. A third group may view educational administration as a process and concentrate on making arrangements for the implementation of the processes. Finally, a fourth group may focus on leadership.

> Each group may be partially right, but to be successful in educational administration, an administrator cannot afford to have a limited view of his role. He must be aware of the conflicts of interest of the various publics with which he must work. He should take into consideration those things that make sense to him and conform to his own beliefs (Hack et al., 1971, p. 23).

School Board-Superintendent Relationships

> The best one-gauge appraisal of a community's school system, so the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) suggested recently, is a barometric reading of its school board/superintendent relationship. In creating the mutual trust,

> confidence, and understanding essential to operating a successful educational program, the superintendent, who occupies the dual position of leader to staff and partner to a lay board, plays a pivotal role (Hess, 1965, p. 44).

Only by developing an effective school board/superintendent relationship can the school system work most efficiently. By recognizing the areas most likely to contribute to a breakdown in relations, the board and superintendent may avoid some conflicts. One of the prime areas for potential breakdown is a misunderstanding or failure to follow the policy making and administrative role model (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 1977). The superintendent must use professional and technical competency to manage the schools and to implement board directions. An effective school program results when both superintendent and school board properly execute their roles and respect each other's duties. The board and superintendent must continually assess their working relationship, focusing on proper division of responsibilities.

Hess (1965) also reported that superintendents and school board members should clearly understand their areas of responsibility; that is, "The school board members should stick to policy matters and render administrative matters unto the board's executive agent, the superintendent" (p. 47). Citing the National Education Association (NEA), Hess stated the following:

> The distinction between lay control of school policies determined by the board of education and implementation of these policies by professional staff, with the leadership of the local superintendent, should be dedicated, understood and respected (p. 47).

Schmidt and Voss (1976) referred to this traditional school board/superintendent role-relationship as a harmony model. Policy-setting was a prerogative of the school board, but policy should originate with the

professional staff. The superintendent has the responsibility for the interpretation and administration of adopted policy.

The primary responsibility of the local school board is to make policy decisions and the primary responsibility of the superintendent is to administer those decisions, but in reality their functions intermingle. The decision-making process in regard to policy involves intimate discussion between the two parties. This quality of interaction between the school board and the superintendent may well affect and influence the decision-making process (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978). Youngblood and Tidwell (1981) contended that the "School boards are likely to become spokesmen for the superintendent to the community. Their representative roles are reversed and the superintendent becomes the dominant policy maker" (p. 51).

Upon careful examination of this position, it can be seen why, in some cases, the superintendent can become the dominant policy-making force in the local school district. Kimbrough and Nunnery (1976) reported on the control of power.

> As the profession of education develops better educational processes, this power may grow so vast as to influence the society greatly. Such power in the hands of an elitest group of whatever persuasion would be ominous to American democracy. Therefore, this power should be kept directly accountable to the people (p. 31).

> Given the nature of the board-superintendent relationship, the ability of the superintendent to maintain his position is also political in nature and closely tied to the ability of school board members to get re-elected (Lutz and Garberina, 1977, p. 123).

Since the school superintendent is the administrative head of the school system, Dykes (1965) reported that superintendents should be appointed by and held accountable to the school board, administering the school as directed by the board.

> It should be made clear in the law that the board of education is the representative of the people for the establishment of educational policies for the schools, but that the superintendent is the executive officer of the board and its professional advisor. The superintendent should have an enforceable right to make recommendations to the board on educational matters such as the selection of personnel, courses of study, and textbooks and instructional materials. The board should be restricted to the superintendent's recommendations in many phases of the instructional program of the schools, although reserving the right to the board to reject his first proposals and to ask for alternative recommendations (Dykes, 1965, p. 30).

Officially, the chief school officer is the administrator of the local board of education policies and not the determiner of such. The superintendent is adviser to the board, offering professional judgments, and presenting alternative policy proposals (Walden, 1966).

Any change in direction that local school districts take is also connected to the local school superintendent. It has been found by Griffith (1964) that the number of innovations instituted in a school district is inversely proportional to the tenure of the superintendent. Also, the more hierarchy to the organizational structure, the less possibility of change occurring. When change does occur, however, it tends to occur from the top down. This only emphasizes the importance of the superintendent.

Paschal and Pittillo (1972) suggested that the perception that teachers have of a unified establishment between the superintendent and the school board is not necessarily true. Conflict frequently occurs at the top level. In a survey of superintendents and board chairpersons in North Carolina, only about 10% reported conflict arising from the discussion of personnel. Little conflict was noted on issues of school finance or even community pressure groups. The greatest conflict reported by superintendents was caused by school boards' assumptions of administrative functions. Conversely, the school board chairmen perceived the

greatest conflict as being caused by superintendents assuming the role of policy-making.

Authority conflict in organizations, according to Anderson (1968), results when two or more bases of authority contradict each other, creating anxiety. Formal authority is derived from the position through the rules and procedures. Functional authority grows out of technical skills, expertise, and experience.

Nelson (1980) insisted that school boards and superintendents are forced into conflict situations because of ". . . irrational demands, emotional reactions, vested interest forces, legal mandates, political pressures, and harsh criticism" (p. 67). Educational administrators increasingly expected to cope with conflict resolution. They found attitudes of dissent and militancy. Therefore, they must deal effectively with groups and individuals in conflict situations.

The lay citizens affect the superintendent's decisions. In our country, the schools belong to the people who pay for them with their taxes. According to Hack et al. (1971), the people wanted to decide how the schools are run and set limits on the administrator's decision-making power. The school board member, according to Hess (1965), spent many long hours on school matters and was subject to the same pressure as the superintendent, but usually without pay or glory.

> As an individual board member, you must learn to deal with another one, the superintendent. Remember: The superintendent is the professional in your school system, and you msut help and work with him (Clark, 1981, p. 18).

Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) stated that school board members should give support to their superintendent, but they should also maintain their right to fulfill their duties. A board may become the dominant force when the superintendent lets a major issue drag on, when there

exists widespread dissatisfaction, or when the board loses confidence in the superintendent. Lack of leadership by the superintendent may cause the board to assume administrative responsibility. The superintendent should demonstrate leadership by actively planning, advising, directing, and implementing board policy (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 1977).

Kutkat (1981) advised that when the board and the superintendent disagreed and the superintendent believed that the board was acting unwisely, the superintendent had three choices: (1) yield to the wishes of the board, (2) remain neutral, or (3) disregard the board pressure. Kutkat stated that the third choice was the correct action since superintendents were paid to be the leaders of their school systems and good leaders understand that they must sometimes make unpopular decisions.

Concerning community involvement, Lutz (1978) reported that many school boards chose to involve the community closely in the decision-making process. Open meetings were held where community input was sought. In heterogeneous school districts, the parents valued "arena behavior" by their school boards, although it may cause conflict and a high rate of board turnover. Superintendents may survive such board conflict and turnover by:

> being supportive of the concept of arena behavior for the board and recognizing that public debate enhances the public nature of policy making
>
> remaining inactive in the policy making process
>
> separating the policy making process from the administrative process
>
> leading in the execution of policy enacted by the board
>
> preventing personal identification with any board faction (Lutz, 1978, p. 41).

School board members reported that they must listen to the voices of the voters who put them in office (Kutkat, 1981). Superintendents did not depend on the voters directly for their jobs, but they normally served at the pleasure of the school board. Even though the board and superintendent usually agreed on what was best for the school system, there were times that the two did not agree.

Since it is important for the school board to know all available options and the implications of each before the best decision can be made, Clark (1981) recommended that the superintendent make available the following data:

1. A complete identification of the problem
2. All supportive data concerning his recommendations
3. Alternative suggestions
4. A list of pros and cons concerning the alternatives
5. A rationale for the final recommendation (p. 18).

Poor planning may cause the board to become involved with day-to-day administration, thereby creating conflict in board/superintendent relationships (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 1977). A board that does not have a clear policy direction may find itself having to react to crisis situations. This makes decision-making much more difficult for the board and creates greater resistance toward the superintendent's implementation plans.

Not all writers have supported the harmony model of superintendent/school board relationships. Many social scientists have urged the development of a pluralist model which focuses on a more political form of administration. The role of the superintendency would become more that of an appointed politician or an elected official. This movement has

called for a partisan election of the school board that functions under a department of general city government.

> Educational policymaking would improve its responsiveness to the diverse needs of the citizens, and thereby, the administration of schools would become more innovative, socially sensitive, and educationally effective. This pluralist model seems to be supported by only a few social scientists. The literature by educational administrators seems to solidly support the harmony model (Schmidt and Voss, 1976, p. 526).

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) (1977) determined that the greatest conflicts in the harmony model were caused by failure to put student needs first in decision-making, withholding information by either party, closed mindedness, failure to seek all available information, poor leadership, and indecisiveness.

The conclusion has been drawn that the local school boards have used their ability to appoint the local superintendent in such a way that the entire school district has moved in a new direction. Carlson (1972) discovered that school boards can use their decision to appoint a new superintendent in order to mandate educational policy change. It was demonstrated that the appointment of an outsider to the position of superintendent would substantially increase the rate of policy change within a school district. The traditional saying "easy come, easy go" has relevance to the position of superintendency. The superintendent appears to be a position for which entry is relatively easy, but it also appears to be a position from which many individuals exit.

School Board and Superintendent Turnover

When a study is made in this area of superintendent turnover and incumbent school board member defeat at the polls, the explanatory model developed over a three-year period of time in the early 1960's provides a place to start.

> The model described the midwestern school district of Robertsdale during the late 1950's. The original model identified certain conditions that resulted in a gap between the community and the school board. This gap often resulted in incumbent school board member defeat, followed by increasing nonunanimous voting on the board, and within three years involuntary superintendent turnover (Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970, p. 63).

As a result of this "Robertsdale" model, there were three verification studies carried out based on the original model. These were done by Kirkendall, Walden, and Freeborn, all published in 1966.

Determining which social, economic, and political indicators could be used to predict future defeat for re-election of incumbent school board members, Kirkendall (1966) found that the most significant predictors were changes in assessed valuation, average daily attendance, and the ratio of votes against incumbents to total votes cast in previous elections.

Mitchell and Thorsted (1976) summarized the findings of both Walden (1966) and Freeborn (1966).

> There is a very significant relationship between the defeat of an incumbent school board member and replacement of the superintendent, and that the superintendent is usually replaced within three years after the entry of a successful insurgent on the school board and that this turnover is generally an involuntary one (p. 164).

Moen's (1971, p. 73) analysis of the data that he secured in the State of Pennsylvania revealed that ". . . the defeat of an incumbent in either the primary or general elections, is the most accurate predictor of involuntary superintendent turnover." Moen also declared that "School boards can use their decisions to appoint a new school superintendent in such a way as to effectively mandate educational policy change" (p. 74).

In reference to executive dismissal and replacement in the industrial world, Glickman et al. (1968) found that in the higher echelon of administration, the actual number of individuals holding these positions

was relatively small. Much interpersonal activity tended to develop among these administrators through highly personal relationships. Those in these industrial leadership positions seemed to operate with a great deal of informality and to depend on consensus in making decisions. Most of these managers accepted the idea that there is more than one right way to perform a management task.

Examination of the development and growth of conflict at these higher levels of industrial management revealed parallels with other types of administration. Kaagen (1978) described these when he declared that any time there were fundamental differences between people regarding any organizational objective, it could, and usually would, frustrate movement, cause dysfunction, and ultimately slow the growth capacity of that organization. Whenever this type of crisis continued long enough, serious consideration was generally given to terminating the employment of some administrator. "You can't change organizations merely by reorganizing or by restructuring functions. Ultimately you have to make key personnel changes if you want to improve the organization" (Kaagen, 1978, p. 82).

Stratton (1978) found that if an individual worked at one position for any length of time, it was only natural that a few people would become alienated along the way. Whenever the industry had problems, the administrator became a natural target for blame as the personification of that industry. Members were frustrated with their conditions and, without trying new tactics, came to the conclusion that a new chief executive could miraculously solve all their problems.

Kammerer et al. (1962) examined carefully the role of the city manager and found it to be a very political position which was greatly affected by the politics of the individual communities. In a competitive,

unstable type of community, professionalism, particularly skill in public relations on the part of the city manager, may be irrelevant. Given this nature of political environment, there was nothing the city managers could do to save their positions. It was necessary that city managers entered this type of community realizing that their positions were involved in politics and their risks of early dismissal far exceeded the possibilities of a long tenure in the position.

> City managers, like school superintendents, frequently considered to be performing non-political roles, were necessarily involved in politics because of their participation in policy determination for their communities. As such, their positions were vulnerable when a change in the power structure of the community brought a new political orientation to the city council. Clear evidence of a council shift in ideology was incumbent defeat (Kammerer et al., 1962, p. 35).

In determining why business executives left their positions in such large numbers, Gooding (1981) determined that there were at least five reasons that could be legitimately considered as causes. These included the increased pressure that was being placed on the individual to produce; the inflation rate and other national factors beyond their control; the day-to-day scrutiny of operations by board members, stockholders, and governmental agencies; the dramatic increase in mobility of the employees; and the rapidity of mergers, acquisitions, and consolidations.

> In the public sector, political pressure is an ever-present consideration, and it can be assumed that the source of political pressure will probably come from the same people whose support is needed to get a program enacted, an appropriation of funds made, or a supportive decision rendered (Kaagen, 1978, p. 52).

Superintendents have many different management or problem-solving styles. Ashmore (1979) studied Maine's superintendents to see if their conflict management style had any relationship to superintendency turnover. It was found that there was no significant difference between the choice of conflict management style of low turnover and high turnover

superintendents. It did show, however, that as a total group, Maine superintendents at that time preferred to use compromising and collaboration as opposed to avoiding and competing styles. It was also found that this choice of style does not have an effect on the length of time in office. Neither does this choice of style change with age or experience. In essence, the superintendent viewed himself as a peacemaker among the various forces.

Eblen (1975) found that involuntary superintendent turnover resulted in significantly more successful superintendents being hired from outside the school district than from within. In this regard, it was found that the degree of stability within the local school district was the strongest determinant in choosing an inside or outside replacement for the superintendency. Stable districts stayed with insiders, while changing districts hired from the outside. Most superintendent turnover occurred in small school districts having low enrollments and high expectations. The two greatest causes of superintendent turnover were found to be alleged interference of the board into the superintendent's administrative duties and personal factors of the superintendents themselves.

Another area that had an effect on the superintendency was revealed when a survey questionnaire was given to superintendents in the State of Massachusetts with the request that they identify the factors in their jobs which gave them the most difficulty (Gross, 1958). The major difficulties were reported to be created by insufficient funding, inadequate staff, and community values.

There have been other attempts made to find out what factors contributed to superintendent turnover. One of these was a study conducted in the State of Missouri by Pope (1974) which indicated that, although no one variable seemed primarily responsible, there were at least six that

contributed to the superintendent's turnover. In order of importance, they were found to be budget deficits, socioeconomic status, teacher activity, population stability, board of education stability, and political activity. Also mentioned were a rapid growth from rural to suburban classification of the local school district and failure of the superintendent to recognize and deal adequately with the development of political forces.

Porter (1971) looked at the phenomenon of superintendent turnover in the State of Connecticut. He found that 10 community and population factors were relevant to a superintendent's turnover: size, population, density, type of government, party affiliation, party competition, property value per pupil, per capita income, per pupil expenditure, and superintendent's salary. There was no significant level of association between any of them and the superintendent's turnover. Therefore, it was determined that various community and population factors were not related to the turnover of public school district superintendents in Connecticut. This study also found that only one of three turnovers was a result of retirement.

Still another study conducted in Illinois to analyze superintendent turnover in that state revealed that there were three prevalent reasons for superintendency turnover: poor relations with local school board members, attractiveness of the new position, and better compensation (Thies, 1980). Most superintendent turnover occurred because of retirement or career change. Other concerns included negotiations and teacher unions, teacher layoffs, school closings, bond defeats, program cutbacks, reorganization, and finances.

Bentley (1976) studied the issue in the State of North Carolina, asking both board chairpersons and superintendents about their reasons

for superintendent turnover, both voluntary and involuntary. Superintendents' reasons, presented in order of frequency, were: (1) board interference with superintendent's duties, (2) board's failing to work as a unit, (3) personality conflicts between board and superintendent, (4) lack of community confidence and support, (5) board's involvement in partisan politics, (6) poor local government support, (7) interference from pressure groups, and (8) intimidation from locally elected or appointed officials of government. Board chairpersons placed more importance on planning, plant operations, instructional leadership, decision-making, and business management as areas capable of producing conflict.

Freeborn (1966) hypothesized that when the chief school officer's departure from the school district was involuntary, the successor would be from outside the school district. Conversely, it was expected that candidates from inside the local district had a good chance of being selected when the present superintendent was leaving the position voluntarily. The study, which comprised 117 school districts in California from 1956-1965, discovered that school board and superintendent stability far exceeded change conditions. Furthermore, incumbent board member defeats did tend to result in the selection of an outside replacement of the superintendent, while absence of such incumbent school board member defeat tended to result in the continuation of the present superintendent or replacement from within the school district.

Finally, Crosby (1972) studied nine variables and their effect on superintendent turnover. Six of the nine variables were found to contribute to superintendent turnover, although none of them was primarily responsible. Rapid growth in the community was critical in providing the fertile environment leading toward turnovers. When this rapid

growth occurred, new power structures emerged, creating factions in the community, competition for local school board seats, repeated budget deficits, and a definite conflict between the board chairman and the superintendent.

Chichura (1977) conducted a study in which he found four general developments occurring in local school districts. First, the school districts studied had long perods of calm and tranquility with no incumbent school board members suffering defeat at the polls and virtually no superintendency turnover prior to the growth of conflicts between and among the community, school board, and superintendent over local school district policy. Second, as these conflicts grew and began to encompass all three participants because of societal shifts and changes, incumbent school board members were defeated at the polls, and superintendency turnover soon followed. Third, eventually a new superintendent, with new school board member support, made changes in local school district policy that were consistent with the community's wishes. And fourth, there arose a new tone of stability and tranquility within the district.

> Board member defeats do tend to result in the selection of outside replacement of the superintendent while the absence of such defeats leads to the continuation of the old superintendent or the selection of an inside replacement (Freeborn, 1966, p. 116).

A consolidation of opposition forces within the community apparently determined the defeat of an incumbent school board member (Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970). This defeat of an incumbent resulted in school board conflicts, especially between the new board member and the superintendent. Usually, within three years the superintendent was out of office and the replacement was a person from outside the district. The new superintendent then perceived a mandate to change the status quo. Local school districts which had a pattern of intermittent change in the school

administration and a relatively stable pattern of change in the community moved along a collision course towards incumbent school board member defeat, superintendent turnover, and an outside superintendent replacement.

At the conclusion of a class study of six communities in New Jersey over a period of 15 years, Gleeson (1975) found 19 instances of superintendent turnover. In a majority of cases, rapid growth or rapid change resulted in incumbent school board member turnover and ultimately superintendent turnover. There were two instances of teacher activity exploiting a community rift which led to the superintendent turnover and one instance of a political party's influence affecting the superintendent turnover.

Mitchell and Thorsted (1976, p. 125) stated that "There has been no serious challenge, either in theory or in available data, to the hypothesis that incumbent school board member defeat leads to school superintendent turnover." It usually took 7-10 years for demographic changes in a school district to yield incumbent school board member defeat, and then up to three more years for the superintendent turnover to occur.

The theoretical basis for school board election studies is reinforced by political science research. Studies made by MacRae and Meldrun (1960), Schattscheider (1960), Sellers (1965), and Burham (1970) all emphasized partisan or value shifts during these election periods.

> There is evidence that school board member incumbent defeat is correlated with superintendent turnover, that these events are sequenced over time, and that the literature on partisan elections has identified the same phenomena occurring at the national, state, and local level (Davis, 1984, p. 22).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

A detailed description of the research design and procedures that were followed in this study is presented in this chapter. Following a restatement of the problem, brief descriptions are provided of the design, population and sample, data collection, and data analysis.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a significant relationship existed between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover in independent school districts in the State of Oklahoma between the years 1978 and 1987. The null hypothesis is stated as follows: There is no significant relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover.

Research Design

This study was conducted following ex post facto design procedures. This method was appropriate since the actual circumstances to be studied had already transpired and since manipulation of a treatment variable was needed. The independent variable was the defeat of an incumbent school board member. The dependent variable was the continuation or termination of employment of the superintendent within three years of such defeat.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was the 456 independent school districts in the State of Oklahoma in 1987. A random sample of 45 districts was selected for this study.

Data Collection

The data necessary for this study were obtained through a survey instrument mailed to the 45 sample districts (Appendix A). A letter was included with each instrument to explain the study and to request assistance (Appendix B). Both the letter and the instrument were mailed to the school district superintendents. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided for the return of the instrument.

Each superintendent was contacted after three weeks to request assistance with the survey. A second follow-up was made to nonrespondents two weeks later.

A total of 42 instruments were returned. Seven of these instruments contained incomplete data. A total of 35 usable instruments were thus available for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were first compiled regarding the average length of service by superintendents in the respondent districts. From these data were developed expected frequencies of superintendent turnover. Actual data were then compiled regarding the superintendent turnover following incumbent school board member defeat.

Calculations were performed for the hypothesis using the Chi-Square Test of Independence. The procedure consisted of placing the observed frequencies in their appropriate cells of the chi-square structure. The expected frequency was then entered as appropriate and the chi-square value was determined for the hypothesis. The degree of significance was found by referring to the appropriate table in Hopkins and Glass (1978).

Summary

In order to determine if a significant relationship existed between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover, an instrument was mailed to a sample of 45 of the 456 independent school districts in the State of Oklahoma. The data were compiled and analyzed to test the null hypothesis.

The data from this study are reported in Chapter IV. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations are contained in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study sought to examine the relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover in Oklahoma's independent school districts. The analysis was completed with data secured from the survey instrument as well as from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Based upon the survey data, the Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to test the hypothesis. Further examination of the survey and other data revealed additional information relative to school board and superintendent service in these school districts. These data and analysis are reported in this chapter.

The subjects for this study were school board members and superintendents who served within the period of 1978-1987 in 45 randomly selected independent school districts in Oklahoma. Responses were received from 35 districts, representing 177 school board positions. While 34 districts reported five-member school boards, one district had seven members on the board.

Testing the Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was stated as follows: There is no significant relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover.

Table I contains data regarding turnover in the superintendency in respondent districts. In each year studied, from two to seven districts

reported changes in the superintendent's position. The mean turnover for the period of 1978-1987 was 4.78 superintendent changes per year. From these data it was thus predicted that there would be change in the superintendency in 13.66% of the districts each year.

TABLE I

SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER, 1978-1987

Superintendent Change		
From	To	Number of Districts
1978	1979	4
1979	1980	2
1980	1981	7
1981	1982	2
1982	1983	5
1983	1984	5
1984	1985	5
1985	1986	7
1986	1987	6

Note: Mean turnover per year = 4.78 districts (13.66% of the districts).

Incumbent school board members were defeated in re-election bids on 40 occasions, as reported in the 35 respondent districts. In 24 of these defeats, the incumbent superintendents either left the position or remained in the position within a three-year period. The remaining defeats were too recent to determine the impact on the superintendency. Table II contains information relative to these 24 defeats by incumbent school board members and the years of service by the incumbent superintendent

following such defeat. While the superintendency changed hands within one year following board member defeat in 25% of such incidents, the incumbent superintendents remained in office more than three years following 62.5% of such defeats.

TABLE II

YEARS OF SERVICE BY INCUMBENT SUPERINTENDENT FOLLOWING INCUMBENT BOARD MEMBER DEFEAT

Years of Service	Number of Superintendents	Percentage of Superintendents
1	6	25.0
2	2	8.3
3	1	4.2
> 3	15	62.5
Totals	24	100.0

The hypothesis was tested with the Chi-Square Test of Independence using the data reported in Table I to predict superintendent turnover in comparison with the actual turnover reported in Table II. Table III shows this comparison, while Table IV depicts the computed data from Table III using the chi-square. The null hypothesis was found tenable.

School Board Member Tenure

From the data contained in the instruments received from 35 school

TABLE III

PREDICTED AND ACTUAL TURNOVER OF SUPERINTENDENTS
FOLLOWING DEFEAT OF AN INCUMBENT
SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

Years Following Defeat	Superintendent Change		P	100!!	P - 100
	Observed	Predicted			
1	6.00	3.28	25.00	13.66	11.34
2	2.00	3.28	8.33	13.66	- 5.33
3	1.00	3.28	4.17	13.66	- 9.49
> 3	15.00	14.16	62.50	59.02	3.48
Totals	24.00	24.00	100.00	100.00	

TABLE IV

CHI-SQUARE COMPUTATION

df	3
X^2	4.39
$.9^5$ X^2 3	7.81

Note: Value for $.9^5$ X^2 3 from Hopkins and Glass (1978).

districts, it was found that 403 different individuals had served in the 177 school board seats of those districts during the period 1978-1987. This translated into an average of 11.5 different school board members per district. Two districts reported having had only seven different board members in that period, while one district reported 18 different members. These data are summarized in Table V.

TABLE V

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT BOARD MEMBERS SERVING THE 35 DISTRICTS FROM 1978 TO 1987

Number of Board Members	Number of Districts
7	2
8	3
9	3
10	4
11	5
12	4
13	9
14	2
15	1
16	0
17	1
18	1
Totals 403	35

The data were then analyzed to determine the length of service, from 1978 to 1987, by individuals who had been in office in 1978 and those who were in office in 1987. Table VI shows that, of the 177 school board members in 1978, slightly more than half continued to serve for less than

five years. Since the data did not indicate when these individuals had first assumed the office of school board member, it was impossible to determine how many years of service these individuals may have had prior to 1978. Nearly 40% of the 1978 board members were re-elected and thus served more than five years.

TABLE VI

NUMBER OF YEARS OF CONTINUED SERVICE DURING THE PERIOD OF 1978-1987 BY BOARD MEMBERS IN OFFICE IN 1978

Years of Service From 1978	Board Members	
	Number	Percentage
Less than five	93	52.5
Five	17	9.6
More than five	67	37.9
Totals	177	100.0

From the data collected, it was possible to determine how many board members who first assumed office from 1979 to 1982 served less than one term, served only one term, or served more than one term. These data are reported in Table VII. Of the 106 individuals who first became board members in the period of 1979-1987, 33.0% served only one term while 30.2% served less and 36.8% served more than one term. The number of new board members who assumed office in these 35 school districts averaged 26.5 per year, with a range of 24-30 new board members.

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF YEARS OF SERVICE BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS WHO FIRST TOOK OFFICE IN 1979-1982

Initial Year in Office	Total Years of Service						Total Number of Board Members
	1	2	3	4	5	> 5	
1979	1	3	2	1	8	12	27
1980	3	1	3	2	9	6	24
1981	1	1	3	1	8	11	25
1982	3	4	1	2	10	10	30
Totals	8	9	9	6	35	39	106

Table VIII contains data on the amount of previous experience of school board members in office in 1987. While 19.8% of these members had 10 or more years of experience, 62.1% were in their first term of office. Of the 35 individuals who served during the entire period (1978-1987), 26 were from only 11 of the 35 districts: 15 districts had no board member who served through the entire period, while in one district, four of the five members served for that length of time.

When the size of the school district was considered, there appeared to be little difference in terms of school board turnover, as shown in Table IX. The mean number of board members ranged only from 11.0 to 11.9, compared with the entire sample mean of 11.5.

TABLE VIII

CUMULATIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE BY BOARD MEMBERS IN OFFICE IN 1987

Years of Experience	Board Members		
	Number	%	Cumulative %
1	23	13.0	13.0
2	22	12.4	25.4
3	22	12.4	37.8
4	29	16.4	54.2
5	14	7.9	62.1
6	10	5.6	67.7
7	9	5.1	72.8
8	6	3.4	76.2
9	7	4.0	80.2
10 or more	35	19.8	100.0
Totals	177	100.0	

TABLE IX

MEAN NUMBER OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, 1978-1987, BY DISTRICT SIZE

District Size (Number of Teachers)	Board Members
< 25	11.0
26-50	11.9
51-100	11.3
> 100	11.7
Statewide	11.5

Superintendent Tenure

The data indicated that the 35 school districts employed 79 superintendents during the period of 1978-1987. As shown in Table X, eight (22.8%) of the districts employed the same individual throughout that period, while four (11.5%) each employed four different superintendents. The average number of superintendents was 2.26 per district for that period. Since the survey included 10 school years, the average tenure per superintendent was 4.42 years.

TABLE X

NUMBER OF SUPERINTENDENTS EMPLOYED PER DISTRICT, 1978-1987

Number of of Superintendents	Districts		
	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1	8	22.8	22.8
2	14	40.0	62.8
3	9	25.7	88.5
4	4	11.5	100.0
Totals	35	100.0	

As noted in Table XI, the average number of superintendents per district ranged from a low of 1.8 in districts with more than 100 teachers to a high of 2.8 in districts with 26-50 teachers. Districts with 26-50 teachers thus reported the highest turnover of both superintendents and school board members.

TABLE XI

MEAN NUMBER OF SUPERINTENDENTS, 1978-1987, BY DISTRICT SIZE

Distruct Size (Number of Teachers)	Superintendents
< 25	2.1
26-50	2.8
51-100	2.0
> 100	1.8
Statewide	2.2

Summary

The null hypothesis was found tenable, thus indicating that no significant relationship was established between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover. While the number of superintendents who left the district within one year of such defeat was higher than expected, the pattern did not continue for successive years.

The number of different school board members during the period of 1978-1987 ranged from 7 to 18 per district, with an average of 11.5. The number of superintendents employed during the same period ranged from one to four. The average number of superintendents per district was 2.26 while the average number of individuals per school board seat was 2.28.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study began with the premise that there was a relationship between the variables of incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover within three years. This study was initiated to determine that relationship between the two variables. The data used throughout this study were secured from an instrument mailed to 45 of the 456 independent public school districts of Oklahoma. Responses were received from 35 of the 45 sample districts.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence was computed from the predicted and actual superintendent turnover following incumbent school board member defeat. The null hypothesis was found tenable: There is no significant relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover.

Additional analysis of the data provided descriptions of superintendent and school board member service in Oklahoma school districts. It was found that, over the period of 1978-1987, the average number of superintendents per district was 2.26, while the average number of individuals serving each school board seat was 2.28. The responding school districts employed from one to four individuals as superintendent and had from 7 to 18 different school board members during the 10-year period.

Conclusions

The following were the conclusions drawn from this study:

1. The findings of this study led to the conclusion that the length of service of the superintendent is not directly related to incumbent board member defeat at the polls.

2. This study supported the findings of Freeborn (1966) that both superintendent and school board stability far exceeded any change conditions which will occur periodically in most situations. In this study it was found that, between 1978 and 1987, of the 35 responding school districts in Oklahoma, 8 districts had the same superintendent for the entire time, 14 had the superintendent replaced once, 9 districts had the superintendent replaced twice, and only 4 districts had the superintendent replaced three times.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, the following recommendations are offered for further research:

1. The study of superintendent and school board member turnover should be continued, examining all school districts in the state of Oklahoma over different periods of time. External funding should be sought to support said study.

2. There may well be political factors within the community which impact upon continued service by both school board members and superintendent, although such factors were not identified within this study. A study could examine all incidents in which incumbent school board members do not continue in office. Efforts should be made to determine the

reasons and circumstances for such departure from the board and the relationship, if any, to superintendent turnover.

3. The Oklahoma State School Boards Association should maintain historical records of school board service to support such studies. In addition, the Oklahoma State Department of Education could maintain similar data on the length of service by superintendents in the school districts of Oklahoma.

4. Districts could be differentiated according to such factors as geographical size, total population, density of population, trends in student enrollment, district wealth, individual or family wealth, and other demographic and economic data to determine if such factors impact upon superintendent and/or school board turnover.

While the findings of this study supported those of some studies (Freeborn, 1966; Mitchell and Thorsted, 1976) and disagreed with those of others (Walden, 1966; Iannacone and Lutz, 1970), the study does begin to supply a body of literature specific to Oklahoma. As long as public school districts are led by elected school boards and their appointed superintendents, the relationships between the two are vital to the full attainment of the districts' educational goals.

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APPENDIX

CORRESPONDENCE

Oklahoma State University

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
AND HIGHER EDUCATION

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74078
309 GUNDERSEN HALL
(405) 624-7244

Dear Superintendent,

Does a change in your school board membership alter the personality of your board? In fact, how often does a change on the board initiate a turnover in administration?

I need your help! In order to complete my research on school board change and its relationship to Superintendent turnover in Oklahoma, I need the following information. Could you please have your secretary or the clerk of the Board fill out the enclosed sheet?

To establish a pattern, I need information from the past ten years. Please return the form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely,

Billy G. Wheeler

Billy G. Wheeler

P.S. _____Check here and send your name and address if you would like a copy of the results of this study.

TEN-YEAR SCHOOL BOARD CHANGE AND SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER PATTERN

YEAR	Name of Superintendent	member	member	member	member	member
1987						
1986						
1985						
1984						
1983						
1982						
1981						
1980						
1979						
1978						

1. Have you had any incumbent board members defeated in a bid for re-election in the last 10 years? _____yes,_____no.
2. If yes, please list name of the person defeated,_____.
3. Year of the election the incumbent was defeated,_____.

I appreciate your time; Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Billy G. Wheeler

Billy G. Wheeler

VITA

Billy Gene Wheeler

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: INCUMBENT SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER DEFEAT AND SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER IN OKLAHOMA, 1978-1987

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Reydon, Oklahoma, June 22, 1940, the son of Robert E. and Barbara Wheeler. Married to ANdrea Beth Garver on September 19, 1984.

Education: Graduated from Preston High School, Preston, Oklahoma, in May, 1959; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Missions from Southwestern Assemblies of God College in May, 1963; received Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Midwestern University in May, 1977; received Master of Science degree from Northeastern State University in December, 1979; completed requirements for Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1988.

Professional Experience: Missionary, Malawi, East Africa, 1965-70; Teacher/Coach, Newcastle High School, Texas, 1971-75; Senior Pastor, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1976-81; Superintendent of Schools, Boynton, 1980-81; Hanna, 1983-86; High School Principal, Corn, Oklahoma, 1986 to present.