THAT DOG DON'T HUNT: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

ABOUT SUPERINTENDENT SUSTAINABILITY

By

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Title of Study: THAT DOG DON'T HUNT: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ABOUT
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Abstract: Research suggests that, despite a great deal of training and job experience that typically precedes the ascension to a district level leadership position (Lamkin, 2006), superintendent career sustainability/longevity is often very low (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Shulte & Hong, 2011) with average superintendent tenure at approximately seven years (Kowalski et al., 2011). This finding is important due to the fact that superintendent tenure has been identified as a contributing factor to positive student outcomes (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Anomalies exist, however, when superintendents stay in the position for extended periods of time and sustain their careers with reputations and motivation intact.

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry, utilizing the theoretical framework of Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) Theory, was to explore the life and career of one successful, long-term superintendent serving in a mid-sized urban school district. This superintendent has remained in a district leadership position for over four decades with xx years in the district where he is currently serving. P-E Fit postulates a relationship between career satisfaction and the individual's fit for the position and suggests that fit may change and develop in context and over time.

Findings revealed three contributing factors to his longevity: personal financial, political, and relationship building skills; leadership characteristics of intellect, tenacity, vision, accountability, and integrity; and contextual/environmental factors of family heritage and personal fulfillment. These findings support the application of P-E Fit Theory to this particular career, specifically Sekiguchi's (2004) concept of dynamic P-E fit and Yang and Yu's (2009) ideas about the importance of the influence of positive work-based affect. It also supported the work of Truxillo et al. (2012) that focuses on crafting careers to create better job satisfaction, work output, and organizational commitment throughout the lifetime of the employee.

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CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

I'm sitting in a small, brightly lit office across the desk from my superintendent.

He's an older man, mostly bald, prominent nose, broad shouldered and heavy set; he

looks like someone who was probably an athlete back in his day. He is struggling with

back pain today and is restless. He nervously taps an empty plastic water bottle on his

crossed leg. The office is decorated with random memorabilia: on one wall hangs a

photo of him face to face with a kangaroo on a trip to Australia; on a low round table lies

a copy of the Bill Gates book he was featured in; on another wall hangs a framed

commendation from a former state governor; behind his desk a wall of books extends

from floor to ceiling, and featured prominently on the blond ergonomic desk stand two

large computer screens. A projector hangs from the ceiling and a white screen covers the

focal wall. I have just asked a question about what he felt were some of the most

important factors in surviving and succeeding in the superintendency.

> Relationships…in particular friendly ones. When you know there's somebody
>
> out there looking out for you. Two of the best friends I've ever had were the two
>
> school board presidents I have worked with. One was a man and one was a
>
> woman but I would count both of them as, probably, my best friends in life.
>
> When you know someone is deeply devoted to the district and the children in it

then you are in a good place as a superintendent. There's a lot of people you can't

trust in this life, and when you know you can trust someone that's important. And

your board has to know they can trust you. If your board doesn't trust you, well, you

might as well move on down the road. Did I ever tell you about the time my daddy

was the superintendent and the board president didn't like him and well, the feeling

was mutual, you know?

This man intrigues me because of his unconventional approach to giving directives and

sharing ideas; his success as a long-term superintendent compels me to understand the story

of his career and how he has maintained such longevity in the superintendency.

Introduction

A great deal of education and practical experience in the field of K-12 education

usually precedes a move to the superintendency. However, a large number of persons who

attain the superintendency abandon it early in their careers (Grissom & Andersen, 2012;

Lamkin, 2006; Trevino, Braley, Stallone-Brown, & Slate, 2008). Melver (2011) wrote, "an

understanding of the complexity of the superintendent position was found to be important

before entering the superintendency, as the complex nature of the job can be overwhelming

for those superintendents who are not aware of the varying aspects of this position" (p. 1).

According to Moody (2011) acting superintendents have an increasingly difficult task to

make decisions based on integrity and moral purpose given the current environment of high

stakes accountability and the contentious social and political culture that has resulted. Even

though many superintendents serve as teachers, building principals, and often, central office

administrators prior to their first appointment, these experiences often times do not

adequately prepare them for the head district position. In our present society, the

development of strong educational leaders is essential in laying the groundwork for sustainable school improvement (Fullan, 2002). The necessity for success in the role of educational leader cannot be understated in the 21st century.

The research points out that the superintendency is often abandoned within the first few years (Freely & Seinfeld, 2012; Tellerico & Blount, 2004; Thomas, 2001). The average tenure of public school superintendents in the United States is three years in large urban school districts and approximately six years in smaller districts (Urban Schools Report, 2010). Superintendents rarely serve more than seven years in one district. Longevity in the position is rare indeed. Turnover rate according to school district size only shows significant variability in the largest urban districts (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). For example, 71% percent of superintendents in the largest urban school districts exited before the end of their third year, while the third year exit rate for all other districts was 46% according to Grissom and Andersen (2012). These statistics indicate that superintendents in large urban districts have an even greater challenge in maintaining their positions as superintendent. Sometimes superintendents leave the career voluntarily, and other times they are forced out of their positions (Thomas, 2001). Much of the research addresses factors such as stress and insufficient financial training as reasons for leaving the position (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Lamkin, 2006). However, additional understandings may be warranted. Grissom and Anderson (2012) explained, "The importance of the district superintendent and the political consequences of superintendent exits makes understanding the factors that drive superintendent turnover a key topic for empirical research" (p. 9).

Statement of the Problem

The difficulty of the position of superintendent is confirmed by research (Lamkin, 2006). The literature reveals a great deal of training and experience generally precedes ascension to the position (Lamkin, 2006). It also reveals that new superintendents are often unsuccessful at maintaining and thriving in their positions (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). To those preparing to enter the superintendency, the research should be somewhat alarming. If candidates invest in practical training and education to further their careers and attain school district leadership positions, they should have a high level of interest for understanding the challenges of the position and understanding necessary skills/dispositions to be successful in that career. Current research identifies the lack of sustainability in the superintendent career as problematic (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Shulte & Hong, 2011). Further, Waters and Marzano (2006) found a significant correlation between length of superintendent tenure and student achievement. In addition, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) found that leadership style could affect student outcomes. If, as Fullan (2005, p. 30) stated, "Almost everyone agrees that leadership is the key to reform" then district leadership must come into focus as the cornerstone of successful school improvement. Narrowing the focus may be the most difficult task of the educational leadership researcher. In their 2010 quantitative study Leithwood, Patton, and Jantzi (2010) found a need to "adopt a more limited 'laser-like' focus on discovering the leadership practices most likely to improve the condition or status of variables in schools for which there is already considerable evidence of impact on student learning" (p. 698).

Through qualitative studies, many obstacles have been identified and many attributes have been ascribed to individual success in the superintendent position (Abshier, Harris &

Hopson, 2011; Alston, 2005, Freely & Seinfeld, 2012; Palladino, Haar, Grady, & Perry, 2007). The problem, then, emerges as new superintendents are often unsuccessful in spite of extensive training and experiences. While a great deal of research examines the training and professional development needed to prepare educational leaders for the superintendent's position, there is little in-depth research examining the personal perspectives of superintendents who have successfully sustained a long-term career in the field. According to Fullan (2005), "As society places higher and higher expectations on the performance of public and private agencies, leadership is bound to come to the fore. The question is, what kind of leadership is needed for sustainability?" (p. 29). Many experts in the field have written formulas for what it takes to succeed in educational leadership (Daggett, 2015; Fullan, 2005; Reeves, 2006; Wilmore, 2008), but little light has been shed on superintendents who have actually adapted through changing times and expectations and proven themselves able to sustain their careers amidst the many crises facing education over the past several decades.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the life and career of a successful, long-term superintendent serving in a mid-sized urban school district.

Research Questions

The literature reveals a lack of existing research related to superintendent career sustainability (Alsbury, 2008; Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010; Melver, 2011). The following research questions guided this study of one long-term superintendent.

Overarching Question

The primary guiding question for this study was:

What meanings does a school superintendent make about his experience of professional success and career longevity?

Sub-questions

1. What personal qualities can be identified as contributing to longevity?

2. What personal experiences can be identified as contributing to longevity?

3. How did critical incidents shape his life and career?

4. How did relationships contribute to his longevity?

5. How did this particular superintendent overcome challenges to his longevity?

Methodology

I used a narrative inquiry methodology which has a rich history in educational research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I used personal interviews with my subject, his family, and colleagues to reconstruct the story of his career. This methodology is referred to as a biographical narrative study by Webster and Mertova (2007). Lengthy observations and many printed artifacts were used to triangulate the data. I used a thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) to analyze the data.

Epistemological Viewpoint and Theoretical Perspective

Epistemology

Epistemology addresses the questions, "How do I know what I know?" and "What is truth and how do we know it is truth?" (Crotty, 1998). Knowledge gained through the narrative inquiry process is knowledge based on the relationship and the experiences co-created by the researcher and the subject (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) insisted that narrative inquiry does not call for a predisposed

epistemological viewpoint. However, for this study, I would argue that constructionism fits closely with the goal of meaning-making through experience that defines the narrative inquiry process. The epistemological viewpoint constructionism, as described by Crotty (1998), best fits the meaning-making that I utilized as the narrative inquiry researcher. "Constructionism… points up the unique experiences of each of us. It suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other, thereby tending to scorch any hint of a critical spirit" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Crotty also wrote that constructionism is always relative (1998). He explains, "What is said to be 'the way things are' is really just 'the sense we make of them'" (Crotty, 1998, p. 64). This explanation of constructionism fits comfortably with what Clandinin (2013) describes as gaining new awareness through studying experiences. For example, "Narrative inquiry is situated in relationships and community and knowing in relational and participatory ways" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13).

We make meaning from our interactions in living our lives, and we can also make meaning by retelling the lived experiences of others. I believe we each create our own realities through living our lives in interaction with others, through choices we make, and through the culture of our family and our social circle. In these ways we construct what truth is to us and this certainly supports the truth we develop along with our subjects when conducting narrative inquiry.

I approached this study through an interpretivist theoretical perspective. Crotty tells us, "Interpretivism is overwhelmingly oriented towards an uncritical exploration of cultural meaning" (1998, p. 60). This narrative inquiry seeks to tell Bob Hall's story from his

perspective without a predetermined societal view. This perspective helped to determine the narrative inquiry methodological approach to the study.

Theoretical Framework

The role of theory in narrative inquiry is fundamentally different than its role in more formalistic research modes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Theory is interwoven in the narrative study, but does not provide the foundation for the study. The narrative inquirer does not seek to support or inform a particular theory through his research. Narrative studies do not recognize the boundaries of theory placed on formalistic inquiries (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The narrative inquirer begins with the lived experiences of his/her subject(s). Webster and Mertova (2007) described narrative inquiry as learner centered. The reader or learner must work out the findings and their application to practice (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This characteristic creates one of the many boundary tensions present in the narrative inquiry process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For example, "The tension often appears as a tension between literature reviewed as a structuring framework and literature reviewed as a kind of conversation between theory and life or, at least, between theory and the stories of life contained in the inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 41). While narrative inquiry may add to an established or developing theory and/or provide substantial food for thought in regards to the existing literature, application or development of theory is not a prioritized goal in conducting the narrative study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A well-created narrative text provides readers with rich material for gaining insights and designing personal applications for their learning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Webster and Mertova (2007) described, "This subtle connection with construction of knowledge through

experience allows narrative to be associated as a tool of research in conjunction with contemporary learning theories" (p. 20).

While narrative inquiry does not lend itself to the use of theory that is common in other qualitative designs, researchers often enter a study with ideas about theory that could, potentially, further explain their findings. My approach to this study caused me to contemplate potential explanations for this superintendent's success. For example, a potential lens for explaining the success of this superintendent is Person-Environment Fit Theory (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). The theoretical framework of Person-Environment Fit Theory (Holland, 1997) is one possible theory that could be applied, ex post facto, to explain findings of the study. Person-Environment Fit Theory was developed in the field of organizational psychology and theorizes that a person's motivation, job productivity and job satisfaction are directly related to how well the person fits the job demands (Caplan, 1983; French et al. 1974; Harrison, 1978). Edwards et al. (1998) explained the fundamental "premise of P-E fit theory is that stress arises not from the person or environment separately, but rather by their fit or congruence with one another" (p. 29). This theoretical lens may provide some explanation for the present study's subject's longevity.

Edwards et al. (1998) further divide P-E fit into two types of fit. The abilities/demands side of P-E Theory emphasizes how well a person's aptitudes, social skills, and work ethic match with the skill level, time investment, and social interactions demanded by the job (Edwards et al., 1998). The second arm of P-E Fit Theory is characterized as needs/supplies (Edwards et al., 1998). This aspect of the theory encompasses both physical and social needs such as food, clothing, shelter, social interaction, and personal fulfillment

and how well they correspond with what the job supplies monetarily, socially, and intrinsically (French, 1974).

Donohue (2006) applied P-E Fit Theory to career persistence in his empirical study titled *Person-Environment Congruence in Relation to Career Change and Career Persistence.* His findings indicated a statistically significant difference between the career congruence of career persisters and career changers. Donohue (2006) discovered, "Career persisters scored higher in terms of their level of person-environment congruence, when compared with career changers" (p. 511).

P-E Fit Theory has been strongly correlated with job stress research (Edwards et al., 1998). Theorists contend that stress arises when there is not a good fit between abilities/demands and needs/supplies. Adversely, one might contend that a good person-environment fit would enable someone to deal with job stress and thrive in a work environment. This theory, then, may provide some theoretical basis for one long-term superintendent's ability to sustain his career for over 40 years. However, I will not know if this particular theory fits this study until data is collected and analyzed. I will be open to allow the data to determine the appropriate theoretical framework for this study, and the appropriate framework, based on findings, will be applied ex post facto to help to explain this superintendent's success.

Significance of the Study

Studying educational leadership has been motivating and invigorating for me. During our Qualitative Research I class, I was drawn to qualitative research and in particular a form of research called narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I was particularly engaged by *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low Income Neighborhood*

(MacLeod, 2009), a first person account written by a researcher who embedded himself into a community filled with poverty and crime very different from his own middle class background. MacLeod visited and then lived in the community and became part of its culture to the point of participating in illegal behavior along with his subjects. After reading MacLeod, I thought about how I have always loved history, but what I remember about historical events was garnered through reading historical fiction. The story the characters and events were immersed in is what drew me in and enabled me to retain the information. However, I did not settle on writing a narrative inquiry until I had chosen my research topic, done a literature review and attempted to write a methodology chapter. Qualitative research texts (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002) tell the dissertation writer to choose a methodology based on the guiding research questions. After wrestling with case study (Yin, 2014), I realized I wanted to focus on the life and career of one particular superintendent. You see, I was most interested in superintendent longevity. This graduate program was preparing us to be school superintendents, and we had studied extensively about how to do that well, how to obtain a position and how to sustain a career. The more I studied superintendent leadership the more my conviction grew that it could not be streamlined into a particular formula. I am skeptical about any certain leadership talents or characteristics being generalizable to the successful superintendent. My research uncovers themes contributing to one superintendent's lengthy career and augments the existing literature on school district leadership through an in-depth study of the life and career of one long-term school district leader.

I examined the career of this long-term superintendent in a mid-sized urban district in a Midwestern state in order to discover how he has been able to serve successfully as a

school district leader for over 40 years and approach his retirement with his reputation intact. This study uncovered recurring themes throughout his career that have promoted his success. The existing literature on school district leadership is enriched through the story of a long-term superintendent's life.

Existing studies have been conducted from social justice and feminist perspectives on how and why some minority groups attain and sustain a particular position (Alston, 2005; Ortiz, 2000; Skrla, 2000; Tellerico & Blount, 2004), while others report the reflections of retired superintendents (Lamkin, 2006). This study of one long-term superintendent examined the life and career of one long-term superintendent. The findings provide insight to the reader that will contribute to superintendent career sustainability, a topic in school leadership literature that is lacking in the research.

Definition of Key Terms

The following section will define key terms that may otherwise be open to interpretation.

Interoperability Framework. An interoperability framework is described as an open, standards-based specification and set of technologies that describes and promotes interoperability among components of a service-oriented architecture (SOA).

Longevity. For the purposes of this study, longevity will be defined as more than ten years in the position.

Narrative. Narrative as defined by Clandinin (2013, p. 10) is an interpretive account of an individual's lived experiences.

Narrative Inquiry. Though narrative inquiry has varied definitions according to the experts in the field, for our purposes of this study it will be defined as a research

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methodology which uses the stories of people's lives and how their interaction with others shapes and makes meaning of their experiences as described by Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013, p. 576).

Objective Fit. This is fit free from the bias of human perception (Edwards et al. 1998, p. 251). This part of fit describes factual attributes.

Subjective Fit. Subjective fit refers to an individual's personal perceptions of his attributes and abilities and how they align with those of the organization (Yang & Yu, 2009, p. 1211).

Verisimilitude. In narrative inquiry research verisimilitude refers to the authenticity, believability, or trustworthiness of the story (Riessman, 1993, pp. 64-65).

Summary

The first chapter of this narrative inquiry introduced the benefits and challenges of career longevity in the school superintendency. It also provided evidence of historically short tenure in the position in any one school district. An anomaly has been presented, and the need for further research into this phenomenon has been established and the purpose of the ensuing research study outlined. The guiding question for the study is: What meanings does a school superintendent make about his experience of professional success and career longevity?

Chapter II presents a review of the literature beginning with the historical contexts of the position and the role the school superintendent has played throughout its history. Opposing preparation pathways will be presented with pros and cons cited by leading researchers in the field. Next, the existing literature on typical career length and its implications for successful district stewardship is explored. Finally, a review of the obstacles

superintendents may face in maintaining and succeeding in the career and existing studies concerning superintendents who survive and thrive in the position are synthesized.

Chapter III discusses the methodology of the study. This research will consist of a biographical narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008) covering the life of a unique Midwestern superintendent who has thrived in the position for over 40 years. Interviews, observations, and artifacts will be analyzed and critical incidents narrated so the reader may draw conclusions and reflect on factors that have allowed this superintendent successful career longevity.

Chapter IV presents the data. Using Riessman's (2008) thematic analysis, emerging themes are discussed and supported with data.

Chapter V presents the narrative of his life and career from his own perspective and that of others who have been close to him. My perceptions and reflections as the storyteller are interwoven with his story. A rich description of the context within which he has lived and worked has been included. The researcher's role in narrative inquiry is one of active participation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and the story cannot be told without providing a truthful explanation of the effect of the story and research experiences on the researcher.

Chapter VI presents the study's implications and discussion and suggests direction for further research on the topic.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of the Superintendency

Superintendent as Teacher Scholar

The beginning of the superintendent's position in American schools, by most accounts, can be traced to the mid- nineteenth century (Bjork, Browne- Ferrigno, & Kowalski, 2014; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011; Miggins, 2014). In its earliest conception the superintendent's role was one of teacher scholar, and the primary duties were in overseeing instruction and its quality (Bork, et al., 2014). Kowalski (2011) explained:

> From the time the position was created until the first decade of the 20th century, the primary foci of district superintendents were implementing state curricula and supervising teachers… These early administrators were essentially lead educators, subordinate to board members but superior to principals, teachers, and pupils. (pp. 102-103, 145).

Kowalski (2013) described the position as having little power and being filled with menial jobs. According to Kowalski (2013), this practice was attributable to city politicians and school boards who feared assigning a professional role to the position would also indicate the presence of political power thus undermining their own positions.

Superintendent as Business Manager

The superintendent's role has undergone a slow but steady transformation over the years since it's inception. America evolved from a mainly agrarian society to one of industry, and so, too, did American schools and the role of the American school superintendent (Bjork et al., 2014). Educational leadership scholars have identified five emphases of the superintendent role throughout American history. Each of these roles evolved in conjunction with societal and demographic changes in American history; however, expertise in all roles is an expectation for modern American school superintendents (Lindle, 2014; McCombs & Miller, 2009). Kowalski (2013) provides description of the five role conceptualizations in the order in which they appeared: teacher, scholar, business manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and effective communicator.

Researchers concur those early superintendents from the late 1800's until the second decade of the 20th century viewed themselves as teacher scholars. They most often came from the ranks of teachers and were considered experts in their field. They emphasized teaching as a profession and often went on to become state superintendents, college professors, and college presidents (Bjork et al., 2014; Kowalski, 2013; Miggins, 2014; Thomas, 2001). They chose to focus on instructional leadership, curriculum and pedagogy (Kowalski, 2013). Their positions of authority often placed them at odds with city leaders who felt their political power might be called into question if school superintendents were viewed as professional leaders (Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski, 2014; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011; Thomas, 2001). An influx of European immigrants and the dawn of the industrial age combined to change the direction of public schooling in

America. Urban center populations grew exponentially during the first two decades of the 20th century. Thomas (2001) explained, "Schools came to be seen as having the responsibility of responding to new social problems such as industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, which began to dominate social and political thought" (p. 2). The early decades of the 21st century, in many ways, parallel those of the 20th century in that there has been an influx of immigrants to the United States seeking social, economic and political asylum from many nations with varying cultures, languages, and religious practices. This wave of immigration caused urban crowding, fear, and push-back from established citizens. During the same era the industrial revolution drew rural populations to urban centers and further strained the capacities of city school districts. Miggins (2014) stated, "Urban educators faced the challenge of culturally assimilating new, different, and growing populations of foreign-born and black students from migrant families from the American South during urban America's economic transformation from a commercial to an industrial society" (p. 672). Kowalski (2013) further explained, "Qualms about managerial skills intensified as America began to emerge as an industrial society" (p. 19). Miggins (2014) described the role of the superintended during this time as, "Above all, the business efficiency model championed an enlightened and all-powerful superintendent as the cornerstone to achieve progress and stability in the school system" (p. 672). This ideal superintendent has never left the American consciousness to present day (as will be clarified in succeeding sections of the review of literature). Presently a faction of educational reformers is calling for recruiting school leaders from non-educational backgrounds. Meyer and Feistritzer (2003) decry the need for school leaders to come from the ranks of education stating:

It is no more essential for every education leader to be a teacher than for the CEO

of Bristol-Myers Squibb to be a chemist… When it comes to schools, leadership

is so much a function of talent and prior leadership experience that it's a mistake

to accord technical training a central position in the selection process. (p. 24)

The concept that managerial acumen is more valuable than an educational background is

thoroughly engrained in the American education system as evidenced by the

inconsistencies across the states in requirements for superintendent licensing (Kowalski,

2013).

The demand for expertise in scientific management changed the course of

superintendent preparation and the public perception of the role (Kowalski, 2013;

Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Prior to this era, the role of the school leader was that of a

teacher and a scholar. Being the most adroit educator led of the role of school

superintendent. The era of scientific management gradually changed those concepts.

Educational leadership practices reflected changes in society as a whole. The role of

superintended as business manager was not without its critics. Local politicians and city

managers often vehemently opposed this role for the local superintendent, as they feared

it would diminish their own power and influence (Bjork et al., 2014).

Superintendent as Democratic Leader

The stock market crash in 1929 and the era of the Great Depression influenced

American education just as it influenced all other facets of American society. As

education vied with other public services for scarce funds, it became necessary for school

leaders to become politically minded and to be able to garner support for the local

schools (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Superintendents who had previously eschewed

involvement in politics were now expected to perform the duties of lobbyist and political strategist (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). The former opinion that engaging in politics was unprofessional on the part of the superintendent was abandoned when the necessity of political activity to school survival became apparent (Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Leaders such as John Dewey, George Counts, John Childs, and Charles Beard led this period of time in American education and were often referred to as progressives (Callahan, 1966). Jesse H. Newlon stands out among educational leaders of the time. He was respected as a scholar and a practitioner, having served as a history teacher, high school principal, superintendent of schools in Lincoln, Nebraska and Denver, Colorado and finally as education professor at Teachers College, Columbia, the most prestigious school of education in the United States (Callahan, 1966). His background in both educational leadership and academia allowed him respect from all educational sectors. His ideas for a democratic framework for America's schools involving the participation of teachers and soliciting input from parents and community as well was first presented at the NEA convention in 1925 (Callahan, 1966). He was a visionary far ahead of his era, as his ideas did not directly impact American education for another decade (Callahan, 1966). Newlon criticized current educational leadership training as narrowly focused on the business management side of the work and called for a form of educational leadership that was much more democratic and much less bureaucratic in nature (Callahan, 1966). Perhaps fortunately for Newlon, the Great Depression caused an upheaval in all elements of American society, and educational leaders paused to reflect on current systems and practices (Callahan, 1966).

Democratic leadership did not expunge business manager from the duties required for school superintendent; it added to them and took a priority role in the years between 1930 and 1954. Education mirrored the society around it in its call for progressivism, democratic ideals, and loyalty to the nation (Bjork et al., 2014).

Superintendent as Applied Social Scientist

As American society changed, so did the role of the educational leader. Criticism of the democratic leader arose during the 1950s. Kowalski (2013) explained, "Detractors argued that the concept was overly idealistic and insufficiently attentive to social, economic, and political realities of a rapidly growing and changing society" (p. 22). During the 1950s, the social sciences were experiencing exponential growth and respect. This growth, in turn, created a demand for more scientific training for school superintendents (Kowalski, 2005). These practices would not be the scientific management of former decades, but instead, the situation called for scientific application to the actual practices of educational leadership. This period of time in American educational history is frequently referred to as the theory movement (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011).

R. E. Callahan (1966) provided an in depth analysis of the American superintendency and its evolution during this period of time. Callahan (1966) described four variables that helped to shape the development of the superintendent as social scientist role:

1. Public perception that the democratic leader role was not meeting the need for reform in Post World War II schools.

2. The burgeoning field of social science and the exciting prospect of applying it to the field of educational leadership.

3. The Kellogg Foundation's $7 million dollar investment in scientific research in the field of educational administration at major universities. Educational leadership degree programs were redesigned because of this.

4. As always, growing public outcry concerning the inadequacies of American public education.

In hindsight, one must look at other major events at play during this era. The signing of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 by President Johnson was in direct response to the American Civil Rights Movement. The inequalities in the American public schools were to be directly addressed by this legislation. It had become apparent to most Americans that underprivileged and particularly African American children were receiving a substandard education, which further exacerbated the limited opportunities for children growing up in poverty (Coleman et al., 1966). The Coleman Report (1966) was a major government undertaking employing social scientific research and, although its findings were later reputed by Coleman himself, it served as an example of the application of social science to sweeping changes in America's public schools.

Kowalski (2013) also noted two other factors contributing to the rise of the superintendent's role as social scientist; the efforts by professors to elevate their profession to equal footing with business management and public administration and the adoption of systems theory as explanation for the influences of external factors on school systems. All of these forces combined to support the evolution of the role to one of a

social scientist. Schools of educational administration called for more specified training for school leaders that would elevate them above the teaching profession (Kowalski (2013). The role of social scientist is still firmly entrenched in expectations for well-trained superintendents. The school district leader is expected to bring knowledge of current theory and practice to the position and to stay constantly abreast of current educational research and its implications for practical implementation. The theory movement in educational leadership pushed scientific inquiry to the forefront of educational administration, but it did not rescind the required expertise in previous roles (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Superintendent as applied scientist realistically added to the role expectations and complexity of the superintendent position. As the nation moved forward into the 1980s and the accountability era, empirical knowledge has been an important part of parsing data and studying the unlimited possibilities for school reform (Bjork et al., 2014).

Superintendent as Effective Communicator

The theory movement in educational leadership waned in response to the rise of the information age. During the past 35 years, our nation has transformed with increasing rapidity from a manufacturing society to an information society. Information in all of its forms, good and evil, verifiable and fallacious, rules the economy and the minds of our citizenry. Bjork et al. (2014) explained, "By the 1980s, the era of administrators working in isolation ended as educational reform and restructuring emphasized collaboration, organizational restructuring and distributing leadership" (p. 13). Further, Kowalski and Brunner (2011) stated, "Virtually every major school improvement concept and strategy encourages administrators to work collaboratively with teachers, parents, and taxpayers

to build and pursue a collective vision" (p. 149). Effective communication in an ever-expanding era of constant information is a skill that aspiring and existing school leaders cannot overlook. Communicating with parents, teachers, community members, lawmakers, city leaders, and the media has become a major component of the superintendent's role (Callan & Levinson, 2011). For example, a superintendent may have all of the empirical knowledge, financial and managerial expertise, and high moral purpose and still fail in the position because of inability to share the vision and inspire others to accomplish the mission. According to Kowalski (2013), "In an information based society, administrators are expected to engage in relational communication consistently" (p. 24). Bjork et al. (2014) stated, "Superintendents' communicator role is shaped by two conditions – the need to restructure school cultures and the need to access and use information in a timely manner to identify and solve problems of practice" (p. 13).

In his book, *Leadership Sustainability; Systems Thinkers in Action,* Michael Fullan (2005) wrote the following:

The advice to system leaders is to communicate, communicate, communicate. Written words are not enough. Lots of interaction will be required. There are two purposes to these exchanges. One is that good system leaders will have a lot to say, and it helps enormously if leaders are transparent, coherent, and inspiring about the short-and long-term purposes of reform. The second purpose is that leaders learn to sharpen and refine the message as they are pushed to become clearer and to take into account objections and suggestions from the field (pp. 90-91).

Effective and, in fact, superior communication skills are emphasized in much of 21st century literature on successful school leadership and sustainable school improvement and have become an integral piece of university preparation (Callan & Levinson, 2011; Fullan, 2005; Lindle, 2014; McCombs & Miller, 2009). Fisher, Frey, and Pumpian (2012) emphasized the importance of communication in the statement, "The best schools we know of focus relentlessly on communication" (p. 137). Further, Reeves (2006) stated, "Leaders underestimate the power of personalized communication and overestimate the effectiveness of hierarchical communication" (p. 58). Lindle (2014) described empowering communication practices between superintendent and building administrator developed through deliberate training in reflective practice and transformative communication. Wilmore (2008) made effective communication an essential component of superintendent expertise. She explained, "The superintendent's job is to identify, allocate and justify resources necessary to develop and sustain an effective educational program" (Wilmore, 2008, p. 35). Wilmore (2008) also emphasized communication as an essential skill in her statement, "The superintendent is the primary contact for all forms of resource and financial procurement from working with the school board and the school community to the legislature" (p. 35). Fullan (2005) also stated, "Assuming the big picture is coherent, driven by purpose, and prioritized system leaders must become preoccupied with communicating the overall purpose and plan" (p. 90). It becomes apparent that in the current educational climate, effective communication takes a priority role in the superintendent's position.

Conclusion

The reader should not assume effective communication as the only role of the present day superintendent. Again, it should be emphasized that this role adds to the already complex requirements for an effective school leader. Superintendents are still expected to be highly competent in the roles of educational leadership in regards to being a knowledgeable instructional leader, business manager (including fiduciary planning and responsibility), political activists as democratic leaders, and social scientists as far as staying abreast of educational theory and its current implications (Callan & Levinson, 2011). All of these roles are vital elements in modern academic superintendent preparation programs.

Pathway to the Superintendent Position

Introduction

The pathway and training preceding attainment of the superintendent's position have become a central focus of debate in recent decades (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Orr, 2006). Researchers have argued concerning the best preparation path to equip candidates with the necessary skills to navigate and conquer the superintendent roles that have emerged throughout the history of the superintendency. Hoyle (2007) explained, "The pressures to improve leadership education have never been greater due to widespread calls for reform of public education" (p. 148).

Traditional Pathway

The majority of present day school superintendents in the United States followed a traditional preparation pathway to the position while, "Historically, university schools of education have trained and educated personnel for becoming school administrators"

(Ediger, 2008, p. 17). However, "following tradition, most university- based programs for the training of aspiring principals and superintendents might be best characterized as preparing aspiring principals and superintendents for the role of a top-down manager" (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 238). The top down manager will likely not experience success as a superintendent in today's social, political and cultural context (Bird & Wang, 2013). Unfortunately, many educational leadership professors rely on their own training and experiences to formulate teaching practices. The professional experience and training of the professor certainly has some impact on curricular emphasis (Bird & Wang, 2013). Most faculty come from one of three backgrounds: academia, former educational leaders, or adjunct instructors holding down full-time positions during the day (Bird & Wang, 2013). Bird and Wang (2013) explain some of the challenges of leadership preparation in the statement, "Assembling a faculty reflective of both theory and practice is difficult because there are few folks who have done both extensive scholarly research and lengthy executive service" (p. 15). In sum, the quality of university programs varies and is complicated by the diverse backgrounds and philosophical viewpoints of program instructors.

Nontraditional Pathway

Increasing numbers of school leaders are being tapped from non-educational backgrounds. Though still in the minority, more school districts and boards are looking for innovative leadership in unconventional places (Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003; Orr, 2006). According to Orr (2006), "Leadership preparation programs, according to the U.S. Department of Education, need to be more innovative and need to include intensively focused components and authentic course and fieldwork" (p. 493). For the

past three decades, traditional university programs have come under fire from proponents

of deregulation (Ediger, 2008, Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hoyle, 2007; Kowalski,

Young, & McCord, 2011; Orr, 2006;). Meyer and Feistritzer (2003) called for the

deregulation of administrator certification citing such issues as a shortage of qualified

candidates and a need for true 'leaders' and not just administrators. Meyer and Feistritzer

(2003) stated, "Even as states report a surplus of formally credentialed candidates for

administrative positions, many schools and school systems cannot find the exceptional

candidates they need to lead them" (p. 14). These positions are often led and supported

by private entities such as the Broad Foundations and the Thomas B. Fordham

Foundation (Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003).

Social and Political Implications in 21st Century

The battle lines have been drawn between traditional university professors and

educational researchers and philanthropists and business leaders (Ediger, 2008). One

side argues that education can never be run with a business model if education is to

provide opportunity and a quality education for all children (Ediger, 2008; Grogan &

Andrews, 2002). The other side argues that public schools are failing and business

leaders possess the answers to the problems of inefficiency, quality, and inequity they are

facing (Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003; Orr, 2006). Both sides frame the neediest American

children as the impetus driving their reform models (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Meyer &

Feistritzer, 2003).

On the other hand, the higher education community has not blindly ignored the

calls for reform in educational leadership preparation. According to Orr (2006), "National

leadership standards, such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

(ISLLC) standards, now frame states' expectations for high- quality leadership and are used by 40 states as a platform for preparation programs and licensure" (p. 493). Surprisingly, amidst the controversy, the majority of school leaders value and approve of the preparation programs available, "Regardless of education level, superintendent ratings of their professional preparation have remained consistently high between 1982 and 2000" (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2009, p. 18).

However, those who advocate alternative pathways to the position often fail to consider whether school leaders value their formal preparation for leadership (Kowalski, McCord, et al., 2011). For example, Kowalski, Young and McCord (2011) stated, "Those promoting deregulation have tended to view the position as one requiring a mix of efficient management and political savvy" (p. 14). Ediger (2008) wrote that proponents of business leaders serving as school superintendents believe the type of leadership required in both positions is quite similar. Competition, fiscal efficiency, measurement of student results equated with profit lines, and the study and use of data are all arguments provided to persuade the public of the advantages to having an educational CEO (Ediger, 2008; Meyer & Feitstrizer, 2003). On the other hand, practical experience in the field of education, pedagogical and curricular expertise, a focus on the individual student, social justice, and understanding education as a service rather than a business are some of the tenants for traditional university training for educational administrators (Ediger, 2008; Hoyle, 2007; Meyer & Feitstrizer, 2003; Orr, 2006). Orr (2006) argued, "We have compelling evidence that significant innovation exists in the field and positively influences graduates' leadership practice" (p. 493). Hoyle (2007) called for placing more attention on a rigorous and selective acceptance process, carefully vetted

course content and coursework, and more intensive and varied internship experiences. McClellen, Ivory, & Dominguez (2008) advocated for more involved and relevant mentoring by successful superintendents. McClellen et al. (2008) further iterated this relationship with the statement, "Superintendents have much to share with aspiring administrators and the faculty who prepare them" (p. 353).

Conclusion

Most superintendents are still trained in traditional ways through university-based programs. The number of nontraditional paths to the superintendency is increasing, and it is difficult to correlate superintendent longevity to either style of preparation (Orr, 2006). Nontraditional superintendents are often recruited to serve in exceptionally large or historically troubled school districts. These positions tend to turn over rapidly whether leadership is trained traditionally or nontraditionally (Kowalski, McCord, et al. 2010). Many superintendents step down from their positions in districts large and small, urban and rural for various reasons. With this in mind, literature examining superintendent tenure and longevity related to district demographics, size and location will be examined and its implications for school improvement efforts.

Facing Obstacles and Surviving in the Superintendency

Introduction

Depending on the type of district served, typical tenure for the American superintendent ranges from three and one half to seven and one half years (Kowalski, McCord, et al., 2011). The typical school reform initiative takes five to ten years to produce visible results (Bryk et al., 2010). In an era of high stakes accountability, there is

often disconnect between reform efforts and the tenure required to enact and follow through to visible results.

The school superintendent is arguably one of the toughest jobs in America. Many candidates who achieve the position find the pressures and expectations too overwhelming to persist in the position (Grissom & Anderson, 2012; Lamkin, 2006). There is a plethora of research written in regards to what makes the position so difficult to sustain (Abshier et al., 2011; Fusarelli, 2006; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Holmes et al., 2014). In the 2010 decennial study, Kowlaski, McCord, et al., (2011) ranked the top seven problems faced by America's school superintendents. In order of importance according to responding superintendents, these problems include financing schools, school board and community relations, assessment of student learning outcomes, planning and goal setting, changing practices in curriculum, management problems, and accountability and credibility. This information was obtained through surveys completed by practicing superintendents (Kowalski, 2011). Other important issues raised by educational researchers include equitable education for all students (Holm, Diem, & Welton, 2014; Ivory & Acker-Hocevar, 2007; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Rothstein, 2004; Wilmore, 2008), local, state and national politics, (Saltman, 2014; Wilmore, 2008) and personnel issues (Bird & Wang, 2013; Langlois, 2004; Wilmore, 2008).

School Finance

School finance encompasses a wide range of responsibilities for the school superintendent. Poston (2011) provided a definition for school budgeting as "at it simplest, it is a plan to manage resources. At its best, it is a plan for use of resources to accomplish organizational goals and to obtain maximum productivity," (p. 4). Not

surprisingly, finance is listed as the number one source of stress for district leaders (Kowalski, McCord, & Peterson, 2011), and both qualitative and quantitative research exists that analyze school budgeting (Abshier et al., 2011: Boyland, 2013; Trevino, Braley, Stallone-Brown, & Slate, 2008). Melver (2011) stated, "Historically, district superintendents have always been required to do more with less" (p. 28). Trevino et al.'s (2008) quantitative study found school funding issues ranked as second in organizational challenges for school superintendents. Additionally, school funding is increasingly being related to performance accountability (Hanushek & Lindseth, 2009; Melver, 2011; Thompson, Crampton, & Wood, 2012). Hawk and Martin (2011) found lack of adequate resources to meet the necessary state and federal guidelines and creating and managing the district budget to be the highest ranking job stressors of American school superintendents.

The responsibility for financial accountability lies squarely on the shoulders of the district superintendent. According to Thompson et al. (2012),

> Consequently, new and experienced school leaders alike must be thoroughly versed in the concepts of *fiscal accountability* and the *fiduciary trust*… There is no defense for people who do not take time to fully grasp the weight of accountability for public money because all aspects of education suffer irreparable damage when proper accountability measures are not followed; that is, failure to establish good fiscal accountability results in pervasive distrust of everyone involved. (p. 112)

It is understandable that school finance is a leading stressor for many school leaders and that poor money management brings the career of many superintendents to an

early end. Unfortunately, most beginning superintendents lack adequate training in

school finance, and though the employment of a separate business manager is

recommended, it is often not feasible (Abshier et al., 2011). Further, most university

programs lack appropriate training in the financial aspects of the position (Abshier et al.,

2011; Melver, 2011; Thompson et al., 2012). Substantial mentoring, careful oversight,

and thorough training in school finance should be precursors to the superintendent

position. While the role of school financial manager warrants a unique position, the

reality is that school superintendents frequently occupy this role along with several

others.

School Board and Community Relations

One stealthily navigated area regarding superintendent retention is community

and public relations. Each community, large and small, comes with its own politics and

power struggles. A wrong turn on this treacherous pathway has derailed many well-

intentioned superintendents. Several educational authors have outlined the pitfalls of

school and community relationships (Fusarelli, 2006; Lindle, 2014; Wilmore, 2008).

Joyce Epstein (2011) developed a comprehensive body of work concerning school,

family, and community partnerships and how to overcome obstacles and attain the best

leverage as school leaders. Epstein (2011) recommended developing a systemic

approach to partnering with parents. This includes a well thought out plan and program

for engaging parents in their student's education. Another piece of the puzzle is

collaboration with community businesses and organizations (Epstein, 2011).

Cabeza (2013) found that successful Latino superintendents made it part of

district practice to include a variety of stakeholders in determining instructional direction

and "also utilized collaboration as one way in which to sustain relationships with different members of the organization" (p.165). Fusarelli's (2006) research concluded that reasons for superintendent being unsuccessful was because, "In the end, it was his inability to work within the culture of the community and the school board that led to ineffectual leadership, near-constant conflict, and his resignation" (p. 49). Effectively engaging the community as well as the staff of a school district emerges as an important component of successful school leadership. An ineptitude for working within the context of the community and understand the culture of the board leads to conflict and ineffective leadership (Fusarelli, 2006). Michael Fullan (2002) summarized the importance of relationships in his statement, "Successful leaders tend to engage others with their energy and are in turn, energized by the activities and accomplishments of the group" (p. 15).

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

In today's data rich world, it is unconscionable that a superintendent would not be abreast of student performance including knowledge of strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, superintendents must be competent at monitoring student achievement and directing district policy in meeting the academic needs of students. Ivory and Acer-Hocevar (2007) asserted, "In partnership, superintendents and school board members need to examine student achievement, monitor student learning over time, and determine how to take responsibility for the academic success of all students" (p. 59). Maintaining an accountability for student performance is a demanding task that involves superior knowledge in the areas of curriculum, technology, statistics, and cutting educational change. Bird and Wang (2013) stated, "In matters of decision-making, problem-solving, and strategic planning, authentic leaders rely on data rather than biases" (p. 16). The

district leader must not only know how to interpret the data, but also how to best use it to guide policy decisions.

Often, student data is maintained and managed using a Management Information System (MIS). However, an MIS has little purpose if not utilized by employees to assess student outcomes and drive future instruction (Kowalski, 2013). Larger districts usually employ someone specifically to manage and interpret data; however, many smaller districts must delegate this responsibility to employees who serve in other roles as well. It is important for all superintendents to understand how to interpret student data and use it to influence policy changes (Bird & Wang, 2013). This expectation adds one more complicated and difficult layer to the job role of the superintendent.

Planning and Goal Setting

The Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standard 1.0 deals with the "development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared district vision" (Wilmore, 2008, p. 7). As the leader of a district, the superintendent must maintain a clear focus on the mission and vision of the organization to be certain that daily actions and activities in the district lead to fulfillment of district goals. According to Kowalski (2013), "Planning is essentially a mechanism for moving a school district from its current state to its vision" (p. 202). Additionally, a collaborative approach to meeting district goals encourages success (Fullan, 2002). Fullan (2002) indicated that consensus in planning, just as consensus in visioning, helps build a sense of ownership in a change process for more success in reform efforts.

Communicating and overseeing the district's plans for sustainable improvement is an integral part of the superintendent's role. Though the district leader may rely heavily

on a leadership team to provide the data, ideas, and methods necessary to bringing about

school improvement, the onus for communicating the needs and instructing the board and

community lies squarely on the superintendent's shoulders. Palladino, Haar, Grady, and

Perry (2007) identified "people skills" as a characteristic held by most successful

superintendents. A successful superintendent knows how to inspire and persuade others,

be a good listener, and make others feel comfortable in her presence. Successful

superintendents in America's largest school districts use their communication skills to get

the job done. Margaret Smith, the successful leader of the Volusia County Florida

School District, a district serving over 62,000 students has been described a collaborative

in her leadership style (Rivero, 2010). Rivero (2010) described Smith as a leader who

"meets, listens, speaks, strategizes, negotiates, encourages, supports and otherwise

communicates with dozens of people daily" (pp. 49-50). Another example of a positive,

successful leader is former Philadelphia Public Schools superintendent, Paul Vallas.

According to Useem (2009), "Vallas's experience shows that even when other actors

assume significant formal roles in school governance, a bold and persuasive

superintendent who is able to take advantage of enhanced formal authority can implement

a significant improvement effort in a district" (p. 301). What these two school leaders

shared was strongly developed communication and persuasive skills necessary for

implementing a vision for change.

Implementing Change

Closely related to communicating the vision is implementing needed changes in

district curriculum and policies (Lindle, 2014). Student demographics have changed

rapidly in all district sizes and locations and curriculum and policy changes frequently lag

behind shifting demographics. Holm et al. (2014) examined district responses to demographic changes in suburban school districts and found that while most suburban districts quickly implemented efforts to celebrate and recognize diversity, they did not address the underlying needs for curricular and policy changes necessary for providing equitable instruction for individual students. Districts with changing demographics but unchanging school board membership have an even harder time adapting to change as school board members do not realistically reflect the new demographics of the district population (Weller, Brown, & Flynn, 1991). While local school boards and school employees historically strongly resist change (Fusarelli, 2006; Hackmann, 2012), change is necessary in meeting the future demands on our publicly educated citizens. Further, sustainable change is not possible when superintendent leadership turnover is frequent (Hentschke, Nayfack, & Wohlstetter, 2009). Again, research strongly supports the relationship between effective communication and collaborations skills as well as the ability to effectively implement sustainable change (Hoyle, 2007; Hyle, Ivory, & McClellan, 2010; Ivory & Acker-Hocevar, 2007; Montz &Wanat, 2008; Useem, 2009).

Management Issues

Human Resource Administration is the term commonly used in education to refer to managing employees (Kowalski, 2013). Even small school districts employ many people, and the management of people involves flexibility, tenacity, and moral resolve. The local superintendent must deal with compensation packages, job descriptions, employee expectations, planning for staffing, employee training, several department heads, teacher bargaining units and much more. He must also manage the district finances, special education programs, school lunch programs, and legal matters. If the

superintendent is fortunate enough to have others to delegate these tasks to, he must still take ultimate responsibility for all areas of management (Callan & Levinson, 2011).

Hiring, maintaining and building leadership capacity in building administrators and teachers helps to sustain school improvement. Bird and Wang (2013) stated, "Effective leaders need to respond to fast-changing conditions; strive to develop leadership talents within colleagues throughout their organizations; and do so through continuous personal interactions with stakeholders" (p. 15). Current federal guidelines demand that local school staff each classroom with "highly qualified" teachers (Ivory & Acer-Hocevar, 2007). Recruiting highly qualified teachers and providing them with the support and professional development required is a daunting task in the face of reduced funding (Kowalski, 2013). At a time when educational research and federal and state legislation is calling for higher student achievement, administrators and teachers find themselves defending, not only their salaries, but expenditures on training and development (Kowalski, 2013). This has made the challenging task of hiring and maintaining qualified educators even more difficult in current times.

Accountability and Credibility

The literature on school leadership identifies the qualities of honesty, intelligence and moral purpose, and their varying manifestations, such as integrity, trustworthiness, credibility, public accountability, etc. as crucial to superintendent longevity (Nir, 2014; Kowlaski, 2013). While these qualities are not always enough to sustain a leadership position, they underlie almost every lengthy tenure in the profession (Callan & Levinson, 2011; Palladino et al., 2007). When a leader has moral purpose, he demonstrates accountability and credibility. Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010)

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explained, "At a more fundamental level, we seek to discern whether a moral-ethical perspective guides the activity of others; do I see their behavior as really being about the children, their education and welfare?" (p. 139).

An important element of moral leadership is developing trust with stakeholders. According to McCombs and Miller (2009), "When trust becomes a characteristic of the network as a whole, it expands the number of people resources that can be called upon in a collaborative learning and leading process" (p. 54). Nir (2014) explained "Trust is viewed as highly significant for coordinating relations in organizational systems and decreasing uncertainty and risk" (p. 4); however, trust is built slowly over time based on observed behaviors and actions and is easily broken. When a superintendent reacts consistently with moral purpose to each problematic situation, she will build trust with the board and community.

The role of integrity is tantamount to decision making as a school leader. Board and community members will quickly hone in on questionable actions committed by the superintendent. A district leader can avoid scandal and mistrust when using integrity to guide her actions. Basing decisions on student welfare is a practice sure to build respect and trust. Ivory and Acer-Hocevar (2007) explained,

> Acting with integrity means doing the right thing when no one is there to see what you are doing. It means always keeping students and the welfare of the district at the center of decisions and doing what is right for all students. (p. 210)

Palladino, et al. (2007) stated "moral responsibility" or "ethical leadership" as contributing factor to superintendent sustainability (p. 41). Maintaining tenure may rely on practicing integrity in the workplace because the superintendent's position is so

political in nature, a misstep in ethics can bring a swift end to the school leader's tenure. The successful superintendent is one who keeps moral purpose at the forefront of all decision making.

Conclusion

While the role of superintendent has evolved throughout the history of its existence, in more recent decades it has become increasingly complex (Bjork et al., 2014). It has become increasingly difficult to maintain a successful career as school superintendent amidst the demands for expertise in numerous fields and the negative portrayal of school officials in many communities.

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Those Who Survive and Thrive

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Introduction

Much of the existing quantitative literature on superintendent tenure focuses on length of tenure and reasons for turnover (Alsbury, 2008; Council of the Great City Schools, 2010; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Johnson, Huffman, Madden, & Shope, 2011; Kowlaski et al., 2011; Melver, 2011). All of the aforementioned challenges supply reasons for turnover as well as retirement and career moves to larger districts (Kowalski et al., 2011). In the qualitative arena much of the work focuses on case studies about superintendents sharing specific qualities or demographics (Alston, 2005; Bird & Wang, 2013; Cabeza, 2013; Hackmann, 2012). These studies focus on answering questions about what characteristics these successful superintendents share. Some qualitative studies report the skills and successes of one particularly successful superintendent, such as Paul Vallas in Philadelphia or Beverly Hall in Atlanta (Useem, 2009). These

successful leaders do not fit any one leadership style or formula. Each of them is worthy

of being studied simply because of who they are and what they have accomplished.

Educational Leadership Council Standards

The body of literature on effective practices in school leadership is extensive

(Bryk et al., 2010; Daggett, 2015; Fisher et al., 2012; Fullan, 2005; McCombs & Miller,

2009; Reeves, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1994). Sustainable school improvement is the goal set

forth by many of the current experts in the field (Bryk et al., 2010; Daggett, 2015;

Decker, Decker & Brown, 2007; Fullan, 2005). Superintendents are expected to create

and sustain systematic improvement. Effective practices are difficult to break down and

identify; however, the Educational Leadership Council (ELCC) has formulated six

standards necessary for improving district performance (Wilmore, 2008).

Standard one addresses vision, specifically developing, articulating, and

implementing a district vision (Wilmore, 2008). Developing and implementing a strong

vision is corroborated as a vital part of superintendent leadership in the literature (Allen,

2013; Alston, 2005; Cabeza, 2013; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Palladino et al., 2007; Useem,

2009). In essence, a school leader must have a vision and empower others to help

accomplish that vision.

Standard two involves creating a positive school culture that supports teaching

and learning in the district (Wilmore, 2008). Promoting a positive culture may seem as

though it should be more of a site-based endeavor and low on the superintendent's list of

priorities; however, "Culture ultimately defines the essence of the school and gives

meaning to human endeavor" (Harris, 2005, p. 32). Because the superintendent serves as

the instructional leader of the district, establishing a culture in the district that supports

teaching and learning is essential to his/her success. Harris (2005) advocated getting a clear understanding of the underlying culture and utilizing its strengths to accomplish goals. Similarly, William Daggett (2015) emphasized relationships among staff and students as key components to sustained improvement. District culture has emerged as a crucial consideration in accomplishing school improvement.

Standard three address a task long deemed a part of the superintendent's role, operational manager (Wilmore, 2008). Much like any business manager the superintendent must make sure all aspects of the district run smoothly and safely. This component of the job is verified as stress inducing (Hawk & Martin, 2011), and failure to run a district safely and smoothly can often land a superintendent and his board in serious legal trouble (Callan & Levinson, 2011).

Standard four identifies family and community collaboration (Wilmore, 2008) as a key component of successful school leadership. Most school improvement initiatives include at least a partial focus on engaging and sustaining relationships with the community (Bryk et al., 2010; Epstein, 2011; McCombs & Miller, 2009). Bryk et al., (2010) described a model school as "one that melds systemic efforts at strengthening instruction with the social resources of a comprehensive community schools initiative" (p. 196). For example, the community schools model brings many social services including parent education classes to the school as a means of bettering the community and thereby overall education. The importance of the ability to establish and maintain effective partnerships is well established in the literature. Michael Fullan (2009) wrote "community organizing is correlated with higher levels of teacher-parent trust, sense of school community and safety, achievement oriented culture, and parent involvement in

the school" (p. 34). Cabeza (2013) found "establishing and sustaining relationships and ensuring the district culture was collaborative in nature" (p. 158) were key components in student achievement. Finally, Joyce Epstein et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis and compiled a body of literature that specifies best practices in engaging the community in schools and student achievement. Epstein et al. (2011) recommend further research evaluating the effect of school/community programs on student achievement.

Standard five calls for ethical and fair practices on the part of the school superintendent (Wilmore, 2008). Standard five aligns with authentic leadership because of its emphasis on transparency and moral integrity (Bird et al., 2013). Authentic leadership is touted as a driving force for student success and contains for components: 1) self-awareness, 2) relational transparency, 3) balanced processing, and 4) moral integrity (Bird et al., 2013, p.80). In their analysis of the data, Bird et al. (2013) found a positive correlation between authentic leadership practices and school improvement practices. Bird and Wang (2013) described authentic leaders as having "strong, open and honest relationships with others" (p. 16). Fusarelli (2006) found establishing trust with school board members to be important for successful district leadership. Additionally, complex decision-making is related to this standard because it is an ethical process that involves moral judgment (Langlois, 2004).

The final standard describes a school district leader as someone who "has the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context" (Wilmore, 2008, p. 8). A superintendent has positional power that can and should wield a great deal of influence in the community and beyond as the superintendent

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understands the needs of stakeholders in the district as well as advocates for meeting those needs.

Conclusion

Successful school leaders use to capacity the strengths they possess and grow those skills that need honing. Whether it be spirituality as described by Alston (2005) and Fullan (2002), great communication skills such as those possessed by Margaret Smith in Volusia County, Florida (Rivero, 2009), or financial expertise (Abshier et al., 2011; Useem, 2009) each successful superintendent leverages what she already has going for her and either surrounds herself with those who can shore up her own shortcomings or learns to strengthen her weaker skills through experience.

Longevity and Influence on Student Achievement

At first glance, the literature on district leadership and its effects on student outcomes seems to be contradictory. Waters and Marzano (2006) claimed their meta-analysis produced evidence that certain practices as well as superintendent longevity contributed to improved academic achievement. However, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) conducted a meta-analysis and came to opposite conclusions. They reported "low or very weak impact" (p. 636) of educational leadership on student outcomes. The superintendent's influence on student achievement warrants a closer look.

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) found "leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (p. 3). Alsbury (2008) found many different variables determined whether a district leadership positively or negatively impacted student achievement. Some of those contextual differences include the stability, vision, and support of the

school board and the size of the district (Alsbury, 2008). Leithwood et al. (2004) decried advocating a particular style of leadership. Instead they focused on leadership for organizational effectiveness that involves specific, goal oriented direction and then getting those in the organization to collaboratively move toward accomplishing those goals (Leithwood et al., 2004). In this case, superintendent success would not depend upon superintendent tenure, but rather the ability to articulate and implement a vision, motivate others to work toward goal fulfillment, and the ability to execute plans toward goal pursuit. Waters and Marzano (2006) provided support for this concept. The findings of their meta-analysis indicated "effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal oriented districts" (p. 3). However, Waters and Marzano (2006) also found two studies finding a statistically significant correlation between superintendent tenure and positive student achievement.

Alsbury (2008) claimed that superintendent stability in districts with less than 500 students often stymied student academic growth because the board encouraged maintenance of the status quo even when student demographics change. Alsbury found "no measurable effects from superintendent turnover, possibly due to a balancing of these uncontrolled variables and variations in new superintendent effectiveness" (p. 222). When examined more closely, these findings do not actually contradict findings that suggest a correlation between superintendent leadership and student achievement because other factors are at play. In sum, the literature concurs that effective leadership matters for student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Alsbury, 2008). Additionally, establishing attainable goals and garnering the help and support of

all stakeholders in accomplishing those goals leads to improved student achievement (Bryk et al., 2010).

Additional findings in the literature suggest that context is important for superintendent success. For example, Chingos, Whitehurst, and Lindquist (2014) conducted a study using data from Florida and North Carolina between 2000 and 2010. They examined K-12 student-level administrative data. Chingos et al. (2014) concluded, "Student achievement does not improve with longevity of superintendent service within their districts" (p. 1). They also suggested, "superintendents whose tenure is associated with sizable, statistically reliable changes in student achievement in the district in which they serve, controlling for the many other factors that affect student achievement, are quite rare" (Chingos et al., 2014, p. 1). Perhaps, it is not the skills, characteristics, or formulaic leadership style that make a great district leader and raise student achievement; perhaps it is the leader, working in a particular context with a set of skills that can adapt to that context that make for a successful district superintendent.

Person Environment Fit Theory

Person-Environment Fit is one of the leading models in vocational psychology (Spokane, Meir, & Catalano, 2000). This theory is derived, as many others are, from research conducted throughout the 20th century addressing the field of work psychology. One idea to come out of the work/stress literature in psychology was the idea of "fit." Specifically, an employee's ability to fit in his environment greatly reduces his stress and increases his productivity and likelihood of persevering in the position (Spokane, et al., 2000). Person-Environment Fit is a theory rooted in the work of John Holland. During the mid-twentieth century psychological academicians became interested in work related

stress and how the causes and effects on workers and the work place. Holland's

background as a vocational counselor during service in the military and at Western

Reserve University served as impetus to his work in job fit theory development (Nauta,

2010). It was at Western Reserve that Holland began to build his Vocational Preference

Inventory (VPI), a six-category typology of vocations (Nauta, 2010). He later developed

the Self-Directed Search (SDS) that was used to assess and counsel the individual

concerning career direction (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009). The concept of

administering interest inventories to young workers was one outcome of Holland's theory

and work. His influence on "practice and research in career development by contributing

a clear theory useful in organizing information about individuals and career alternatives

and for understanding individuals' entry and persistence in occupational and other

environments" (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009, p. 99). Holland's work has significantly

influenced the way educators approach career counseling for students. For example,

from the 1970's moving forward, most students have been subjected to interest

inventories of one kind or another seeking to determine a good potential career fit for the

individual. Holland sought to empirically tie job satisfaction and job persistence to a

positive match up between a person's skills and those demanded by the job and a

person's needs compared with those provided by the job. This "fit" is often expressed as

congruence (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Spokane et al., 2000). Spokane et al. (2000)

defined congruence as "a good fit, or correspondence, between one's needs, wishes, and

preferences on the one hand and situation, rewards, and gratification on the other hand"

(p. 139).

Over the course of his lengthy career, Holland continued theoretical work on person-environment fit. Edwards, Caplan, and Harrison (1998), Edwards and Cooper (1990) and others refined and extended this theoretical framework during the latter half of the twentieth century. In 1997, Holland strengthened his presentation of the theory by clarifying the mobility of congruence in relation to his theory and social psychology (Spokane et al., 2000).

Caplan (1987) described person-environment fit theory as "as a method for understanding the process of adjustment between organizational members and their work environment" (p. 249). P-E Fit Theory has been applied repeatedly in organizational research (Dawis, 2002; Donohue, 2006; Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009; Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Yang & Yu, 2009) concerning vocational choice, job satisfaction and persistence, employee productivity, and commitment to the organization. Over time, related theories such as person-environment correspondence theory (Dawis, 2002), self-determination theory (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009), the psychology-of-working framework (Duffy, Autin, & Bott, 2015), and person-environment congruence theory (Spokane et al., 2000) have added to the concepts and complexity of person-environment fit.

Holland's (1997) theory contains three main ideas: 1) different work environments can be identified by type, 2) people can also be classified by type, and 3) work environments and people can be matched by best fit (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009; Holland, 1997). Holland (1997) created a six-part typology commonly known as RIASEC (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional). He believed that both the work environment and the individual could be classified using the RIASEC typology. The premise of his theory was that high congruence between the

individual's typology and that of his/her work environment positively impacts job satisfaction, productivity, and longevity in the position (Holland, 1997). Conversely, poor congruence results in the opposite causing low productivity, dissatisfaction, and job abandonment (Sekiguchi, 2004). Numerous correlational studies have been conducted in an effort to solidify the assumed connection between the fit of person and environment (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Edwards, 2004; Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013); however, not all studies seeking to support Holland's propositions yielded significant results (Donohue, 2006). It should also be noted that in studies finding a significant correlation, the effect size was generally found to be weak (Donohue, 2006).

The most elementary description of P-E fit describes the relationships between needs-supplies and between demands-abilities (Caplan, 1987; Duffy, et al., 2015; Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006). Needs-supplies refers to what the individual perceives as his needs compared to what the job supplies. Examples of needs include: How much autonomy does one need? How much compensation, direction, challenge, and affirmation and to what level are these needs met by the organization (Edwards et al., 2006)? On the other hand, demands-abilities refers to what skills, intellect, talent, psychological stamina are required by the job and organization, as well as how well equipped the individual is to meet those demands (Edwards, et al., 2006). According to P-E fit theory, as the needs-supplies and demands-abilities become more congruent, the less stress the employee will feel and the better the results will be for the organization. Alternatively, when the need-supplies and demands-abilities diverge, the more negative the impact will be on the employee's well being and the overall organization (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. P-E Fit Theory Model (Edwards et al. 2006)
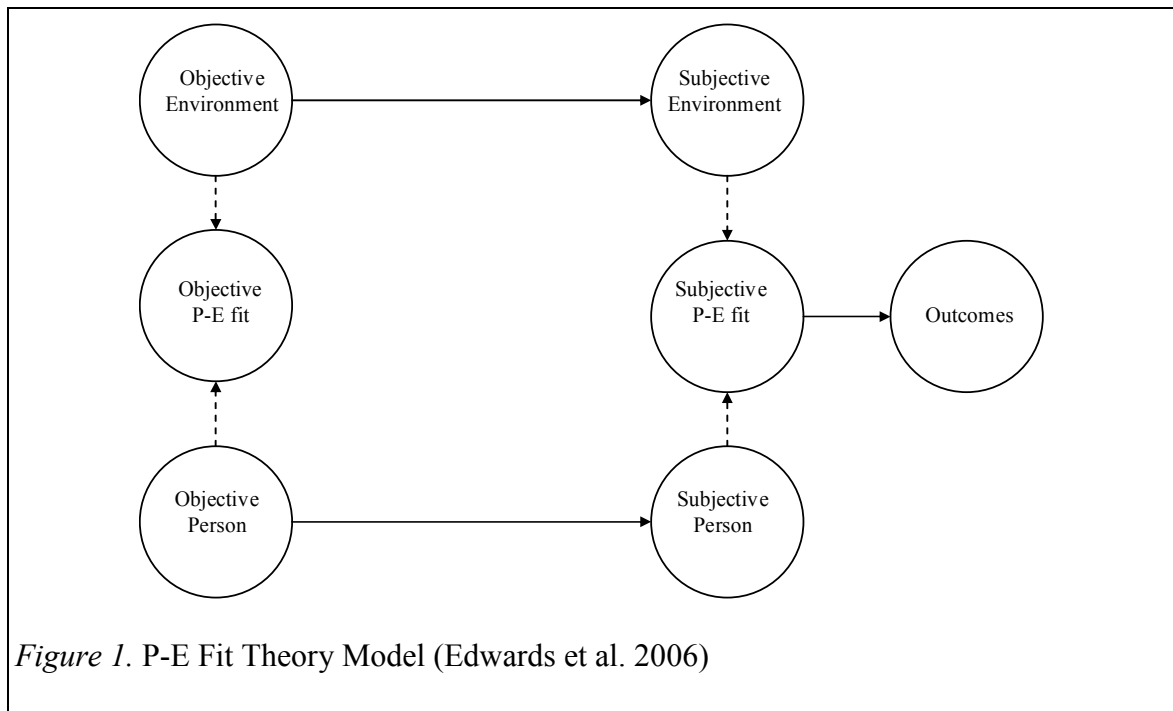
These two basic assumptions about person-environment fit are the underpinnings for a

plethora of research and the expansion of fit into multiple categories and interpretations

(Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2012; Sekiguchi, 2004; Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Truxillo,

Cadiz, Rineer, Zaniboni, & Fraccaroli, 2012). P-E fit has also been studied extensively in

relation to overall organizational effectiveness (Pseekos, Bullock-Yowell, & Dahlan,

2011; Seong, Kristof-Brown, Park, Hong, & Shin, 2012).

In their groundbreaking study, Seong et al., (2015) researched supplementary and

complementary fit perceptions at the group level. Their study looked at two different

types of team-member diversity, social-cultural diversity and education-skill diversity

(Seong et al., 2012). Their findings suggested that having a similar social and cultural

viewpoint helps members to feel as though they fit in and provides for a more productive

working environment (Soeng et al., 2015); however, when these members have no education-skill diversity, they are often unable to productively and creatively complete work tasks. Seong et al. (2015) stated "social category and informational diversity may both feed into perceptions of team-level fit, but are not completely independent predictors… Additional research exploring how various types of diversity interact to create conditions that are conducive to effective teams is clearly needed" (p. 1204).

Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) took the concept further through the development of five dimensions of fit: 1) person-job (PJ) fit, 2) person-organization (PO) fit, 3) person-group (PG) fit, 4) person-vocation (PV) fit, and 5) person-supervisor (PS) fit (p. 3). Each of these aspects of fit relates to the organizational psychology of P-E fit theory in slightly different ways. In measuring each dimension, it should be taken into consideration that measures are always a combination of individuals' perceptions compared to objective measures. This consideration is often cited as a theoretical weakness not fully dealt with in the research (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Edwards, Caplan & Harrison, 1998; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2012).

One expansion of the theory is into the realm of subjective and objective fit. Caplan (1987) stated, "A second property is the importance of distinguishing between objective and subjective measures of fit and its components" (p. 249). Further, Edwards et al. (1987) described, "Subjective fit is that which is perceived by the target person- that is, the employee. Objective fit, by definition, is free from the bias of human perception" (p. 251). According to Yang and Yu (2009) "the objective person describes characteristics of the person, such as abilities, goals, and values. In contrast, the subjective person refers to an individual's perception of these characteristics" (p. 1211).

In subjective fit, the individual reports his perceptions of personal values and perceptions of organizational values (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2012). The important point here is that both reports are done from the point of view of the individual employee. Objective fit, sometimes labeled actual fit, relies on internal and external sources of data (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2012). The individual being evaluated for fit reports the internal dimensions, but external dimensions are evaluated by other means. For example, a supervisor or coworker could provide ratings of the individual in question. Ratings could also consist of actual external factors such as building conditions or rewards systems in place. Questions that evolve from this theory include: But what is free from the bias of human perception? Who rates the target person and environment? What are the facts truly when another human must provide the rating? The answers to these questions are only identifiable through varying epistemologies. The positivist will have a very different answer to the questions than the constructivist. This is an issue that must be taken up by behavioral science researchers. Cable and DeRue (2002) reported a very weak relationship between the elements of subjective fit and objective fit. Therefore, it would make sense that someone could find his values and cultural expectations closely fitted with his organization, but find that his abilities did not come close to aligning with the demands of the particular job. This contradiction segues into another type of "fit" found in the research.

Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2012) found a third type of fit called "perceived fit" which is described as "an internal feeling of 'fitting in' or 'feeling like a misfit'" (p. 1). This third type of fit is often related to shared values (Kaldenberg & Becker, 1992; Rehfuss, Gambrell, & Meyer, 2012). Kaldenberg and Becker (1992) predicted "that an

individual would be more likely to help the larger causes of an organization when he or she shares the organization's values" (, p. 620).

There are several additional limitations involved with use of P-E theory. One of the limitations of the theory is the fluid nature of the individual's self-perception as well as the evolution of the organization. Kristof-Brown & Billsberry (2012) and Sekiguchi (2004) addressed the fluidity of self-perceived fit. Further, Holland's (1997) restatement of his theory thoroughly acknowledged this caveat by stating, "Incongruent interactions stimulate change in human behavior… environments tend to change or to become like the dominant persons within them" (p. 68).

In 1959, Holland organized the output of recently developed vocational inventories and methods for scoring, applied the person-environment fit framework and served as an impetus for a flood of organizational psychology research in the ensuing half century (Spokane et al., 2000). While much of the research testing P-E fit has been quantitative, most of it has been correlational. There are questions concerning the validity of such studies. Spokane et al., (2000) called for more scientific experimental designs taking place over lengthy periods of time and in real-life settings.

Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2012) proposed looking at P-E fit through a less objective lens than that of the positivists and post-positivists who have most frequently done research in the area. According to Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2012), "Very little is known, then about how these perceptions form, or why they influence attitudes and behaviors as strongly as they do. This is fertile ground for new organizational fit research" (p. 5). Shipp and Jansen's (2011) research focused on how individual's perceptions of their own fit changes over time added to the notion that someone's

perception of fit and actual job fit can change over time upon reflection and anticipation of events (Gabriel, Diefendorff, Chandler, Moran, & Greguras, 2013; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). This perspective lends credence to the idea that job fit can indeed be adapted to and viewed differently at different points in one's life. Also, it suggested that a better fit can be established through tacit knowledge, or knowledge gained through experiences on the job. This provides food for thought concerning the weak correlations between skills and job needs as skills are developed through practice and can often improve greatly over time given a good fit between the values of the person and the organization.

McCauley and Brutus (1998) furthered the discussion on adaption to the job environment and demands in their work *Management Development Through Job Experiences: An Annotated Bibliography.* The authors discussed "tacit" knowledge or knowledge that is "developed through direct experience" (McCauley & Brutus, 1998, p. 5). McCauley and Brutus (1998) explained, "Although the way in which managers acquire tacit knowledge has not been looked at closely, studies of this phenomenon do support the notion that, in order to be successful, managers need to develop increasingly complex levels of expertise" (p. 5). This understanding supports the notion that individuals can adapt to their work environment over time and through experience, and thus will increase their person-environment fit given the opportunity. Yang and Yu (2009) affirmed this notion of adaptation to the organizational environment and improvement in P-E fit when they stated, "Therefore, even though it is seldom mentioned explicitly, work-based affect in the form of attitudes with affective components has often been treated as an important outcome in a majority of P-E fit research" (p. 1211). Indeed, Sekiguchi (2004) called Holland's theory sensible and measurably valid, but also static.

According to Sekiguchi (2004), "Some characteristics of the person and environment are more stable, but other characteristics may be more changeable" (p. 178). Sekiguchi (2004) introduced a more dynamic P-E fit model and argued for future research in the field of dynamic P-E fit. This undergirds the proposition that individuals can achieve better P-E fit through experience on the job. Adaptation to a better fit is a topic well suited to future P-E fit research. Truxillo et al. (2012) extended these concepts with their study focusing on crafting careers to create better job satisfaction, work output, and organizational commitment throughout a worker's developmental changes as they age. Truxillo et al. (2012) explained, "We are only beginning to learn how to design jobs for workers across the lifespan to promote their satisfaction, engagement, and productivity" (p. 2).

Though much of the research suggests that good P-E fit results in positive affect for individuals and among groups of workers, the employee's affect is posited as a reason for, rather than expression of P-E fit in a particular job or organization by Yang &Yu (2009). Yang and Yu (2009) proposed a cyclical model in which positive affect, defined as positive attitudes, actions, feelings, interactions and experiences, may be an outcome of P-E fit. They further suggested that positive affect also continually contributes to better P-E fit (See Figure 2). Gabriel et al. (2013) supported this assertion, and found evidence for reciprocal relationships between positive affect and job fit and positive affect as a precursor to perceptions of good job fit.
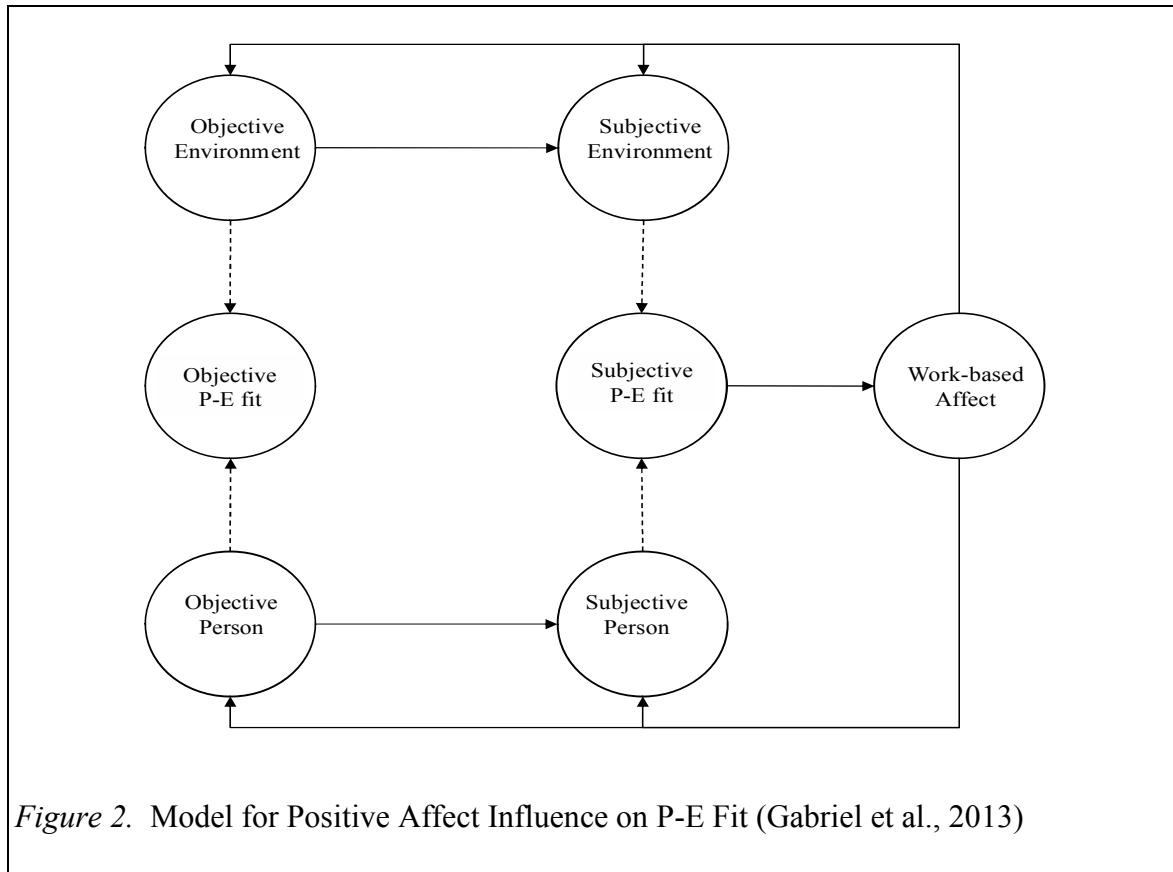
Figure 2. Model for Positive Affect Influence on P-E Fit (Gabriel et al., 2013)

According to Yang & Yu (2009), "The usefulness of P-E fit to organizations and individuals is thus compromised until we have a better idea of how individuals experience, manage, and influence P-E fit" (p. 1211). Particularly relevant to this study, the affective side of P-E fit supplies a template for future qualitative inquiry, an uncommon approach to the study of how well the employee fits his job and the organization.

The literature includes several attempts to integrate different types of fit, particularly the objective types of fit (needs-supplies fit and demands-abilities fit) and the more subjective person-organization fit (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Sekiguchi, 2004). Sekiguchi (2004) delineated the differences in the two types by labeling them "surface-level" and "deep-level". Surface-level fit describes more measurable or

demographic differences, whereas deep-level fit describes differences on a more psychological level such as values, mores, and vision. Integrating the two types of fit is difficult to accomplish through experimental research. The issue of subjective individual perceptions and how realistically individual's can rate their own abilities as well as the difficulty in quantifying levels of feeling creates weaknesses in the scientific model. Qualitative research could provide useful data in continuing the study of the person and their fit in the job environment.

Amy Kristof-Brown and Jon Billsberry are pushing the boundaries in the growing field of qualitative Person-Environment Fit research. Having thoroughly defined the concepts of subjective and objective fit, Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2012) turned their attention to what they labeled "perceived fit", which relates to the individual mind and its interpretation of reality (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2012). Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2012) stated, "most P-E fit theories focused on the function of fit but discussed little about the psychological processes underlying fit and fit outcome relationships… That is, we need to turn toward the question 'when does fit matter?'" (p. 90). If the individual believes his job or organizational fit is good, what else matters?

The temporality of job fit is another aspect of Person-Environment Fit Theory researchers have recently tackled. Researchers are now posing questions such as: What influence do age and stage in life have on the individual's fit? Does job feedback influence an individual's perceived fit? Dawis (2002) proposed that fit changes over time. Truxillo et al. (2012) explored "lifespan development perspectives to the interactions between job characteristics and age" and found "There has been less work on how to design jobs for people at different life stages so that they can continue to work

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productively" (p. 1). All of these provide intriguing direction for the future of qualitative

research in the field of person environment fit theory.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement, Purpose, and Research Questions

Many experts in the field of educational leadership identify the superintendency

as a position that requires a high level of intelligence, skill, and the ability to cope with

heavy stress (Fullan, 2005; Lamkin, 2006; Lindle, 2014; Nir, 2014; Reeves, 2006;

Wilmore, 2008). The literature reveals a great deal of training and experience generally

precedes ascension to the position (Freely & Seinfeld, 2012; Grogan & Andrews, 2002;

Lamkin, 2006). It also reveals that new superintendents are often unsuccessful at

maintaining and thriving in their positions (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). The necessary

levels of preparation and the many rewards of succeeding in the position call for more

attention to be focused on career sustainability. New and aspiring superintendents should

take note of the current trends and be attuned to ideas for sustaining a career in the

position.

What is interesting is that, despite the enormously high turnover in the

superintendent position (Bjork et al., 2014), an anomaly exists in that there are a few

instances of longevity in the superintendent position where an individual experiences

success over an extended period of time. One example of a long-term superintendent is Bob Hall in Eastern Valley School District. This individual has served successfully in the role of the superintendent for over four decades, with 25 years in the same district. He approaches his retirement with his reputation in tact and with a sense of satisfaction for his accomplishments made during his leadership as superintendent. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the life and career of this successful, long-term superintendent serving in a mid-sized urban school district in order to gain a better understanding of how he has been able to maintain long-term success.

The following research questions guided this study of one long-term superintendent.

Overarching Question

The primary guiding question for this study was:

What meanings does a school superintendent make about his experience of professional success and career longevity?

Sub-questions

1. What personal qualities can be identified as contributing to longevity?

2. What personal experiences can be identified as contributing to longevity?

3. How did critical incidents shape his life and career?

4. How did relationships contribute to his longevity?

5. How did this particular superintendent overcome challenges to his longevity?

Qualitative Paradigm and Method

Identifying a qualitative paradigm for a narrative inquiry study can be difficult. Narrative inquiry "does not proceed from a realist, constructionist, or postmodern position; instead, how we seek to understand and evoke experience arises from within the

inquiry" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 56). While the nature of narrative inquiry is that we do not begin with an epistemological paradigm in mind, I can argue for the purposes of this study, the epistemology I enter this study with would align with constructivism or interpretivism (Crotty, 1998). A term commonly used in the narrative inquiry literature is "experiential" (Bochner, 2014; Clandinin, 2013; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The researcher becomes involved in and experiences what is being researched. This is one reason narrative inquiry lends itself so well to educational research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher can, and does, become immersed in the research. Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) explained, "To engage deeply with experience, an ontological commitment is, then, a relational commitment" (p. 576). This approach to research does not appear to contradict epistemologies that insist meaning is created and relevant based on our interactions with others, such as constructivism, but cannot be limited to a constructivist epistemological viewpoint. Therefore, I approached this study with the understanding that the data must "tell the story", and since I collected data through interviews, document analysis, and observations, I must be open to both constructivism and the foundation of experiential interpretations as defined by scholars in narrative inquiry (Bochner, 2014; Clandinin, 2013; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Narrative Inquiry Research

When I began my post-graduate study, I was a building administrator. As a conscientious employee, I was always interested in learning more about quality educational leadership. I contemplated whether or not I was too old or too far along in my career to undertake such a challenge when the opportunity to study for an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership arose. I vacillated for a few days, agonizing over my lack of

experience in the world of academia, the lengthy amount of time that had passed since I had finished my M.Ed. (seventeen years), and the daunting task of either retaking the GRE or the MAT. My husband of four years, who is several years older than I, encouraged me to apply. His words were, "I'll support you every step of the way and do anything I can to help you. I would really love to be married to Dr. Yarbrough." Thus, began my eventful journey.

I have loved studying educational leadership. The teachers who work for me have been my guinea pigs. They have listened to my speeches, taken my grid and group questionnaires, and been subject to trying each new bit I learn as I go along. Halfway through my studies, I began to worry about exactly what kind of research I was going to conduct. My interest in narrative inquiry began during my Introduction to Qualitative Research course. I was drawn to qualitative research, particularly narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low Income Neighborhood* by Jay MacLeod (2008) was assigned to us as an exemplar for narrative research. The book is a first person account written by a researcher who embedded himself into a community very different from his own over a period of several years. I was hooked at the first paragraph of the story, and could not stop reading until I had come to the end. I was excited to see that written research could be engaging as well as informative. Storytelling has historically been a preferred method for imparting knowledge and values to younger generations. Putting important events and facts into story form helps us to understand those facts and events in a meaningful way and aids us in retaining the knowledge gained (Miller, 2000). The narrative method used in the aforementioned research rendered it relevant and engaging, and stood out in my mind as

one of my favorite readings in my doctoral program. However, I did not settle on writing

a narrative inquiry until I had chosen my research topic, done a literature review, and

attempted to write a methodology chapter. Qualitative research texts (Patton, 2002;

Creswell, 2014) tell the dissertation writer to choose a methodology that aligns with and

helps to answer the guiding research questions. After wrestling with case study

methodology (Yin, 2011), I realized I wanted to focus on, and tell the story of, the life

and career of one particular superintendent. This graduate program was preparing us to

be school superintendents, and we had studied extensively about how to do that well, how

to obtain a position, and how to sustain a career. Long careers in the superintendency are

infrequent, or if lengthy, they involve moving rapidly from one district to another

climbing the job ladder or specializing in cleaning up problems (Kowalski et al., 2011).

But, what kind of person embodies the superintendent who stays in a district for lengthy

periods of time and seems to thrive on the demands of the job?

I chose a narrative inquiry methodology because it best addressed the purpose of

this study. A highly descriptive, in-depth exploration of one educator's career lends itself

to a narrative inquiry method because this person's career is unique, and his story is

worthy of being told. Delving into critical life events proved fruitful in studying career

longevity and leadership capacity. My intent was to tell his story as he remembers it, and

as I interpret it based upon analysis of evidence gathered in this study. Caine et al.

(2013) described narrative inquiry as inquiry that "proceeds from an ontological position,

a curiosity about how people are living and the constituents of their experience" (p. 575).

According to Clandinin (2013), "Because narrative inquiries attend to individual's lives

as they are composed over time in relation with people and situations in a particular place or places, the focus remains on lives as lived and told throughout the inquiry" (p. 52).

Narrative inquiry is rooted in the work of John Dewey (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Dewey was the leading philosopher of education during the first half of the twentieth century. "Experience" was a key term in Dewey's works. The continuity of experience, "the notion that experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2) is foundational to this narrative study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated "there is always a history, it is always changing, and it is always going somewhere" (p. 2). Each successive meeting with the subject will yield new insight into how his career path emerged and developed over time through his relationships and interactions with others.

It is not unusual to focus on the life of one subject when conducting a narrative inquiry (Gilmore & Miller, 2013; Weinberg, 2015). When focusing on lived experiences and developing a relationship with the subject being researched (Bochner, 2014; Clandinin, 2013), it makes sense to narrow the focus to a group or an individual. Miller (2000) builds a strong research base for studying an individual's life. He described the narrative approach to life story research as "understanding the individual's unique and changing perspective as it is mediated by *context*" (Miller, 2000, p. 12).

Kenyon (2013) described the foundation to approaching a narrative "is the ongoing development of the respondent's viewpoint during the telling of a life or family story… understanding the individual's unique and changing perspective due to context is more important than relating straight fact" (Kenyon, 2013, p. 20). After so much reading on superintendent leadership, I recognized that looking at a specific individual in context,

and the factors that have led to that individual's successes, was a worthwhile study due to the fact that findings in the literature rarely provide the intricate details that provide understandings and insights into an individual's experiences, challenges and successes.

My research interest brought to mind a superintendent whom I am well acquainted with who has held the position for approximately forty years. I began to formulate the idea that the events and personal encounters the subject had throughout his life were what shaped his individual career into what it was and is today. According to Miller (2000) "a biographical approach is indicated where the area of interest is either the effects of change across time, historical events as theses events have impinged upon the individual, or his movement along his life course" (p. 74). Sitting in meetings with this superintendent is sometimes like listening to a professional storyteller. He regularly uses stories to illustrate his points and often begins with the phrase "did I ever tell you about the time that...?" This superintendent seems to take in stride whatever the position throws at him. He often punctuates his decisions by telling a story about an incident in his career that defined his future decision-making. His leadership style is unique and has led to a successful career that has spanned changes in demographics, legislation, financial situations, advances in technology and other significant changes in the field.

One form of narrative inquiry is called "life story" or "biographical research" (Brian Roberts, 2002). Roberts (2002) described this form of inquiry as, "The study of biographical research rests on a view of individuals as creators of meaning which form the basis of their everyday lives" (p. 6). Further, Atkinson and Heath (1990) explained narrative inquiry as, "The intimate detail of the single life history, with some commentary-interpretation, allows us to gain a feeling of 'knowing' a life and situation

outside common experience and establishes the 'warrant for credibility and authority in the text'" (p.133).

Life experiences are often encapsulated in critical events. Critical events, or life-changing events, are often shared in story form (Webster & Mertova, 2007). According to Webster and Mertova (2007) "narrative is an event-driven tool of research" (p. 71). Narrative inquirers frequently structure research methods around the detailed retelling of important moments in time that impacted the future direction of a life or lives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). My study recounts many of these critical events in the life of this long-term superintendent in order to gain insights about superintendent leadership. It was my intention to provide a rich description of events and reactions that shaped the leadership style and practices of this superintendent. Further, I wanted readers to reflect and use those reflections to shape their concept of educational leadership in their ongoing pursuit of knowledge in the field. Kvernbekk and Frimannson (2013) supported this approach and stated, "Narratives may thus shape our behavior and thought by providing models of the world, of how things are, how they hang together and what they mean; and in return we reshape and revise our own basic narratives" (p. 571).

Researcher's Role

Qualitative researchers must consider the question: "Who am I in this narrative inquiry?" (Webster & Mertova, 2007). According to Clandinin (2013), "Narrative inquirers see their research as relational research… We are in the phenomenon under study. In narrative inquiry, we are, as narrative inquirers, also under study, over time" (p. 81). My prior job role and working relationship with the subject and other employees of the district precluded a completely objective approach to the study. A certain amount of

subjectivity affects all qualitative research (Peshkin, 1988). I was a student and a learner hoping to gain insight in the field of educational leadership. My relationship to the subject as a sort of student of educational leadership is a key component of this study, and certainly impacts the findings of my study; however, this approach is well recognized in narrative inquiry. According to Miller (2000), the "core" of the narrative approach consists of, "The interplay between the interview partnership of interviewee and interviewer" (p. 12). Peshkin (1988) calls for qualitative researchers to consciously reflect on their own subjectivity, which is a hallmark of narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). There is always a relationship between researcher and subjects and part of that relationship is determining "voice" and "signature" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My voice and my signature are reflections of my subjectivity. My voice reveals my way of perceiving the data, and my signature reflects not only my style of writing, but my prior studies and experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These factors should be evident and reflect my personal subjectivity in this study. Clandinin (2013) stated, "Research texts need to reflect the narrative quality of the experiences of both participants and researcher and the ways these stories of experiences are embedded within social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives" (p. 207). Thus, I must recognize that all of these factors affect my voice as researcher in my writings. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained, "Establishing voice and signature pulls us inward to the inquiry and to the field and its participants" (p. 149). The tension between the researcher's voice and signature, and the accurate portrayal of the subject's voice and signature, is one of many tensions found in the narrative writing process (Clandinin, 2013). While leaving my own imprint on my research work is an important part of the

process, listening to and adequately expressing the subject's own voice and signature is also a key consideration to the telling of his story.

I was fortunate that my subject has such a distinctive voice of his own. I did not have to concentrate and listen closely to hear his voice and signature. It was clear in every conversation I had with him, and so distinctly different from my own that I am confident the reader will have no difficulty in differentiating between the two. I did take care, though, to involve my subject in the reproduction of his story (Webster & Mertova, 2007; Miller, 2000) and ensure that he felt it is an authentic representation of his experiences.

As the qualitative researcher, I am the collector of data. I have worked under this particular superintendent for 17 years. I began as an assistant principal in the days when we still figured statistics for the accreditation report with calculators and filled out paper forms using a typewriter. I was reserved and quiet, and spent the entire first year mostly observing during administrator meetings. I knew little about my boss, and he knew little about me. As time went on, I became more confident and more vocal in his presence. I gradually transformed from a follower to a leader who sometimes challenged the status quo. I do not think it was until I had worked for the district for approximately ten years, that he began to really listen to my suggestions and trust that I gave sound advice.

My perception is that, at that time, my colleagues and I were insulated from much of the activities and decisions made at the district office. We had little to do with finance, policy, or school board issues. We ran our buildings, took care of student discipline, teacher supervision, and parent complaints. For many years, I was completely unaware of most of my superintendent's accomplishments. I knew he was skilled at handling

school finance and that he had been recognized as having vision in implementing

technology and the required infrastructure in the district. When I began to spend more

time with him while working on my doctorate, whether it was interviewing him for my

school finance class or observing him for qualitative research class, I learned a great deal

more about him, both personally and professionally. Educational leadership is a family

legacy to him, and he followed a unique pathway to his present position. The relevance

of so much of what he had done became ever clearer as I pursued coursework in

educational leadership. The more I learned, the greater the conviction became that his is

a leadership story worthy of being told.

Data Sources

The primary data source was the subject whose story is being told. It is not

unusual for the subject of a narrative inquiry to be one group or one individual (Miller,

2000). As the researcher, I spent a great deal of time with the subject on a daily basis

gathering data through semi-structured interviews, conversations, and many observations.

Known as a prolific storyteller, the subject often peppers conversation and instruction

with personal stories. Those personal stories were a source of rich data for me.

Interviews with employees, community members, and family added to the

richness of the context and provided alternative perspectives to the subject's stories. I

used criterion and snowball sampling to identify key interview subjects. The selection

criteria was currently or formerly working closely with the subject, or being a family

member or close friend. Further interviewees were discovered through snowball sampling

as described by Patton (2002). I did not enter the field with a predetermined number of

interview subjects, but rather, continued to interview until my content became redundant and no new data seemed to be emerging.

Data Collection

After obtaining approval from the institutional review board (IRB), a semi-structured interview protocol was used for each interview (See appendix B). An audio recording device was employed during interviews, as well as written field notes. Interviews were conducted in various locations depending on the preference of the interviewee. Several interviews were conducted with the subject until I gained a sense of his "story" and an understanding of his perception of factors that led to his longevity. The interviews with the superintendent took place mostly in his office. I sought written permission (See appendix C) from each subject prior to recording interviews. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and locations when reporting results to maintain anonymity. Data was transcribed after each interview.

Several observations were conducted and field notes recorded over a nine-month period of time. Most observations occurred as the subject was on the job in his office, throughout the district, and at area meetings. Interviews with family members, present and former colleagues, and friends were conducted in and around the school district. Phone interviews were conducted with two former employees living at a distance, one who served as the high school principal in his first district and one as the third grade teacher in his former district. Phone interviews were also conducted with two business colleagues who did not live nearby. Prior written permission was obtained to record the observations with an audio recording device. I also recorded field notes, and all data was later transcribed into a written format. One observation of a school board meeting was

made within the specified time frame. Permission was not required for this observation as it was an open meeting.

In addition, I perused a large number of printed artifacts and publications provided by the subject and his family in order to provide more depth to the analysis of the subject's career. Printed memorabilia is one means of recording our lives, and according to Clandinin and Connelly, "Viewing these documents in the context of a narrative inquiry constitutes something that might be called an archeology of memory and meaning" (p. 114). Historical artifacts may add to the veracity of primary source data, and "material from other sources enlivens an emerging theme and complicates it" (Riessman, 2008, p. 300). Although printed artifacts were not the primary source of data, they added to the data by corroborating themes and verifying the substance of stories.

Data Analysis

I used a thematic data analysis approach described by Riessman (2008). According to Riessman (2008), the thematic approach to narrative analysis can be applied to a wide variety of narrative approaches, and are solely concerned with the content of the story. Riessman (2008) described this approach as "akin to what scholars in folklore and history used with archival data" (p. 238). Thematic narrative analysis differs from other methods of narrative analysis because it emphasizes the content of the story rather than the way the story is told (Riessman, 2008). In other words, I was more interested in relating the findings in the data than the manner in which the data was being shared. My purpose was clearly in finding the "whys" behind this person's longevity in his position, and the P-E fit theory was applied ex post-facto to the findings. Therefore, the thematic data analysis approach as described by Riessman (2008) suited my purposes very well.

I hand coded the data following the methods outlined by (Riessman, 2008). For example, I looked for events that perhaps created a temporary imbalance for the subject and required some action or adjustment on his part. This is what Riessman (2008) describes as "narrative reconstruction" (p. 57). In this research, I looked for how the subject dealt with disruptions in his biography, how he reflected on his life and purpose, as well as how he made mental and behavioral adjustments. Themes began to emerge as the data was sorted and analyzed.

My interview questions were aimed at soliciting stories of lived experiences that caused some kind of action or shift in thinking for the subject. Among these stories I searched for recurring themes (Riessman, 2008). I paid particular attention to experiences that resulted in successful outcomes. Then I grouped the stories according to similar actions or behaviors and defining themes relating to his success and job longevity. The interviews and observations were transcribed, and field notes were typed. Artifacts chosen for use were scanned and organized sequentially.

All data was then read and studied, and notes were made describing my reflections on various data. Riessman (2008) wrote that the data analysis process is recursive. As I was interviewing I began to notice recurring themes in different interviews. In my mind I was establishing possible themes for the coding process. I began transcribing when all interviews were completed. Throughout the transcribing process I again noted recurring themes and similar stories throughout the different interviews. When all interviews had been transcribed I began rereading each interview and highlighting particular sections that seemed to provide support for Bob's own story. I then took highlighted sections and sorted then into themes. Some excerpts supported

more than one theme. In these cases I duplicated the excerpt and included it in more than one thematic compilation. I consolidated themes when they seemed to be similar in order to reduce the themes to a manageable number. Finally I organized each themes data into a chronological order. When I began the writing process I used this organized chronological data to construct the story.

I looked for emerging themes as well as recorded general thoughts on the data and each item's usefulness for the study. My themes were guided by my previous research on the superintendency and were informed by the P-E fit theory. I was looking for experiences and critical incidents throughout his career that contributed to his longevity, as well as characteristics or skills that may have helped him to succeed in the career. This process aligns with Riessman's (2008) method of analysis in that "data are interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior emergent theory, the concrete purpose of an investigation, the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors)" (pp. 241-242). It was important to analyze the data through the context of my subject's biography (Riessman, 2008). I tried to makes sense of his life as a whole as I looked for themes.

The next step was coding the data. Qualitative research is often both deductive and inductive in nature. P-E fit theory was found to be applicable and data was studied through a P-E fit theory lens. No predetermined codes were assigned, instead I sorted the data into similar themes and looked for emerging codes. Notecards were used to copy particularly interesting quotes and bits of information. The notecards were sorted into categories in search of recurring themes. These themes were compared with the existing findings of P-E fit theory studies.

A rich description of the subject, the setting, and his daily activities is provided in the narrative. Rich context is an essential element in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Roziek, 2007). Life's experiences always happen in a context, and the context through which individuals live and interact is part of what gives meaning to experiences. A narrative story cannot be told without a clearly illustrated context. However, in this type of narrative, the analysis is not about the context, rather the context provides a colorful backdrop, and perhaps helps to explain some of the subject's actions and decisions.

Lived experiences are also temporal (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained, "We are, therefore, not only concerned with life as it is experienced in the 'here and now' but also life as it is experienced on a continuum-people's lives, institutional lives, lives of things" (p. 19). Therefore, my research could be conducted and findings recorded without the inclusion of life events that led to career moves and career accomplishments. Time and place must always be considered when looking for meaning. Interestingly, and what lead me to believe that P-E fit theory was appropriate for my research, is the fact that more recent person-environment fit research has focused on changes in fit over the course of a career and how fit may adapt over time (Dawis, 2002; Kristoff-Brown & Billsberry, 2012; Truxillo et al., 2012). This explanation aligns with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who posited, "What we may be able to say now about a person or school or some other is given meaning in terms of the larger context, and this meaning will change as time passes" (p. 19). Specifically, narrative inquiry must record events that take place over time and the temporality must be a considered part of the research (Geertz, 1995).

The elements important to the study emerged as coding took place and appeared fluid through more in-depth data evaluation. My intention was to discover themes throughout the research, and these themes were not fully determined until study of the data was completed. The number of themes was determined by analysis of the data.

The findings of the study are presented in a narrative form and will include a timeline of important events, as well as an in-depth discussion of the themes developed and how they might relate to existing theory. Finally, the findings are related to the existing literature, and implications for future research are discussed.

Verification

Narrative inquiry is rarely judged by the same criteria as other forms of qualitative research. Qualitative research is most often examined for validity and reliability methods established by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The commonly accepted ways to determine validity and reliability in qualitative research is through trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is most often gained by such methods as member checking, triangulation of sources, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and data analysis (Loh, 2013). Experts in the field of narrative inquiry usually discourage the traditional ways of analyzing narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly posited, "It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (p. 184). Webster and Mertova (2007) defined four elements that address issues of trustworthiness in narrative inquiry: 1) truth value, 2) applicability, 3) consistency, and 4) neutrality. According to Webster and Mertova (2007) "the trustworthiness of the narrative research lies in the confirmation by the participants of their reported stories of experience" (p. 99). Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) suggested an ongoing process for developing standards with which to verify and validate narrative research and use the term "wakefulness" (p. 185) to guide narrative inquiry fieldwork, writing, and analysis.

In contrast to this philosophy, Jason Loh (2013) called for a well-defined way to measure the quality of narrative research. Loh (2013) posited that narrative inquiry should "first acknowledge that lack of acceptability of its trustworthiness within the qualitative field, and then move to discuss this issue, so as to ensure that its research is acknowledged to be acceptable to other qualitative researchers" (p. 3). Loh (2013) advocated for "embracing the rigor of using a set of quality criteria that is widely recognized and accepted in the broader field of qualitative research" (p. 3). Loh (2013) recommended using a trustworthiness table to establish qualitative validity and reliability. A trustworthiness table can be used to assure every possible step has been taken to validate my research. I have used Loh's (2013) way of measuring qualitative narrative research and approached this study applying his suggestions. Using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines for establishing trustworthiness, I used a trustworthiness table (see Table 1 for details) to verify validity and reliability.

Table 1

Trustworthiness to Verify Validity and Reliability

Criteria	Techniques
Credibility (internal validity)	1) Prolonged engagement 2) Persistent observation 3) Triangulation (sources, methods, investigators) 4) Peer debriefing 5) Negative case analysis 6) Referential adequacy (archiving of data) 7) Member Checks

Transferability (external validity)	8) Thick Description
Dependability (reliability)	9) Overlap methods (triangulation of methods) 10) Dependability audit – examining the process of the inquiry (how data was collected; how data was kept; accuracy of data)
Confirmability (objectivity)	11) Confirmability audit – examining the product to attest that the findings, interpretations and recommendations are supported by data)
All 4 criteria	12) Reflective journal (about self and method)

Note. Adapted from Principles of trustworthiness in qualitative research adapted from "Naturalistic Inquiry," by Y.S. Lincoln and E.G. Guba, 1985, p. 301-327.

Ethical Considerations

The very human nature of telling someone's story requires serious reflection on personal ethics. I had to take a close look at how and why I conducted my research, as well as make sure I treated my subject with respect and caused him no harm. Clandinin (2013) emphasized the importance of ethical considerations in narrative stating:

Although ethical review is mandatory for all research with people, the relational ethics of narrative inquiry need special consideration… As we live alongside participants and/or hear their stories, we are always attentive to co-composing what 'the field' is becoming and what field texts we co-compose with participants. All of these experiences of the inquiry are deeply imbued with ethics. (pp. 198-199)

Ethical considerations inform the purpose of the narrative study. Bochner (2014) stated, "I want my stories to evoke conversation about the activities and relationships that keep people inspired and alive in their academic work as well as those that can dull their

motivation (and even their humanity)" (p. 297). This concept of somehow making a positive contribution to mankind must undergird narrative research.

As relationship is a vital component of the narrative experience, I had to also examine my own motives and trustworthiness in my relationship with the subject being researched. We co-created this story, and I wanted to make sure, while I inserted my analysis of the events in his stories, I also portrayed his life fairly and from his perspective, his truth, and the perspectives of others who have worked with him. Bochner (2014) discussed the questionable ethics of deceiving study participants and making social science accountable to the public. Education is a field closely related to sociology, as it directly relates to people and society as well as has heavy implications for our culture, policies, and historical outcomes. We must be attuned to the moral impact our work can have on those being studied and those reading our work.

Plan for Results

My qualitative report will include a rich description of the setting and the subject. An in-depth discussion of each theme will follow with authentic descriptors of how themes emerged from the context of the life and career of the superintendent. The restorying of the subject's career and the reflections of the subject and those around him will provide productive insight about the superintendency, particularly related to longevity. Existing theory may be supported or negated. No conjectures can be made as to the nature of the emerging themes or their implications for future research prior to completion of the study.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of the study. This research consisted of a biographical narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008) covering the life of a unique Midwestern superintendent who has thrived in the position for over 40 years. Interviews, observations, and artifacts were analyzed and critical incidents narrated so the reader may draw conclusions and reflect on factors that have allowed this superintendent successful career longevity. Chapter IV will present the findings of the data. Several themes and subthemes are identified using Riessman's (2008) narrative thematic analysis. Each theme is discussed in depth and supporting data is provided.

CHAPTER IV

PRESNTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

At the onset of this research I had little idea of the amazing stories and copious

details about one man's life I would collect over the course of several months. I initially

sought to discover qualities and characteristics of this successful leader; however, I feel

that I have uncovered the soul of someone whose whole life has been dedicated to

children and education. Each life has its own story and this is one about an outlier;

someone who shared gifts and talents with other educational leaders, but who also crafted

a unique pathway through 42 years as a school superintendent. As a narrative inquirer, I

have developed my own meaning and knowledge through this process. As I reader, my

hope is that you too, will create your own insights through his story.

Problem Statement

The difficulty of the position of superintendent is confirmed by research (Lamkin,

2006). The literature reveals a great deal of training and experience generally precedes

ascension to the position (Lamkin, 2006). It also reveals that new superintendents are

often unsuccessful at maintaining and thriving in their positions (Grogan & Andrews,

2002). To those preparing to enter the superintendency, the research should be somewhat

alarming. If candidates invest in practical training and education to further their careers

and attain school district leadership positions, they should have a high level of interest for whatever is necessary to be successful in that career. Current research identifies the lack of sustainability in the superintendent career as problematic (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Schulte & Hong, 2011). Further, Waters and Marzano (2006) found a significant correlation between length of superintendent tenure and student achievement. In addition, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) found that leadership style could affect student outcomes. If, as Fullan (2005) asserted, "Almost everyone agrees that leadership is the key to reform" (p. 30), then district leadership must come into focus as the cornerstone of successful school improvement. Narrowing the focus may be the most difficult task of the educational leadership researcher. In their 2010 quantitative study, Leithwood et al. (2010) found a need to "adopt a more limited 'laser-like' focus on discovering the leadership practices most likely to improve the condition or status of variables in schools for which there is already considerable evidence of impact on student learning" (p. 698).

Through qualitative studies, many obstacles have been identified and many attributes have been ascribed to individual success in the superintendent position (Abshier, Harris & Hopson, 2011; Alston, 2005, Freely & Seinfeld, 2012; Palladino, Haar, Grady, & Perry, 2007). The problem, then, emerges as new superintendents are often unsuccessful in spite of extensive training and experiences. While a great deal of research examines the training and professional development needed to prepare educational leaders for the superintendent's position, there is little in-depth research examining the personal perspectives of superintendents who have successfully sustained a long-term career in the field. According to Fullan (2005), "As society places higher

and higher expectations on the performance of public and private agencies, leadership is bound to come to the fore. The question is, what kind of leadership is needed for sustainability?" (p. 29). Many experts in the field have written formulas for what it takes to succeed in educational leadership (Fullan, 2005; Daggett, 2015; Wilmore, 2008; Reeves, 2006), but little light has been shed on superintendents who have actually adapted through changing times and expectations and proven themselves able to sustain their careers amidst the many crises facing education over the past several decades.

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Research Questions

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The overarching question for this study was:

What meanings does a school superintendent make about his experience of professional success and career longevity?

Sub-questions

1. What personal qualities can be identified as contributing to longevity?

2. What particular experiences can be identified as contributing to longevity?

3. How did critical incidences shape his life and career?

4. How did relationships contribute to his longevity?

5. How did this particular superintendent overcome challenges to his longevity?

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Data Sources

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The main data source was the subject whose story is being told. As the researcher, I spent a great deal of time with the subject on a daily basis gathering data through semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and many observations. I visited and revisited; probing for further information as one story led to questions and further stories. Over the course of the last three months of data collection, I visited both

in person and on the phone with Bob in order to bring clarity and detail to his story. I had

to be schooled in some of the initiatives he was involved in so that I could clearly relay

the information. Known as a prolific storyteller, the subject often peppers conversation

and instruction with personal stories.

Interviews with employees, community members, and family added to the

richness of the context and provided alternative perspectives to the subject's stories.

These potential interviewees were discovered through criterion and snowball sampling as

described by Patton (2002).

In addition, many written artifacts were studied. These consisted of books,

magazine and newspaper articles, symposium and conference agendas, citations and

awards, personal letters, and photographs. The subject's wife provided a rich source of

data in the form of five personal scrapbooks chronicling his career from its inception to

current times. These data sources were used to confirm and support findings obtained

through the interview process.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview format was the primary means of data collection for

this study (Patton, 2002). A semi-structured interview protocol was developed and used

to guide each interview (see Appendix B). However, these questions were a springboard

for more in depth questioning and topics evolved throughout the process according to the

direction taken by each interviewee.

In addition, the main subject held several informal conversations with me aside

from the semi-structured interviews. These spontaneous conversations added depth and

richness to the data obtained. I was also privileged to attend several meetings, to listen in

on phone conversations, to sit in Bob's office as he conducted his daily business, and to observe a school board meeting. The subject, along with his wife, provided extensive artifacts that greatly assisted with the triangulation of the data. These artifacts included five scrapbooks chronicling the subject's career, as well as newspaper articles, books, presentation agendas, awards, and personal letters. I also employed trustworthiness criteria (see Table 1) as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Member checking by the main subject and two of the interviewees provided further authentification. Reading transcripts to the interviewees and having them provide clarification and confirmation of highlighted excerpts helped accomplish member checking.

The data collection took place over a nine-month period and was conducted on the school district premises in various offices and buildings including the administrations building, two school buildings, and the bus barn. In addition, five interviews were conducted over the phone because of the distant location of the interviewees. Each interviewee was presented with an adult consent form to sign granting permission to use the interview in my research (Appendix A). I conducted interviews with Bob's wife, his daughter, a former student, a former school board member, his associate superintendent, his assistant superintendent, his board clerk and superintendent's secretary, a former teacher, one of his principals who was also a former student in his district, the principal and third grade teacher from his former district who is also a close friend, and three business colleagues from various points in his career: one an educational leader and consultant, and two software engineers who are also owners of their own successful start-up companies. I conducted interviews with twelve people associated with the subject, as well as nine interviews with Bob.

I used purposeful and snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) to determine whom I would interview, and I could have continued interviewing indeterminably. However, at the end of nine months, I felt I had reached a point of data saturation. I was not coming across any new information pertaining to my research questions; therefore, at that point, I decided to terminate the data collection process and begin parsing the data.

Data Analysis

Informal coding took place throughout the interview process. As I interviewed the participants, I compared the stories of each individual along with Bob's stories. After my fieldwork ended, I began to transcribe each interview. Using Reisman's narrative thematic analysis (1993), I began to identify several themes while listening to individual recordings and then reading and rereading transcripts. I created an informal graphic with potential themes and copied and pasted portions of transcripts under themes. Most of these took the form of short stories or scenarios about Bob supporting the themes. I began to notice that many scenarios illustrated more than one theme. For instance, an example of a critical event in Bob's life would provide explanation of his tenacity as well as his integrity and feelings of personal fulfillment. This aligns with the understanding that life is messy, and that narrative events cannot be easily classified into separate themes. One example of this complexity is demonstrated by the following story:

I think I like to get into… I develop a concept of what I think something should look like and I get into that and I can't turn it loose. I've developed what I've thinked (sic). I've been fairly constant with my desire to make it work. And I think I've been fairly constant with it. When I graduated from college and I came to work at a school, at a public school, it hit me right off about instructional

accountability. I thought in a perfect world you really do need to tell the square

of it in terms of, you as a teacher, you as a person, you should be very straight up

and down with people about what they can and can't do and about what they need

to be able to do and I'll call it instructional accountability. I'm going to tell it the

way it is and I'm going to do the very best to make it as good as it possibly can be

for the children we're trying to serve. There has to be instructional

accountability. That went through me. I really believe that if you couldn't tell

mom and dad what the truth of the matter was and what the needs of their kids

were what were you doing here? You probably needed to be doing something

else. I think that's the really big thing that has worried me over the years. I think

that's what still drives me. (B. Hall, personal communication, July, 2017)

This narrative reinforces several identified themes. Throughout this description of his

quest for accountability in reporting student outcomes other themes emerge. His story is

filled with references to his own tenacity and concludes with his commitment to integrity

in sharing the truth with parents about their children's progress. This illustrates the

complexity involved in narrative analysis. Just as in real life, narrative research is

complex and not easily compartmentalized.

     I have identified three major themes in answer to the overarching research

question. These themes were recurrent throughout the interviews and solidified as I

continued to study the data. The three themes that emerged through contemplation about

the subject's lived experiences were leadership characteristics, skills, and contributing

factors. Several subthemes emerged as leadership characteristics including vision,

tenacity, intellect, integrity and accountability. These leadership qualities are often

identified as contributing to successful superintendent leadership (Lindle, 2014). In

addition, the subject demonstrated personal skills in building relationships, political know

how, and financial expertise. When narrowing the focus to educational leadership,

particularly the superintendency, some research also supports the notion that these skills

can certainly contribute to success (Lindle, 2014; Reeves, 2006). Finally, the present

study uncovered two contributing factors, family heritage and personal fulfillment, that

reoccurred repeatedly throughout the investigation and seem to bear heavy weight in

regards to Bob's career longevity. Figure 3 provides a visual illustration of the resulting

themes identified in answer to the main research question. The three main themes

provide support for and lead to the focus of the research, career longevity.
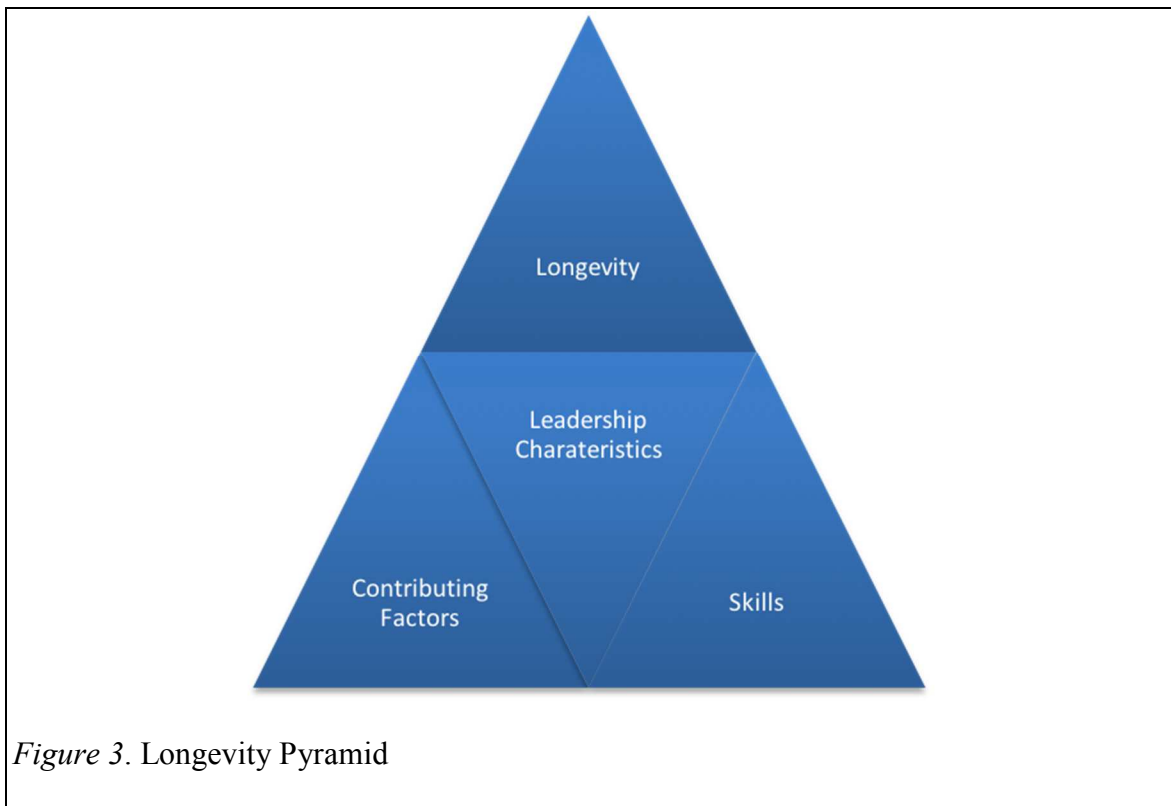
Figure 3. Longevity Pyramid

Following Riessman's (1993) guidelines for thematic analysis of narratives, I will further explain my research process. According to Riessman (1993), "Traditional approaches to qualitative analysis often fracture these texts in the service of interpretation and generalization, by taking bits and pieces, snippets of a response edited out of context" (p. 3). The story itself contributes meaning and identity to the storyteller and it is important to allow the story to remain intact, as the teller orders events and sets them in context (Riessman, 1993). Dissecting bits and pieces to support our own theories or preconceived notions does not give legitimate voice to the narrator. Riessman (1993) asserted that narratives are "essential meaning-making structures" and "must be preserved, not fractured, by investigators, who must respect respondents' ways of constructing meaning and analyze how it is accomplished" (p. 4).

Figure 4 provides a visual for my research process, and is patterned after Riessman's (1993) Levels of Representation in the Research Process. This graphic represents the process from the inception of noting a life narrative worthy of research and continues through the research process to the culmination in sharing the findings of my analysis.

Figure 4. Riessman's (1993) Data Analysis Process
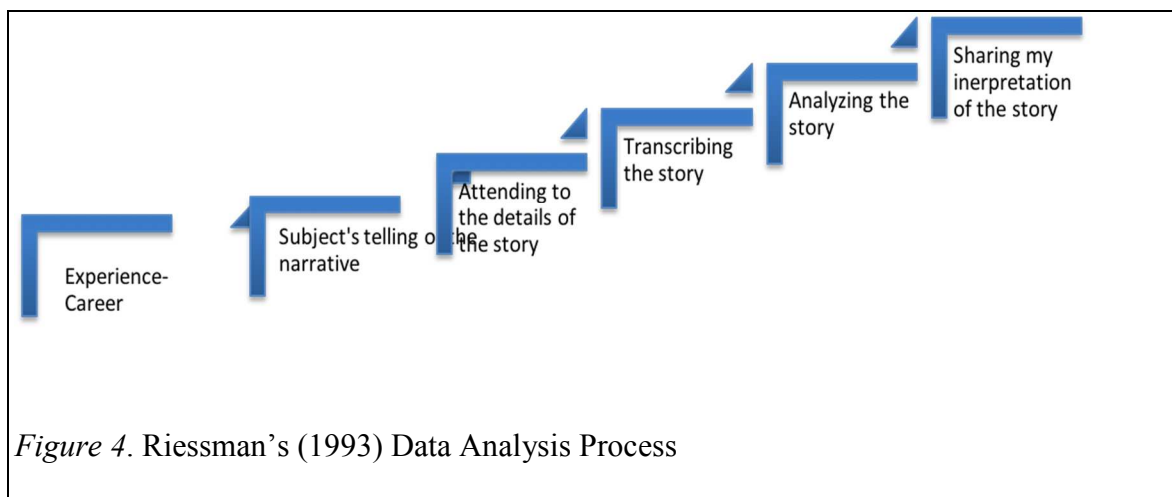
I did not live my subject's experiences, but I will struggle to represent them accurately (Riessman, 1993), as expressed by participants. The first thing I had to do was immerse myself in the data. By doing so, I was attending to his experiences by "reflecting, remembering, recollecting them into observations" (Riessman, 1993, p. 9). I took into account that I chose to remember certain parts of his story and to place value on them. From all of the data collected, I identified what seemed most meaningful to Bob and to myself, as the researcher. I also had to attend to Bob's degree of emphasis and the manner in which he shared stories with me. His demeanor, voice level, and the intensity of his focus on what was being shared all provided meaning for his story. For some topics he seemed to be merely answering questions, while for others he became intensly focused and his body language changed, he leaned forward in his chair, then he punctuated content by thrusting his index finger at me. His voice would take on a deeper timber, and he would finish sentences with "do you know what I mean?" Over time in his presence, I became acutely aware of body language and voice modulation, and how they indicated what ideas were truly important to him. When he was proud of an accomplishment, he spoke of it at length, often chuckling and sharing humorous scenarios. During these times he always spoke of "we" instead of "I", and gave extensive credit to those who helped or were somehow involved in the initiative. There was a sense of pride, but also humility. His inclusion of others spoke volumes about his commitment to good relationships with those he worked with. Attending to the experience then telling about the experience meld with one another; this is the second step in the research process (Riessman, 1993). For me, this step took the form of listening to and repeating stories as I was involved in the process. I shared stories with

interviewees and they shared stories with me. Then I would go back to Bob and retell the stories to him and see what his response was. Was this the way he remembered it? Sometimes he would throw in addendums or make corrections according to his remembered perceptions. Sometimes the exact sequence didn't matter and sometimes, it seemed, it was important to straighten out the timeline. During this time, one story would lead to another, and I would sometimes probe for further information. This would lead to richer description of the incident or setting. As Riessman (1993) tells us that language makes experiences real, so attending to Bob's language and manner of relaying his story made his experiences come alive for me.

The third step of the process was the transcribing experience (Riessman, 1993). Each interview and observation was audiotaped with an iPhone and then transcribed. As I transcribed, new questions would arise such as, "How did this story relate to that story? or "Which event happened first?" These new questions led me to return to Bob for clarification and explanation. Again, there was overlap with the previous step as I stepped back into the telling of the story throughout the transcribing process. I began to study the many artifacts provided by Bob's wife, Candy during this period of time. She had compiled five scrapbooks full of photos, newspaper articles, commendations, personal letters, citations, and presentation agendas. I studied the artifacts and chose those that specifically triangulated with collected data. Artifacts chosen for use were scanned and organized sequentially.

All data was then read and studied and notes were taken describing my reflections on various data. Riessman (1993) wrote, "Transcribing is an interpretive practice… Different transcription conventions lead to and support different interpretations and

ideological positions, and they ultimately create different worlds" (p. 13). As I transcribed, I looked for emerging themes and recorded general thoughts on the data and each item's usefulness for the study.

Analyzing the data is the fourth step in Riessman's (1993) research process. Though analysis was constantly with me throughout the data collection process, it began formally with coding the data. This process began during the transcribing phase and evolved throughout the analyzing experience. Qualitative research is often both deductive and inductive in nature. Patton (2002) described inductive analysis as "discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data" (p. 453). According to Riessman (1993) "the challenge is to identify similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation" (p. 13). I had to make sense of hours of interview transcripts, decide what was important, what to categorize together, how to order the pieces of information so that they created a story with a beginning, middle and end, and develop a sense of tension and drama that would share important insights with the reader.

No predetermined codes were assigned, but instead I sorted the data into similar themes and looked for emerging codes. Notecards were used to copy particularly interesting quotes and bits of information. The notecards were then sorted into categories in search of recurring themes. Potential themes were identified, combined, cast aside, and reorganized until finally each code was aligned with a subtheme and theme. This is a difficult process, as mentioned before, because stories often contain elements of and support for more than one theme. Webster and Mertova (2007) ascribe narrative researchers must be comfortable with that overlap. Next, I attempted to put the most meaningful incidents into chronological order.

A rich description of the subject, the setting, and his daily activities emerged throughout the coding process. Rich context is an essential element in narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). Life's experiences always happen in a context, and the context through which we live and interact is part of what gives meaning to our experiences. A narrative story then, cannot be told without a clearly illustrated context.

Lived experiences are also temporal and "therefore not only concerned with life as it is experienced in the here and now but also life as it is experienced on a continuum-people's lives, institutional lives, lives of things" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19). Therefore, my research could not be conducted and findings recorded without the inclusion of life events that led to career moves and career accomplishments. Time and place must always be considered when seeking for meaning in narrative analysis. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described seeking meaning as, "What we may be able to say now about a person or school or some other is given meaning in terms of the larger context, and this meaning will change as time passes" (p. 19). Narrative inquiry must record events that take place over time and the temporality must be a considered part of the research (Geertz, 1995).

The elements important to the study began emerging as coding took place and were fluid throughout more in-depth data evaluation. My intention was to discover themes throughout the research, and those themes were not fully determined until study of the data was complete.

One aim of my research was to determine whether this P-E Fit Theory could help to explain the subject's job longevity. Therefore, the theory was applied to the findings ex post facto. The discussion section provides an analysis of my findings in relation to

the P-E Fit Theory literature. Lastly, this study's usefulness to practitioners as well as researchers is discussed.

Verification

Narrative inquiry is rarely judged by the same criteria as other forms of qualitative research. Qualitative research is most often examined for validity and reliability using methods established by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The commonly accepted ways to determine validity and reliability in qualitative research is through trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is most often gained by such methods as member checking, triangulation of sources, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and data analysis (Loh, 2013). Experts in the field of narrative inquiry usually discourage the traditional ways of analyzing narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly posited, "It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research (p. 184).

In contrast to this philosophy, Jason Loh (2013) called for a well-defined way to measure the quality of narrative research. Loh (2013) posited that narrative inquiry should "first acknowledge that lack of acceptability of its trustworthiness within the qualitative field, and then move to discuss this issue, so as to ensure that its research is acknowledged to be acceptable to other qualitative researchers" (p. 3). Loh (2013) advocated for "embracing the rigour of using a set of quality criteria that is widely recognized and accepted in the broader field of qualitative research" (p. 3). I have used Loh's (2013) way of measuring qualitative narrative research and approached this study applying his suggestions. Using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines for establishing trustworthiness, I asked for peer review and member checking.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration in research is imperative in research in the social sciences; however, "the relational ethics of narrative inquiry need special consideration" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 198). Further, Clandinin (2013) emphasized the importance of hearing participants' stories and being "attentive to co-composing what 'the field' is becoming and what field texts we co-compose with participants" (p. 199). I have personally struggled with presenting Bob's story the way he remembers it while at the same time holding on to the truths I believed I discovered throughout the experience. These did not always coincide with Bob's interpretation of the story, and it was difficult at times to maintain the authenticity of his story while applying my own interpretations of others' perceptions.

Ethical considerations inform the purpose of the narrative study. According to Bochner (2014) "I want my stories to evoke conversation about the activities and relationships that keep people inspired and alive in their academic work as well as those that can dull their motivation (and even their humanity)" (p. 297). I believe this concept of somehow making a positive contribution to mankind must undergird narrative research.

As relationship is a vital component of the narrative experience, I also examined my own motives and trustworthiness in my relationship with the subject being researched. We co-created this story and I wanted to make sure, while I inserted my analysis of the events in his stories, I also portrayed his life fairly, from his perspective and his truth. Bochner (2014) discussed the questionable ethics of deceiving study participants and making social science accountable to the public. Education is a field

closely related to sociology as it directly relates to people and society and has heavy implications for our culture, policies, and historical outcomes. We must be attuned to the moral impact our work can have on those being studied and those reading our work.

Presentation of the Data

Three themes emerged as supporting the subject's career longevity. I have identified them as personal skills, leadership characteristics, and contributing factors (see Figure 3). The category of personal skills was further broken down into financial expertise, political know how, and relationship building. Leadership characteristics were identified as intellect, tenacity, vision, accountability, and integrity. I chose to separate skills from characteristics because I believe skills are capacities that can be learned over time whereas characteristics are inherent personal traits. Personal characteristics are qualities that make up someone's personality such as patience or tenacity. On the other hand, skills are acquired or developed through experience and training and often require sustained effort. Finally, I found two contributing factors that did not fall under either of the previous categories that could not be put aside when contemplating this subject's career success. These two subthemes are family heritage and personal fulfillment.

My approach to the data presentation may be somewhat out of the ordinary; however, it addresses both the need to present the data in a structured dissertation format and a more narrative expression of the findings. I begin with a description and supporting data for each of the themes and subthemes. Following this, I present the narrative of Bob's ever evolving career. After presenting the narrative, I discuss the study's findings through the application of and relevance to Person-Environment Fit Theory. I conclude with suggested implications for research, theory and practice.

Personal Skills

     Finance. Financial expertise is no doubt an asset in the superintendency, particularly in the state of Statehood where a complicated revenue stream and frequent financial crises in the state complicate the task of keeping a district financially afloat. Every person I interviewed talked about Mr. Hall's expertise in the field of school finance. The following quotations represent the common perspective that Mr. Hall possesses financial acumen.

> You talk about money? How many schools are good financially? How many
>
> schools are giving teachers raises? We expect our carryover to be bigger than it's
>
> been since I've been here. But he's had a plan. Three or four years ago he said
>
> this stuff is coming. And I say, oh that's just Bob. But most of the time he is spot
>
> on. (Rusty, personal communication, March, 2017)

Another participant stated:

> He is very much a numbers person and he is great with the budget and he knows
>
> what's legal. He's always looking at things from the thought process of is that
>
> going to get us in trouble and do we have the money for it? You have to be
>
> constantly thinking of those legal things and then money and that goes hand in
>
> hand. That is definitely his strength. (Viola, personal communication, May, 2017)

A third participant indicated:

> When we're going down the road on a trip he is mumbling to himself. And its
>
> numbers. And he can tell you to a penny how much money they have in the
>
> accounts. He knows it. It's up here. (Candy, personal communication, April,
>
> 2017)

According to his board clerk,

> He understands our money. He understands where Eastern Valley gets their
> money and when it should come in and about how much it should be. And he's
> developed, over the years, relationships with state representatives and senators
> and County Treasurers and he will pick up the phone. I mean people at the Tax
> Commission know that Bob Hall is going to call them if they don't get his
> appropriation out to him on time. And if it looks odd, he's going to call them and
> ask them, "Why does it look this way?" And early on I think he worked hard at
> understanding where the money came from. And he's done it so many years now
> it's like second nature to him. (Viola, personal communication, May, 2017)

A former school board member shared, "He understands the financial aspects of it. He is
one of those people that, as a superintendent, can think beyond what is familiar, can think
beyond the immediate needs of the district" (Edward, personal communication, February,
2017).

Bob Hall explained the importance of understanding district finances when he stated:

> In Statehood you have to understand all the different sources of revenue and how
> you are reacting each year and each month to those things. It's extremely
> important. Because at the end of the day there are probably 2500 families out
> here and their families and I mean there's parents and there are the employees.
> I'm saying there are probably 2500 families total who are probably dependent on
> the fact that you know and understand and are able to keep them having school
> and a job and everything else. Statehood has just got a pretty complex situation. I
> don't know any other way to deal with it than you have to be able to predict and

you have to know in your bones what's fixing to take place after a period of time

and it varies from district to district and what will work in one may not work in

another. And this district does not create its money the same way that other

districts in Statehood create their money. You have to develop a feel for your

district. You have to develop a feel for how much money is coming in and going

out when you have a program this big. When did it get different and why did it

get different? You just have to be constantly asking yourself these questions.

And then you just have to do this other stuff that goes into the school on the fly.

(personal communication, June, 2017)

Political skill. Bob tried to tell me he was not political, but the data revealed that

he coauthored a bill at the state level, served as the chairman of an educational committee

appointed by the governor to oversee a state curriculum-sharing project, and was invited

to Washington, DC to speak before congress. Bob told me that a superintendent must

understand what his/her bearing is in the world of politics. Speaking about the state

majority leader in the senate he said, "I think that Joe Echo may not always like what I

do, but I believe that if we keep coming at him with the same message, that the kids

matter, that he has the right feeling about us." His secretary, Viola, commented, "He is

very good at the political part of it and it is a lot more political than I ever knew."

(personal communication, May, 2017)

A business associate who helped develop the interoperability framework

described Bob's political skill stating, "So he can and he has a deep understanding of how

education is connected to politics, to government control and/or government of

facilitation of maintaining this democracy and an understanding of maintaining our way of life" (personal communication, July, 2017).

Bob Hall explained the importance of understanding the political side of district leadership in this statement:

> I know I dismissed the politics of it. Yes, you have to know what your bearing is in the world of politics. But I would suggest to you that the world doesn't expect educators to do anything but teach the children and do the best they can on the behalf of the children. If we deviate from that I don't think we get to talk to them or the politicians. They won't hear us. But if we keep the kids the focus they'll hear us because they understand that's the way it is. This is what I've learned from school to school for people to understand that you care about the kids. And I think that, I hope that, Joe Echo just as sure as Jack Barrington, Joe Echo being the Majority Floor Leader, he may not always like what I do. But I believe that if we keep coming at him with the same message that the kids matter, that he has the right feeling about us. Does that make sense? And it's one thing that he may not like my politics and I can assure you that I'm not of his persuasion, but we can agree on one thing. That is that he wants me to work with the kids and I want him to help me work with the kids. (personal communication, August, 2017)

Relationship building. Relationship building is frequently mentioned as an important skill for superintendents (Daggett, 2015; Lindle, 2014). Bob told me that relationships were important, particularly those with school board members. His board clerk said, "I will say that Bob Hall made me understand that we all work at the pleasure of the board, and he is very respectful of that. He is also respectful of a chain of

command" (Viola, personal communication, May, 2017). Without exception,

subordinates claimed that Bob put trust in them and expected them to perform their jobs

well but also cared about them and their families. Two interviewees attributed the

genesis of their successful technology companies to their early work helping Bob develop

an interoperability framework.

Bob spoke about one of the young men he worked with and mentored:

> I'm just proud of him. I don't know why we were invited to DC other than on
>
> that one occasion this young man had come to work with us. But he helped us
>
> build Flightnet and I'm grateful. And he told us about how we ought to proceed
>
> with that. And all of the stories that you know and that I know because that was
>
> kind of a ground-breaking thing in and of itself. I'll never forget about the
>
> railroad and Bikeman telling me, "The first thing you do is you start with the
>
> railroad." Boy was he ever right. We'll petition the railroad. And then go
>
> through all of that to get that done. Still today it is a revolutionary kind of thing.
>
> (personal communication, July, 2017)

That same young man Bob described later stated, "Everything we do now is based around

what Bob taught us in those first six years when we first started Azazini" Arturo, personal

communication, July, 2017).

The board clerk said:

> I don't know that Bob would tell you this but… He and Arturo and Darrin worked
>
> so well together that Arturo left Intel and started his own company doing that very
>
> thing. I think it's a very successful venture for Arturo. And when Bob Hall calls

and asks for something, Bob Hall gets it. They attribute starting that company to

him. (Viola, personal communication, May, 2017)

Another former business associate spoke of Bob's contribution to his own success

stating:

It's because of my time with Bob helping build the Flightnet that he really

sparked the vision for me and showed me the potential and then we went and

started Money for Education just to do that. So it had a tremendous impact on me

personally. It's fueled to past twenty years of my life helping schools and

libraries get connected on the Internet. (Jack, personal communication, July,

2017)

Lindle (2014) affirmed that superintendent/school board relationships are central

to a superintendent's success. Superintendents must work closely with the board in order

to accomplish district goals. Short-lived superintendent tenure in large and small districts

is frequently related to a disconnect in the relationship between the district leader and the

members of the board (Kowalski et al., 2011). His board clerk shared what she learned

from Bob about relationships with board members:

I will say that Bob Hall made me understand that we all work at the pleasure of

the board. And he is very respectful of that. He is also respectful of a chain of

command. So he will always talk to the president of the board about anything

good or bad and will ask permission to share that with the other board members.

He is pretty diligent about that. And he is very mindful of keeping them informed

of finances, accreditation, personnel concerns, building concerns. He's mindful

of keeping the board informed of all that. I think that, in and of itself, has a lot to

do with keeping him employed. And he works at building that relationship with all of them, but the president first of all. I will tell you with all of the ugliness with some of the coaches years ago he was keeping the board president informed and at that time it was Joan. But also keeping the rest of the board in the loop allowed the board not to be surprised. Because at the time the media would pursue them to their homes wanting comments and stuff. So it allowed them to prepare to say no comment or not to be caught on camera going, "What?!" I think all of that communication with past board members being prepared in any event because they don't always call us. They may call their board member directly and say, "I heard you had a bus accident." But I bet Bob Hall had already called them. (Viola, personal communication, May, 2017)

Bob shared the following story about superintendent/school board relationships:

Well, one time I had a colleague call me and he asked me, "How's the board liking you?" And I said, "It's going to be okay. It's three to two." And he said, "Well, that's okay I guess. Three for you and two against you." And I said, "No! I didn't say that. I said three to two. It's three against me and two for me." And he said, "Well, I guess you better pack your suitcase." I said, "No. I didn't say that they're going to vote against me. I said three don't like me and two do." And he said, "Well, if three don't like you, you think they're gonna vote for you?" And I said, "Yep. They'll vote for me cause they're afraid of the alternatives." (personal communication, June, 2017)

On a more serious note he said:

I think you have an obligation as an employer and as a supervisor that as long as

you can you need to work with a person to make that person become more

productive and better until you reach such a point that you just can't anymore.

The real secret to being in charge of people is you don't just give up on them.

You just don't give up on them until you've reached a point of termination. Then

you must do it. It's not the point of putting someone on a plan of improvement I

can tell you that. It's when you come to realize that you and this person are not

ever going to reach a consensus on a solution. And at that point, for the sake of

the organization, you need to tell that person that the relationship is over. And I

have reached that point on occasion. Not very often. I believe that if a person is

working for you, you should really work hard to find a common ground. You

have to let them know that you have confidence in them. I think we all learn

through time to trust our instincts. I think sometimes we don't face up to it and do

that. Then it becomes a risk, not just to two or three people, but to the whole

organization. (personal communication, July, 2017)

Bob's commitment to his employees was clear to me. Some interviewees shared

his over-commitment to loyalty as a weakness, citing incidents where people should have

been let go long before they were fired, and sometimes allowing a weak link to continue

working for the district. I gained a greater understanding of this characteristic as I visited

further with Bob. I sometimes felt Bob possessed a misplaced loyalty to people who

undermined his goals. Whatever others may have felt about this characteristic, I found

Bob could not be influenced by others concerning this commitment to care for and

support his employees. He did, at times, end the district's relationship with an employee, but only after a long and protracted effort to find the best fit for that employee. The high school principal from his former district said:

> I've worked with him as a principal and a coach and a teacher. And we've been really good friends ever since then. So we've got a friendship but we also had a working relationship for about 15-16 years. I think it's something that makes him get up and go to work. That's just something that makes him click. I think he's still out there striving for something. I'll tell you something. There were times when Bob could have left and gone to work for the book companies. There were different things and contacts that he had that I know Bob could have went to work and probably tripled his salary at some point. But I just think he's in his niche and that's kids. (Jerry, personal communication, March, 2017)

Leadership Characteristics

Intellect. Intellect was mentioned frequently when interviewees spoke of Bob's career. A colleague who had served as an educator of gifted children told me she believed he was highly intelligent. His wife said she was drawn to him as a teenager because he was smart. His daughter described how he processed more than one thing at a time while relaxing at home continually mumbling to himself and then waking up in the night and writing copious notes to take to work the next day. His assistant superintendent described him as a very intelligent person. She said his "down home" demeanor might fool some people at first, but when you really knew Bob, you knew he was very intelligent. The following story illustrates one educator's analysis of Bob's intellect:

You know I have this background in gifted education and I think the guy's a genius. A lot of people wouldn't know that because he's extremely humble, almost overly humble, if that makes any sense. And he always puts things in simple terms. He'll use jokes or stories to illustrate his points but that guy is an absolute genius. I would love to give him an intelligence test. My guess is that he is in the genius range. I don't think Bob knows he's a genius. I honestly don't think he has a clue. And he wouldn't care. It doesn't matter to him. He will always challenge himself to grow and to learn but he doesn't even realize he's doing it. He just has this thirst for knowledge. And that knowledge isn't just limited to books or content knowledge. It's also knowledge about people and how things are interconnected. The guy never forgets a name. He never forgets a date. I don't think her ever forgets a phone number. There are aspects about him that truly speak to his genius. But the other part… I've worked with a lot of really intelligent children and a lot of really intelligent people and one of the things that's most difficult in working with a highly gifted person is oftentimes they are not, they do not have the interpersonal, they do not have the social/emotional aspect or awareness. They are very cognitively bright but they don't have the social/emotional ability, that emotional intelligence. And Bob has it all. And that's where the humility comes in, and that's where that life of service comes in. I believe the obstacles that Bob has faced in his career are most likely and most definitely from or are a result of people that are unnerved or intimidated by his intelligence or his tenacity to overcome or be successful with something that needs to be done. (Catherine, personal communication, July, 2017)

Bob's daughter remembered the following:

He is always processing. He is always thinking. His favorite place at home is

laying on the living room floor. He has a bad back and it was comfortable for

him. I remember on Sundays, all the time, they have political shows like *Meet the*

Press and *Face the Nation*. It would be one or the other and he would frequently

talk to himself while he was watching. And if you sat and listened you would

hear something about school. It was rarely ever something about politics, but he

was processing something in his head. (Cara, personal communication, April,

2017)

Tenacity. Bob's tenacity enabled him to attain success utilizing Frymyer's

Curriculum Management System in his first district and to complete the installation of an

interoperability framework in his second district. A former colleague put it this way,

"Bob is open-minded, but he has tenacity also. He can be a bulldog. If the was something

he was trying to accomplish, he wouldn't accept failure. He just kept on and kept on until

he got it" (Jack, personal communication, July, 2017)

Bob's own story illustrates his tenacity:

I don't know. I think more like maybe just being stubborn. And just wanting to

do something. My dad used to say, "The boy's not spoiled. He's just letting me

know what his needs are." And I'm talking about my papa a little bit, but he

wouldn't listen to you until you had your idea refined. You know what I'm

saying? When you get your act together, get back over here and talk to me and I

might decide whether I want to get involved. At this point in time it is not worth

my time. So I spent a lot of time trying to refine things. I think I like to get

into… I develop a concept of what I think something should look like and I get into that and I can't turn it loose. I've developed what I've thought. I've been fairly constant with my desire to make it work. (personal communication, June, 2017)

Vision. Bob was frequently described as a visionary. He was talking about measuring growth as a means of determining school accountability decades before it became common language. His desire to match not only curriculum style, but also teaching style to the individual learner was also well ahead of its time. He told a story about visiting Sandia National Lab in New Mexico and telling engineers there that he needed a computer program that would allow him to put a student in a class and track that student. They told him that computer would cost $250,000 in 1980. The engineer told him that computer would be available in twenty years for $3000. In 2001 his district was using that very computer. His business colleague stated:

Now twenty years later they are trying to get all of their campuses connected. They are all trying to leverage the power of the Internet and online resources, education and so on. We are now working with large school districts all over the country that are trying to implement the very vision that we watched Bob first lay out for Eastern Valley back in the early 1990s. (Jack, personal communication, July, 2017)

Accountability. Accountability has driven everything Bob has pursued throughout his career. He relates stories about typing Title 1 reports for his father as a teenager in the 1960s. He learned what a normal curve equivalent (NCE) was and that a numerical gain in the NCE meant student academic growth. Later he equated his early

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experiences to the importance of true transparency in reporting the graduation rate and student achievement, even when it made his district look bad. A colleague told this story about the emphasis Bob placed on accountability. The following story illustrates Bob's determination to transparent accountability concerning student outcomes,

> We didn't have a uniform graduation rate in this state. We were in violation of federal law, and Bob knew it. He was using a longitudinal data system and he wanted the constituents of Eastern Valley to know the truth. He set out chairs at graduation for all of the students who entered as freshmen but did not graduate and he spoke about it at the graduation ceremony. No one does that. That's so honest, it's incredible. (Catherine, personal communication, July, 2017)

Bob also reiterated his commitment to accountability throughout our interviews,

> And I think I've been fairly constant with uh… when I graduated from college and I came to work at a school, at a public school, it hit me right off about instructional accountability. I thought in a perfect world you really do need to tell the square of it in terms of, you as a teacher, you as a person, you should be very straight up and down with people about what they can and can't do and about what they need to be able to do and I'll call it instructional accountability. I'm going to tell it the way it is and I'm going to do the very best to make it as good as it possibly can be for the children we're trying to serve. There has to be instructional accountability. That went through me. I really believe that if you couldn't tell mom and dad what the truth of the matter was and what the needs of their kids were what were you doing here? You probably needed to be doing

something else. I think that's the really big thing that has worried me over the

years. I think that's what still drives me. (personal communication, August, 2017)

Integrity. The previous story speaks to Bob's integrity as well as his

commitment to accountability. Integrity was a topic that arose throughout each interview

session. The following statement by his secretary sums up his commitment to integrity.

I would tell you I think his integrity has a lot to do with his longevity here. He

just follows the rules sometimes to the annoyance of everyone. If I could just do

it this way it would make it a lot easier but it's just not quite right. I think he has

a high level of integrity and people who work with him recognize that over time.

(Viola, personal communication, May, 2017)

The following quote sheds light on the beginning of the battle Bob waged against

the state department of education concerning the accurate reporting of the student

graduation rate in the state:

I don't want to tell the state that the graduation rate or the scores are any more

than they are. I think we must always strive to be truthful about everything, in

every aspect of what we do. If we don't then the confidence of the community

will fall. When they come to me and ask me a question, I have to tell the truth.

And they have to respond to the truth. The same is true with the state. I am not

going to lie to the accreditation officer. If he asks me a question about a kid, this

is what happened good or bad. I'm not ever going to try to cover anything up. (B.

Hall, personal communication, July, 2017)

Concerning accreditation Bob stated:

I'm not about that at all. I want the accreditation officer to feel like, and to know, that when he comes in here and he asks me a question that he will get an answer and it will be as close to the truth as I can make it be and that he won't have any doubt that when he asked me I will not have lied to him. If you don't have truth, you don't have squat. (personal communication, August, 2017)

Bob shared the following about district scandals and transparency:

I think you learn from it when you have employees do really bad things. I think we had an episode of people messing around with students. And I don't know why people do those things, but they did. I think the worse thing in the world you can do in a case like that is hide it. You become a part of it. And to me that's the lowest form of leadership. The important thing is what you do about it. It's a hard lesson to learn but I think now people would look at us now and say, 'They don't stand for that. They never stood for that.' What I care about is that people would say that when I found out I took the right steps. To me that is the worst case scenario other than a child losing his life. (personal communication, August, 2017)

The board clerk, Viola, shared the following two stories connecting his integrity to his longevity. She firmly believed his staying power was due to his honesty and integrity in dealing with his board:

I would tell you that I think his integrity has a lot to do with his longevity here. He just follows the rules sometimes to the annoyance of everyone. If I could just do it this way it would make it a lot easier but it's just not quite right. But I think he has a high level of integrity and people who work with him recognize that over

time. I'm telling you in just all of those little things he does the right thing. He just does the right thing. The band will come in and give him a T-shirt and he's so proud of that T-shirt and when they leave he'll tell me, "Find out how much the T-shirt costs", and he will pay for it. And he does. A hat, a mug, anything. All of those graduation signs; he pays for those. If they give something to the board he never says a word. He lets them have it but he pays for it.

I will tell you when all the negativity of last year at one site happened, he was very bothered by some of the accusations the leadership there made because he could not and would not respond publicly. She accused him of intimidation and yelling at her and accused him of changing her data. He never touched that data. Those things deeply bothered him. And I don't think he would ever have retired and left anybody else to deal with that mess. He wanted to see it through to the conclusion so that nobody else had to deal with it. (Interview, May, 2017)

His former high school principal said, "You know Bob led by example. You know if you worked with Bob he didn't just throw something out there and say you go do this. He led by example where he got in the trenches, too." (Jerry, personal communication, March, 2017)

Contributing Factors

Finally, perhaps the two most important factors contributing to Bob's longevity, family heritage and personal fulfillment, do not align with the literature on superintendent leadership. This is perhaps because they are so very personal in nature. They are certainly intertwined with one another and while other school leaders might share one or both, they are part of what makes Bob, along with his career, unique.

Family heritage. Bob's commitment to education involved a long and continued history of education as a vocation among his family members. Family heritage and reputation certainly played a role in his first appointment as school superintendent at a young age. It also guided his career decisions and moves throughout his life. His employees and colleagues, along with family members spoke of his family's commitment to and immersion in the world of K-12 education over the course of his lifetime.

Personal fulfillment. Personal fulfillment has been identified in job management research as contributing to career longevity (Yang & Yu, 2009). Bob's perseverance can, in part be explained by his level of fulfillment in his job. Scholarly literature has aimed to describe ways to alleviate the many stressors associated with school leadership. What if those stressors serve to invigorate and inspire the superintendent? This would seem to be the case with Bob. Each interviewee included some reference to how much Bob loved the challenges provided by the superintendency. Indeed, Bob himself said once he was on the pathway, he never contemplated doing anything outside the world of education and school leadership. His assistant superintendent told me this about Bob:

> He was in the office at 8:00 PM and he was calling me about financial stuff and
> he was pumped! He was so excited. He was sitting up in the office and he was so
> excited. He told me he was jumping in the car to go find the snow that was
> coming. All of that to say, this is his life and I think it's going to be really hard
> for him to leave it. (Brianna, personal communication, June, 2017)

His associate superintendent stated:

I think this is his passion. He enjoys this. He doesn't think of it as work. He is

the only superintendent I know who is at work more than anyone. I think if he

didn't enjoy it so much, he'd quit. (Rusty, personal communication, March,

2017)

I think most would agree that people who love their work tend to thrive in the

work environment. To most, this would be common sense. Many of us have aspects of

our jobs that we love and aspects that we hate. My data revealed in Bob a love and

passion for students and education, particularly educational accountability. All of the

following data excerpts provide support for more than one subtheme, but personal

fulfillment was always a strong thread throughout my discussions with Bob and those

who came in contact with him throughout the years.

A colleague spoke of his passion for children and education,

The first word that comes to mind when I think of Bob is passionate, passionate in

all aspects of his work. He's passionate about educating young children and

about serving the adults who serve those children. He's passionate about

education as a whole in this state and in this country. I think he is right where he

needs to be. I think anything but what he's doing would have drawn him away

from what is truly in his heart. (Catherine, personal communication, July, 2017)

His wife said, "I think it's been a good career for him and for us. I think he's had

opportunities. Before being superintendent he had opportunities and he chose not to

pursue them. I think he was born for this," (Candy, personal communication, April,

2017). His daughter shared, "He's made choices and, as his child, I don't see that he's

ever regretted any of those choices. I think that he's been fulfilled and he's always

provided for us and cared for us," (Cara, personal communication, April, 2017).

His associate superintendent said:

I think he feels this is his calling in life. And I think he genuinely loves kids and

wants to help them. And he likes people. I think he also loves a challenge and he

just wants to find a way. (Brianna, personal communication, June, 2017)

In Bob's own words:

I always felt like I had unfinished business. I so value what we've attempted to

do and the association of people. You start moving around and you lose it. And

the commitments you make with people, they are more important to me than the

next job down the road. I think that I've been a lucky person to be here and to get

to work with these people. (personal communication, August, 2017)

Conclusion

In summary, I identified three major themes through analysis of my data that have

contributed to the longevity of my subject in his career as superintendent. These three

themes consist of skills, leadership characteristics, and contributing factors. Skills are

further broken into subthemes including financial skill, political skill and relationship

building. His leadership characteristics are described as intellect, tenacity, vision,

accountability, and integrity. The two crucial contributing factors leading to his career

sustainability are family heritage and personal fulfillment. Together these factors have

contributed to Bob's ability to enjoy such a lengthy tenure in his chosen career.

CHAPTER V

THE NARRATIVE

In the Beginning

It is important to know that Bob was raised in a rural area of a South Central

State. The region is hilly and forested and boasts beautiful natural scenery throughout the

varying seasons. Though steeped in concepts of family values, it also hides illegal

moonshine stills and other shady activities. To this day, with its isolated small towns,

and gun owning residents suspicious of outsiders, it is not an area of the country one

would want to venture into without a full tank of gas and an excellent road map or GPS.

His vernacular language is evidence of these early roots. However, it is also important to

know that Bob grew up with a rich tradition of pursuing education. His mother was a

teacher and his father, along with four of his uncles were school superintendents. His

father's sister became the state director of elementary education in a northwestern state.

His grandfather served on the Flower Public Schools Board of Education for many years.

The post World War II GI bill afforded his father's family the ability to pursue

higher education, and his grandmother made sure they all took advantage of this

opportunity. Education was revered and expected. Thus, education and leadership were

part of family heritage. Bob told me a story illustrating his grandmother's determination

to make sure all of her children finished school:

My pop's sister was the youngest of the 10 children. The first nine were boys. Well, she had finished three years of college, and she decided she was through with it, you know. So the day before she was supposed to leave to go back to college she told her momma she didn't want to go back to school; she was tired of school. She just figured she'd stay home. Well, she got up the next morning and her momma had her suitcase packed and sitting on the front porch and she told her, "There's no place for you here. You're going back to school." (personal communication, May, 2017)

I would describe Bob's relationship with his father as a strong and loving relationship. He fondly referred to him as Pop, and it is evident from the many stories he shared about his father that he greatly admired and respected him, and that even as a teenager, he felt a strong father-son bond.

Bob's father became a superintendent when Bob was six years old. A particular set of circumstances set the stage for Bob to become intricately involved in his father's career when he was a teenager. The elder Mr. Hall suffered from heart trouble and underwent open-heart surgery for the first time in 1966. Open-heart surgery was a fairly new procedure in the 1960's. His medical condition required frequent trips to the city. There was no interstate highway system at the time and these trips were made over rural roads. Mrs. Hall was concerned about her husband being on the road alone given his heart condition, and because Bob was a sixteen year-old with a newly issued driver's license the role of chauffer was assigned to him. The winding road trip through many small rural towns took about four and a half hours.

Along with trips to the doctors in the city, Bob also frequently accompanied his father to county superintendent meetings. At that time superintendents would meet with the regional accreditation officer at the county courthouse to do their business and receive updates. To the teenaged Bob, these meetings seemed frequent. Bob reflected, "I was surely not interested in those meetings in those days. They did not matter to me in the least" (personal communication, May, 2017). As we often internalize whatever we are inundated with as a child whether it be country music or talk radio so Bob internalized the superintendents' lingo and bonded with his dad as two men do on monotonous road trips. Bob reminisced:

> He bought me a typewriter. "I want you to be a good typist," he said. He had an ulterior motive. That's the way he worked. So he bought me a typewriter and then he sequestered me to type his reports. (personal communication, May, 2017)

The reports Bob refers to are Title 1 reports. These were the early days of Title 1 and school districts filled out all applications, reports and requests for payment on a typewriter. This responsibility familiarized Bob with something called a Normal Curve Equivalent. He learned about NCE gains and what they represented. Bob stated, "I learned that if there was a positive change that was good and if there was a negative change that was bad because it meant the kids weren't getting what they needed," (personal communication, May, 2017). Although he didn't get much out of it at the time, the concept of accounting for student learning gains or losses became ingrained in Bob's mind.

Bob was also expected to pursue higher education. His mother, a formidable lady in her own right, was determined that her plans for Bob would not be derailed by his

relationship with his high school sweetheart. Candy and Bob went to different high schools in the same county and met, according to whom you ask, in either their freshman and sophomore years or sophomore and junior years of high school. Candy said, "Anyway we started dating and we dated for a while and then we got engaged and his parents didn't know it."

Bob had a dream of becoming a pilot in the Marines. He enlisted in the military and went through basic training. Then his father had another heart attack. This changed his career trajectory forever. Bob told me he never regretted going home when his father asked him and he never regretted becoming an educator; he believed education is his life's work and he is fulfilling his destiny.

His father encouraged him to get through school as quickly as possible and he did, marrying Candy part of the way through the process. Bob had a favorite professor in school and he connected his experiences in his animal ecology class to what he had learned typing Title 1 reports for his father in high school. He credits this professor for the goals he set for himself in his subsequent educational career. The connection he makes between the two experiences brings Bob to a critical point in crystallizing a vision for his life's work. Bob told me the following story:

> So I'll go back to the yearning I had when I came out of OTU. I think that all of this thing about accountability that I've always heard about and believed in. I had a professor who taught animal ecology and he was my favorite professor. His class met at 7:30 in the morning and I never missed a class. He was great and he was a statistician. So nothing mattered to him but what the stats said.

I started thinking about standard deviation and what makes you exceptional? Significant? I guess what I'm telling you here is that I kind of grew up in that class and thinking if you're going to do something then it had to matter and that you were going to have to determine whether you were going to have some real significance in what you were doing. (personal communication, June, 2017)

The most significant experience in the class was taking a midnight trip to a nearby creek that had experienced a big fish kill. They went to determine what was poisoning the fish. The professor believed that fertilizer running off into the stream was depleting the levels of oxygen at night through algae growth and suffocating the fish. If you measure the oxygen levels during the day, there will be all kinds of oxygen and you will think "no problem here." But at nightfall the photosynthesis suspends itself and there's plant respiration and the plants use the oxygen at night and deprive the fish of oxygen. The companies that were polluting the creek claimed there was not a problem because they were measuring the oxygen during the day. So the professor and his students went out and measured the oxygen levels at night and charted them. This professor inspired Bob to want to put a quantification on everything. It made sense to him to try to determine, as a school, "Whether or not we were adding value to our students' learning and thereby determining whether we were doing our job," (Bob, personal communication, June, 2017).

Bob had an epiphany during that field trip. "That's what I was doing when I was typing up that stuff for my papa! You know, showing the difference between each student and whether or not they made NCE gain." (personal communication, June, 2017)

He was concerned about the manipulation of student scores and the avoidance of showing true gains, losses, or stagnation of student learning. Bob theorized, "I don't know; there might be an analogy there. They are going to suffocate if you don't make any NCE gains and that might be true" (personal communication, June, 2017).

Bob grew up with a father who was an educational leader. His father was a school superintendent in some of his earliest memories. Also, as a teenager, Bob became intrinsically intertwined with his father's work because of his father's first heart attack. This life experience had great impact on Bob's life. It was an impetus for spending more time with his father and for inadvertently absorbing the particulars of his father's profession. At an early age Bob learned about NCE scores and measuring student growth. This experience impacted and supported the themes of family heritage and accountability for student growth. This formed a seed that would grow into a life-long passion for Bob. Throughout his career he has been in pursuit of not only improving student achievement, but also accurately accounting for student performance: both good and bad.

This class appears to have been a life altering experience for Bob. It was more than an animal ecology class; it was a meaning making experience. Building on the past knowledge gained from all of those hours typing reports for his father and listening to superintendents' meetings, Bob synthesized Dr. Williams' instruction into purpose for his life's work. It became a mission for him to find a way to assure NCE growth for all students and to efficiently and statistically measure and demonstrate that growth. This theme of accountability is interwoven throughout Bob's career and is central to his

personal goals. This narrative also illustrates Bob's commitment to integrity as well as a certain level of intelligence.

Bob says he began to put a quantification on everything. Frequently described as a numbers guy, he is touted as a guru of school finance. This professor and this course also encouraged his passion for quantification. Bob mentally made the connections between his father's work and Dr. William's work, and these connections gave meaning to his own work life. A friend of his said, "To say educational leadership was part of Bob's heritage is putting it mildly. His family lived and breathed education and leadership. I think he was inspired by a life, or to a life of service by his parents," (Catherine, personal communication, July, 2017).

Early Career

After graduating from OTU he worked briefly in three different school districts as a teacher, coach and principal. Then his father passed away succumbing to the heart issues that had plagued him for the past several years. Again, a family event led him to a change in his career. One might guess that his next job was happenstance, but this opinion would change after hearing about the life events leading to it. Bob's father succumbed to his heart problems and passed away shortly after Bob began his career. Once again, family heritage and personal relationships strongly influenced his career pathway. Bob and his wife shared the following perspective about his first position as superintendent. Candy stated:

> I don't remember him saying he wanted to be a superintendent. To me I think
> that came after his dad died. He wanted to be closer to his mom; to be around for
> her. And someone had called him, and I don't remember who it was. But he said

this would be a good school to start at as superintendent. So that's what I

remember about that. So we were there for 17 years. (personal communication,

April, 2017)

Bob shared:

I applied for a position and I got it. It wasn't like backing into a job. The first job

I had as a superintendent. That was definitely an emotional decision. You know

when my father had passed away, I got what I would call "a call for home." I

think if I had been an older guy it probably wouldn't have happened that way.

From my perspective, it wasn't so much about whether it was a job as a principal

or a superintendent but it was about the proximity I needed. To be relocated.

Close to mom. Close to the people. I think we get some kind of peace from being

able to be around people that our loved ones work around. It certainly helped me.

All I knew was that I needed to be in that area. It was the call of the family. It

wasn't them calling me. It was me seeking them. (personal communication,

June, 2017)

Bob was 24 when he began serving his first school district as superintendent,

making him the youngest superintendent in the state at the time. He will admit that he

made many mistakes attributable to youth and inexperience, but when explaining why he

felt the school board hired him in the first place he said, "I think my family was pretty

well known in the area and I knew that. Family reputation. So part of it was reputation.

It certainly didn't hurt. They knew of my father and my family" (personal

communication, June, 2017). Bob had not completed his master's degree in

administration when he took the job at Indianhead. He clarified for me by explaining:

I was going to school the year that I started; March or April; I wasn't actually

getting my Master's Degree until May. My master's degree was in school

administration. I would qualify based on my master's degree in May for a

provisional certificate. But in the day and time they hired me I did not have my

master's degree or my superintendent's certificate. But when I officially went to

work I had both of those things. (personal communication, June, 2017)

Bob might have stayed in another district had his father not passed when he was

24 years old. He may not have become a superintendent until much later. Regardless,

family legacy, again, impacted his career moves.

Indianhead

Bob was hired in the spring of 1975 to be superintendent of Indianhead Schools.

He completed his master's degree in May and turned 25 in June. Becoming a

superintendent in a small rural district came with it's own special challenges. Bob

recounted the following story about his first days on the job:

When I first started the job there was a fellow who did custodial work for the

district. Well, I use the term work liberally. I was taking classes finishing my

degree in Norton, so I would leave a list every morning telling him what I wanted

him to do that day. I would go to class in the morning and come back to work in

the afternoon. Well, he didn't think he wanted to do what I had on my list. He

figured he had been working there a long time and he knew best. So I would

come back and he wouldn't have any of it done and I would call him into the

office and ask him about it and he would tell me he thought he would do such and

such instead. So I made it clear to him that I wanted him to follow my

instructions. Anyway, I come back the next day and he still hasn't done anything on the list and so I call him to the office and I fire him. Well, he's not too happy about this. So he starts sending his wife, who also had worked for the district for many years, in some capacity, to tell me how low-down I am and that he's not happy with me. So he sends his wife to my office and she tells me he wants me to come out to his place and talk to him about this. So I get in my pickup truck and I drive out there.

Well, when I get out to his place I get out of the truck and I call his name and here he comes around the corner of the house and he's got a gun in his hand and he tells me he's going to shoot me. So I'm feeling like maybe I made a mistake in coming out there but I got no choice in the matter now. So I tell him, "Well, if you're going to shoot me, you're going to have to shoot me in the back 'cause I'm going to turn around and walk back to my truck." And all the time I'm walking I'm just waiting for that bullet to hit me in the back.

I talked to my uncle who was a superintendent afterwards and he told me, "Don't ever do a damn fool thing like that again! If somebody wants to talk to you, you make them come see you on your turf!" So I survived and I never made that mistake again. (personal communication, June, 2017)

After this event Bob garnered a new respect from community members' familiar with the employee and his family. Bob's willingness to stand up to someone known throughout the area as a local bully helped to cement his reputation as one worthy of community leadership. This combination of integrity and tenacity was recounted through various scenarios given by interviewees familiar with Bob and his work. During his

tenure at Indianhead Bob began to focus his efforts on his earlier vision for student progress accountability. Without exception, every person interviewed, except Bob himself, used the word "visionary" as a descriptor. One colleague stated, "I think what makes Bob unique is he dreams just big enough to make him dangerous. He doesn't come with those biases of 'you can't do that'" (Arturo, personal communication, July, 2017). Another stated, "So when he came to Eastern Valley he had this crazy vision that was unheard of at that time which was to tie all of the school sites, the campuses, together with this high-speed network; to just unleash these tools. Many of these tools which at that time were just in incubators" *(*Jack, personal communication, July, 2017).

His visionary tactics were evident early on in his career as a superintendent. Colleagues and a former student describe how he turned the school around academically, in what, for its time, was a very innovative way. This was the late seventies and early eighties. PL94-142 (1974) mandating individualized services for special needs children had been recently passed. However, the concept of individualizing instruction based on learning styles for every student was not even a blip on the radar. His vision also included inputting data into a computer system in order to track methods of instruction and student progress. He had ideas for how to address individual student needs and how to verify progress. Further, he envisioned a school where teachers' instructional styles were matched with students' preferred learning styles.

Bob became intent on developing a way to computerize the Annehurst Curriculum Classification System (ACCS). This was an individualized curriculum system developed by Jack Frymier (1977) in his book, "Annehurst Curriculum Classification System". Jeter (1980) stated, "Central to ACCS is a concept of human

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variability and a conviction that pupil performance is affected by the relationship of curriculum materials to student characteristics (p. 26). Bob's vision took the concept further in that he believed students' learning styles could be matched to teachers' instructional styles.

Bob had studied the Annehurst Curriculum Classification System (ACCS) developed by Jack Frymier (1973) and first presented in his theoretical book "A School for Tomorrow". In ACCS, Frymier developed a method of codification for curriculum materials that matched them with the learning needs of each student (Krauss, 1980). Bob was conceptualizing a way to enter the student data into a computer and produce reports on each student. A delegation was sent to Sandy, Utah, to look at the district's Plan of Instruction. Bob explained:

> We were very much sold on Utah's order of instruction. They had an order of instruction on paper. All of this was running on a main frame in Sandy, Utah. We were sold on their model but we couldn't afford the technology. ACCS looked at how students learn in a hierarchical way. It linked the fundamentals of knowledge with the characteristics of the learner, but it had no sequence of instruction. We combined the best assets of both programs. We took the Utah program and put the meta data of ACCS on top of that. If you have this type of learner with these issues you need to respond in this way. Curriculum Management System was a marriage of ACCS and the Utah Method. (personal communication, June, 2017)

He began to have teachers input data on each student into a data bank and eventually hired three employees whose sole responsibility was student data entry. The

data bank generated reports outlining a hierarchy of needs. The district would then hire someone from the state university to come and provide professional development concerning those needs. They overlaid the Utah process with Frymyer's ACCS to help drive professional development in order to improve classroom instruction. They ran reports on instructional weaknesses in each classroom as well as specific student weaknesses. These reports were used to drive professional development and individualized student instruction.

Excited about their progress, Bob sent Frymyer a report on a child. It was a computerized report showing what they were teaching that child in response to his instructional needs. He sent his phone number along with the report and about a week later he received a call:

"This is Jack Frymyer and what the hell am I looking at?"

Bob replied, "Well, I sent that to you. It's a report on a child and it's in your language. The way you look at things and the way you talk about things."

Frymyer responded, "I'm coming to see you." And so he did.

Indianhead became a Blue Ribbon School and because of the work at Indianhead, Bob was invited to Sandia National Laboratory in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He was not sure how they heard of his work but he was eager to visit the lab when he received the invitation. The following story once again illustrates Bob's visionary position in the field of education. His conversation with the engineer provides clues to what drives Bob in his quest for tracking data to show accountability:

This guy in the labs and I can't remember his name. He was from Tulsa. We described how to track the school and the schedule and the classes and the whole

thing. So I was out there telling him I needed a computer program that will let me put a kid in a class and track the kid. I need that. He said, "The computer that would do that for you right now would cost $250,000. The computer for the teacher would cost $250,000." This was back in 1980 and he said, "You can't do that. But I've got good news for you. You're a young guy." And I was at that time; maybe 30. And he said, "In 20 years that machine will be available and it will cost you $3000." And he was so very right. He nailed it. That was 1980 and you go back and check and in 2001 we were doing all of that stuff. That was the amazing thing that this guy knew that in 2000 we would be doing all of this. (personal communication, July, 2017)

Eastern Valley

Context is a key factor throughout Bob's career. Indianhead was a small rural school district located in a remote part of the state. Envision mountainous terrain covered by deciduous forests populated with maple, sweet gum, hickory, oak, and pine trees. Two lane highways, some with no pavement, wind their ways through small towns and farms. Coal mining, lumbering, grazing and subsistence farming were the primary ways of making a living. The nearest population center was more than 100 miles away and travel time was compounded by the lack of interstate highways. The area is more connected now than it was thirty years ago but cell phone coverage is still spotty. Bob knew there was only so much they could accomplish in such a district. These factors helped lead Bob to make a career move.

Bob's tenacity is illustrated by his determination to improve student achievement at Indianhead through the use of a computerized student management system. His

tenacity is further illustrated by the defining achievement of his second superintendency. The transition from a small rural school district to a mid-sized urban district came about because of the development of the CMS and the accolades that followed. Bob was gaining notoriety in the state and further abroad because of the school's Blue Ribbon status. Bob was asked to provide presentations on his Curriculum Management System at various locations throughout the state. It was at one such presentation at the University of Statehood that the superintendent of Eastern Valley Schools first met Bob. Bob told me:

> I was hired at Eastern Valley because the superintendent at the time went to a CMS presentation I gave. I had been asking myself, "How do you make this useful on an everyday basis in schools across the country?" I realized that in a large system it would have to be linked to a student integration system. The trick to this revolved around scheduling. (personal communication, July, 2017)

Bob was invited to interview with the board at Eastern Valley after meeting the superintendent. She heard him give a presentation at a nearby university and asked him to come to Eastern Valley and interview for the assistant superintendent's position. The work done at Indianhead computerizing the CMS concept which led to enormous student academic gains in Indianhead Schools was a topic of conversation in the interview. Bob saw the potential the resources at Eastern Valley offered. The board members saw Bob's potential and envisioned accomplishing some pretty amazing things utilizing technology to improve student achievement.

When Bob became superintendent one of the board members challenged him, "I want you to design the best technology system there can be for a school district. I want

us to have a great technology support system." At this time Bob began a quest to create a sustainable interoperability framework for the district. Bob said, "I was a heavy believer that there was something that could be done in technology that hadn't yet been accomplished and I could see that we could track the performance of students over time." (personal communication, July, 2017)

Flightnet

The board member's request was all that was required to set Bob on the pathway to developing an integrated fiber optic network throughout Eastern Valley School District. Flightnet was an interoperability network conceived by Bob in the early 1990's and relentlessly pursued over the next several years. This was something that had not even been considered by any school district in the state. It was definitely an unknown proposition with many obstacles to overcome in order to see it through to completion.

> I got a call from INTEL. We had run a bond issue. We had said, "We want to
> run our own network." So I got a call from INTEL. That guy Vesuvius was a
> representative of INTEL. And he called and said, "Would you meet me at the
> airport in Lubbock, Texas?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "I have read about
> your initiative and I think INTEL might want to be a part of it. Involved in
> helping you. I said, "What would there be out of it?" And he said, "INTEL
> doesn't sell the things to you in that kind of way. We don't sell you the stuff you
> need. We sell the stuff to people you might be interested in. What we would do
> is help design a network that could support you and support the school well into
> the future. We think we can help you." (Bob, personal communication, July,
> 2017)

This was the beginning of Eastern Valley's relationship with INTEL. As Bob put it, "They schooled us on what things ought to look like." Bob and his team were advised to build a wide area network with fiber. Bob told me, "That advice has held to be golden even up to today." Eastern Valley is still able to do move information faster, cheaper, and better.

INTEL never waivered from the assertion that their primary interest in the project was to sell silicon. Through INTEL Bob was introduced to Microsoft and Bill Gates. Gates later featured Bob and his district in one of his books. Bob made it clear that these were business relationships. These corporations would have liked to see technology become very effective in schools but ultimately it was about business and making money. Bob reflected,

> There was a lot of software built because INTEL has knowledge of what those machines are going to do and how they could work. So they built software and set it up with Microsoft so they could sell more silicon. (personal communication, July, 2017)

Bob met Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, as well as Andy Grove, one of the INTEL founders. He was very much impressed by Gates, but more so by Andy Grove. A tiny man, born in Hungary during World War II with a reputation for a volatile temper, Bob described him as someone who commanded the room, "When he began speaking everyone in the room stopped talking and listened," (personal communication, July, 2017). Bill Gates, he said, had a boy next-door aura which was very engaging, but not as awe inspiring as Andy Grove. Bob described the culture of the two different companies,

The two companies have very distinct cultures about them. They're both very

profitable. INTEL is the land of engineers and a very regimental atmosphere.

Microsoft is more laid back. Not so much liked the engineers, but very effective

anyway. It's a very different approach. (personal communication, July, 2017)

These events told in Bob's own words strengthen several of the sub-themes contributing

to his longevity. His ideas for expanding on the CMS system and the notice taken by the

Eastern Valley school board member reflect his vision. His vision was also the impetus

for initiating and passing the technology bond issue and led to him being contacted by the

representative from Intel. We also see evidence of his relationship building in dealing

with the school board members and Mr. Vesuvius from Intel. Indeed, not only,

interviewees, but many people in the state react with warm recognition when Bob's name

is mentioned. His political expertise is evident in that he deals with people from varying

walks of life and moves among them with comfort and confidence. He describes the

cultures of Intel and Microsoft and indicates important differences in how employees

relate. He is also savvy to the underlying motive for Intel's interest in his school district

and made frequent references to their desire to sell silicon throughout our interviews.

Bob kept pushing INTEL to help him develop the necessary software to integrate

all district systems including scheduling, testing, and reporting and INTEL kept pushing

back telling Bob they did not create software. Bob persisted telling Vesuvius they would

not be able to purchase the silicon until the software necessary to integrate their systems

was created. The software did not exist. Finally, INTEL sent a young man named Arturo

Sosa to meet with Bob. This encounter would have a profound impact on both of their

lives. Arturo was somewhat of a software engineering prodigy who went to work for

INTEL at a very young age. He was working for INTEL Solutions traveling all over the

country working with Fortune Five Hundred Companies when he was assigned to a

project in an urban school district in the middle of the country. Working closely with

Bob's IT team Arturo was instrumental in developing the needed software. He went on

to start his own highly successful software company that supports school districts across

the country. Arturo described his relationship with Bob,

> It was probably 2001 or 2002, somewhere around there where this school district
>
> outside Statehood City wanted to do real time integration between their student
>
> system, their learning system, and their lunch system and that kind of started my
>
> relationship with Bob. Certainly without meeting Bob and working with him for
>
> a few years, for two or three years, I certainly wouldn't have left INTEL and
>
> started an education, a K-12 company. So your question about has he personally
>
> influenced me. I certainly wouldn't be here where I am today without meeting
>
> him. And for my family, both of my brothers graduated after me and now we all
>
> work together. And so I think it goes beyond me personally, but my entire family
>
> has been influenced by Bob. (personal communication, July, 2017)

The first conversation between the two was still vivid in Arturo's mind when he

spoke with me. He said he was about twenty-four at the time and this superintendent was

talking to him about building a system that could track or look at a student's learning

ability and look at his/her past record and then look at specific teachers and match the

students needs to the teacher's skills or match a student's learning style to a teacher's

teaching style. Arturo said, "I told him, Bob, you're talking about something that is

probably at least a decade away." Arturo felt his company was close to making that

happen, "We have the skill set now where we've been doing this for fifteen years, that I would say, in the next couple of years we're going to be able to show people these teachers are best suited for these students," (personal communication, July, 2017). He assured me that nobody except Bob was talking about such a thing fifteen years ago when they first met.

Another instrumental person in the development of the Flightnet was Jack Remington. He, too, went on to form his own highly successful company whose purpose is to connect schools and libraries nationwide with the funding necessary to implement technology. The first thing Jack told me was that he hoped I was not trying to study the typical superintendent because Bob was an outlier, "He is all about equipping and empowering students and educators for success and that has been a consistent theme in him and about him that I have seen now for twenty-five years," (personal communication, July, 2017). Jack related that Bob's approach differed in that it was about using technology to improve and support instruction rather than using it just for technology's sake. He said, "It's one thing to think technology is cool. It's another thing to use it to improve instruction." According to Jack, "He had the presence of mind to see what was coming at that time, and to recognize the fact that when you have those communication tools in place the sky's the limit."

He believes Bob came to Eastern Valley for better resources. He stated, "So when he came to Eastern Valley he had this crazy vision that was unheard of at that time which was to tie all of the school sites together with this high-speed network. To just unleash these tools." He told me his company does precisely what Bob envisioned twenty-five years ago for schools and libraries across the country. "We are now working

with large school districts all over the country that are trying to implement the very vision that we watched Bob first lay out for Eastern Valley back in the early 1990s.

Bob became increasingly involved at the state level in the use of technology in schools. He co-sponsored state legislation regarding the use of a state-wide interoperability framework and served as chairman of the state FORSIGHT project, an effort funded by federal grants that would create, store, and share electronic curriculum across the state.

House Bill 1646

House Bill 1646 was a state education bill that was designed to streamline the process of transmitting data between the state and the individual school districts. The idea was that all schools would transmit data using a compatible interoperability framework called a SIF. Bob cosponsored the bill with a state lawmaker and Mr. Vesuvius from INTEL. The state was actually one of the first states in the union to pass such a bill and had they continued to adhere to it, they might still be leading the way in student information systems nationally. All data systems were required to comply with the SIF framework. However, over time and changes in state administrations some software systems were purchased that did not comply with the framework and districts are now compelled to translate certain data in order to share it with the state department of education. Bob expressed frustration at the extra work this creates for school district employees. Bob shared to following story.

> We actually started before other states did, but now they are ahead of us because
> they were true to the schools' interoperability framework automatically under SIF
> but when it comes to special education records they can't use SIF. So now in a

duplicative effort we're out there entering data and then having to manually move it. So it's costing us money to do the job because the state department of education did not follow the guidelines of the bill. It is not adhering to the guidelines the legislature actually provided. They're creating paperwork, unnecessary paperwork. Nobody really called the state superintendent on it. But they should. I tried. I said, "That dog don't hunt. I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't sign that agreement. Why would we do this? It's causing us more time and effort. Time and effort is money. It also creates more work. It's less effective." I think one of the important things we did was try and establish a standard for the movement of data, the creation and storage of data. (personal communication, August, 2017)

FORSIGHT Project

Another state project Bob was involved in I will call the FORSIGHT Project. This project was funded through the state by a federal grant. The goal was to get electronic curriculum from a central point in the state capital out to the four corners of the state. This could be quite beneficial in a largely rural state with many small and far-flung districts. Bob described its purpose,

Well, FORSIGHT Project was about trying to get instructional products shared across the state of Statehood. So you talk about the schools' interoperability framework. So the idea was to develop capacity to create and store and distribute the instructional product and get it out to the people. (personal communication, August, 2017)

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In the 1990's the types of instructional materials being shared were films, videos and cassettes. The concept of packaging instructional materials in an XML packet was a new one. This had not been done before. With the skills of many, particularly Arturo who was still with INTEL, Bob's FORSIGHT team developed a model for packaging instructional material in XML packets that could then be assigned to a client dataset and saved to a file so that they could form the basis of a file-based data application. Curriculum was created, packaged, marketed to districts, and moved to their data-bases to provide instructional materials not otherwise available to remote districts. Bob said, "we worked with INTEL and we learned a lot about how to move data." A representative came from INTEL and spoke to the state legislature for the need to develop a state interoperability framework (SIF). That was the impetus for the state student data interoperability framework used today.

Quest for Accountability

Bob continued his campaign for the use of a growth model to demonstrate school district and state accountability. He believed this could be done through the creation of a student tracking system that tracked individual student and student cohort outcomes longitudinally. His ideas concerning student growth accountability were directly related to his early experiences as his superintendent father's typist. Bob related the following,

> You know Linda and I made a presentation before Congress. We were invited to present a paper before the U.S. Congress; The House Education and Labor Committee. We were to testify as to what we thought education ought to look like in America. Our deal was we should use the growth model to measure the success of a school. Some people thought that was very dangerous. I don't know

exactly why. To me that is the essence of instructional accountability. He has

been persistent in his determination to accurately show whether a student is

growing academically or not. He harkened back to the Title 1 program started in

1965, That's what LBJ's Title 1 program was about. That was in the 60s and I

can tell you this from experience because I was filling out the paperwork that

would go in to the Statehood Department of Education that said how many kids

did you have in third grade and how many of them were involved in Title 1 and

how many of them had an NCE score of greater than zero in reading? And if that

percentage wasn't high enough then you had to have an academic improvement

plan for the school. And you know that's still the plan we all ought to be holding

ourselves accountable for. (personal communication, August, 2017)

Bob's obsession with accountability contributed to a falling out with the state

superintendent of instruction. The longitudinal student tracking system developed by

Bob and his colleagues revealed something Bob had long suspected. Student drop out

rates were not being accurately recorded in his district and at the state level. At the

district level employees began tracking all students ever enrolled in the district and

maintaining a data-base that identified unaccounted for students who left the district

before, as well as during, senior year.

Bob pushed hard for accountability. He dramatized the dire student dropout

situation in his own district by placing empty chairs at the graduation ceremony for all of

the students who started freshman year at Eastern Valley who were now unaccounted for.

While this garnered some media attention, it did not sit well with state leaders. The

prevailing attitude was, "You can make your own district look bad, but don't bring down the rest of us with you."

A friend and colleague told me the following story,

> I went on a trip with Bob to DC because of the longitudinal data system he had worked with Azazini to develop and he had talked with the state superintendent over and over again about implementing it in the state and she never did. She did not want people to know the truth about student achievement in this state. So we didn't have a uniform graduation rate in this state and that was a violation of federal law and Bob knew it. But he was using it! He wanted the constituents of Eastern Valley to know the truth; everything from setting out all of the chairs in a cohort to 40% of them being empty because those kids didn't make high school graduation and he spoke about it at the graduation ceremony. No one does that! That's so obvious and honest it's incredible. (Catherine, personal communication, July, 2017).

The Story Continues

Note that Bob remained employed as superintendent throughout this period of time. He had convinced his board that his goals and objectives were important. Bob did not do anything without the approval of his board. The board members were completely behind Bob in these efforts. So perhaps he worked for an unusual board as well; however, these actions did not seem to jeopardize his employment. Having a 60% graduation rate would seem to be fair cause for any board to refuse to renew a superintendent's contract. A friend and colleague told the following story with a note of astonishment in her voice,

So we go to the conference put on by the U.S. Department of Education on data

and there were very few people invited to present. Bob Hall was one of them. So

we are having dinner after we had been at the USBOE and one of the USBOE

secretaries was sitting with us and she point blank told us that there were only two

states in the union that didn't receive money to develop and/or implement a

longitudinal data system; Wyoming because they didn't need the money and

Statehood because they refused to apply. She even called and spoke with the state

superintendent and said, "We will write it. All you need to do is sign." And she

didn't want it. We passed up how many million. (Catherine, personal

communication, July, 2017)

Eastern Valley filed a lawsuit against the state alleging they did not accurately calculate

student dropout rates and they won. Was this commitment to the truth or political

suicide? It effectively ended Bob's influence at the state level. However, his school

board appeared to remain committed to his ideals. This may have been the climax of his

story leading to a quiet denouement involving retirement and enjoying his grandchildren.

Not so! Bob continues on apparently fully supported by a board that has turned almost

completely over since the lawsuit. New bond issues are passed, new buildings built, new

student improvement initiatives implemented, and Bob continues on at the helm of his

school district periodically promising to retire for good soon, training others to take his

place, relinquishing some elements of his control from time to time, but passionately

pursuing his dream of educational accountability.

Conclusion

I would like to be able to say that a particular leadership style emerged from the data, but that would be an erroneous statement. On the contrary, every person I interviewed named and described a different style of leadership. Depending on when they worked with Bob, some of the descriptions of his leadership style actually contradicted one another. I heard servant leadership, hierarchical leadership, collaborative leadership, distributive leadership, and visionary leadership. Ultimately, for Bob anyway, it doesn't appear to be about style or about a flawless career with no mistakes. There is no indication that power, prestige, or money motivated Bob. Rather, the necessary skills and qualities accompanied by personal fulfillment seem to have enabled him to persist in his chosen career. The one thread that remained constant was that he led with integrity and passion for education. Perhaps this speaks to his adaptability as a leader in that, different times and different situations call for different leadership styles. I would like to conclude the story with Bob's own words about his chosen vocation,

> And so you have to be about half jake-leg lawyer and you have to be about half
> jake-leg accountant and then you have to be, hopefully, able to know what's good
> for students instructionally. And I know I dismissed the politics of it, and yes,
> you have to know what your bearing in the world of politics is. But I would
> suggest to you that the world doesn't expect educators to do anything but teach
> the children and do the best they can on behalf of the children and it doesn't
> matter if you are the superintendent or the principal or the teacher. They all
> expect the same out of us and that is concern for their children. If we deviate
> from that I don't think we get to talk to them or to the politicians. They won't

hear us. But if we keep the kids the focus they'll hear us. This is what I've learned; you don't have to move from school to school for people to understand that you care about the kids. (personal communication, August, 2017)

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Application of Theory

Person-Environment Fit Theory was applied ex post facto to the findings of this

study. Person-Environment Fit Theory provides rich context for analysis of this

particular study. The mesh between Bob's abilities and the skills required for the job

were almost completely synchronized. Also, Bob's needs and the rewards supplied by

the position were aligned with precision. If Bob had been in search of more power or

money, he might have chosen a very different career path, perhaps seeking larger and

larger districts or other business opportunities. If he had not been such a visionary nor

had so much tenacity, he might not have accomplished the CMS initiative nor the

completion of the school interoperability framework. Lindle (2014) identified

relationship building as necessary for successful superintendent leadership, and Bob

enjoyed and excelled at building the right relationships. Lindle (2014) also identified

"casting the vision" as a component of successful school district leadership. Over and

over former colleagues and business partners described how Bob cast the vision. One

interviewee told this story:

> So when he came to Eastern Valley he had this crazy vision that was unheard of at
>
> that time which was to tie all of the school sites together with this high-speed

network; to just unleash these tools, many of these tools, which at that time were

just in incubators. But he had the presence of mind to see what was coming at

that time, and to recognize the fact that when you have those communication tools

in place the sky is the limit. (Jack, personal communication, July, 2017)

McCauley and Brutus (1998) furthered the discussion on adaption to the job

environment and demands in their work *Management Development Through Job

Experiences: An Annotated Bibliography*. The authors discussed "tacit" knowledge or

knowledge that is "developed through direct experience" (McCauley & Brutus, 1998, p.

5). McCauley and Brutus (1998) found, "Although the way in which managers acquire

tacit knowledge has not been looked at closely, studies of this phenomenon do support

the notion that, in order to be successful, managers need to develop increasingly complex

levels of expertise" (p. 5). Specifically, individuals can adapt to their work environment

over time and through experience, and thus will increase their person-environment fit

given the opportunity. Bob's career certainly affirms the notion of tacit knowledge

development over time through personal experiences. He entered the job with certain

leadership characteristics through which he met the demands of the job, but over time his

knowledge grew and his expertise increased as he dealt with increasing complex and

demanding situations. His board clerk shared this story:

> He understands our money. He understands where Eastern Valley gets their
>
> money and when it should come in and about how much it should be. And he's
>
> developed, over the years, relationships with state representatives and senators
>
> and Oracola County Treasurers and he will pick up the phone. I mean people at
>
> the Tax Commission know that Bob Hall is going to call them if they don't get his

appropriation out to him on time. And if it looks odd, he's going to call them and

ask them, "Why does it look this way?" And early on I think he worked hard at

understanding where the money came from. And he's done it so many years now

it's like second nature to him. (Viola, personal communication, May, 2017)

Sekiguchi's (2004) development of P-E fit's reflexive properties provides

additional thoughtful analysis of Bob's career. Sekiguchi states that certain elements of

person environment fixed and others are variable (2004). Shipp & Jansen (2011) stated,

"But if researchers capture only current fit, we are unable to see how individuals interpret

and react to these dynamic elements and can only tell a portion of the story of an

individual's fit experience" (pp. 3-4). The detailed recounting of Bob's various

challenges and accomplishments provides a rich illustration of this concept of the

transitive nature of certain elements of P-E fit and how one might craft and recraft their

own narrative of P-E fit. Learning on the job afforded Bob a great deal of tacit

knowledge that he later applied to challenging situations during his career. Each time he

succeeded with a particular initiative or relational situation the positive feedback

increased his positive affect and satisfaction with his job. Each step of Bob's career

shows how one success leads to another and to increasing positive career satisfaction. In

one interview, he explained his move to Eastern Valley, "I was hired at Eastern Valley

because the superintendent at the time went to a CMS (Curriculum Management System)

presentation that I gave." The following quote is also illustrative of how one success led

to another during Bob's career:

I got a call from INTEL. We had run a bond issue. We had said, "We want to

run our own network." That was the '95 bond issue. Laura said to make it the

best it can be. So I got a call from INTEL. That guy Vesuvius was a

representative of INTEL. And he called and said, "Would you meet me at the

airport in Lubbock,Texas?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "I have read about your

initiative and I think INTEL might want to be a part of it; involved in helping

you." I said, "What would there be out of it?" And he said, "INTEL doesn't sell

the things to you in that kind of way. We don't sell you the stuff you need. We

sell the stuff to people you might be interested in. What we would do is help

design a network that could support you and support the school well into the

future. We think we can help you." So they began the process of schooling us,

me and others, about what things ought to look like and would look like. (personal

communication, July, 2017)

Yang and Yu (2009) furthered this notion of adaptation to the organizational

environment and improvement in P-E fit in their application of work-based affect (see

Figure 5). According to Yang and Yu (2009), "Therefore, even though it is seldom

mentioned explicitly, work-based affect in the form of attitudes with affective

components has often been treated as an important outcome in a majority of P-E fit

research," (p. 1211). The recognition and affirmation Bob received through the success

of his application of the CMS system to student learning led to further opportunities to

pursue his career goals. As Figure 5 illustrates, there was a continuous cycle of Bob's

own self-efficacy and external or objective views of his efficacy that in turn led to

additional positive outcomes.
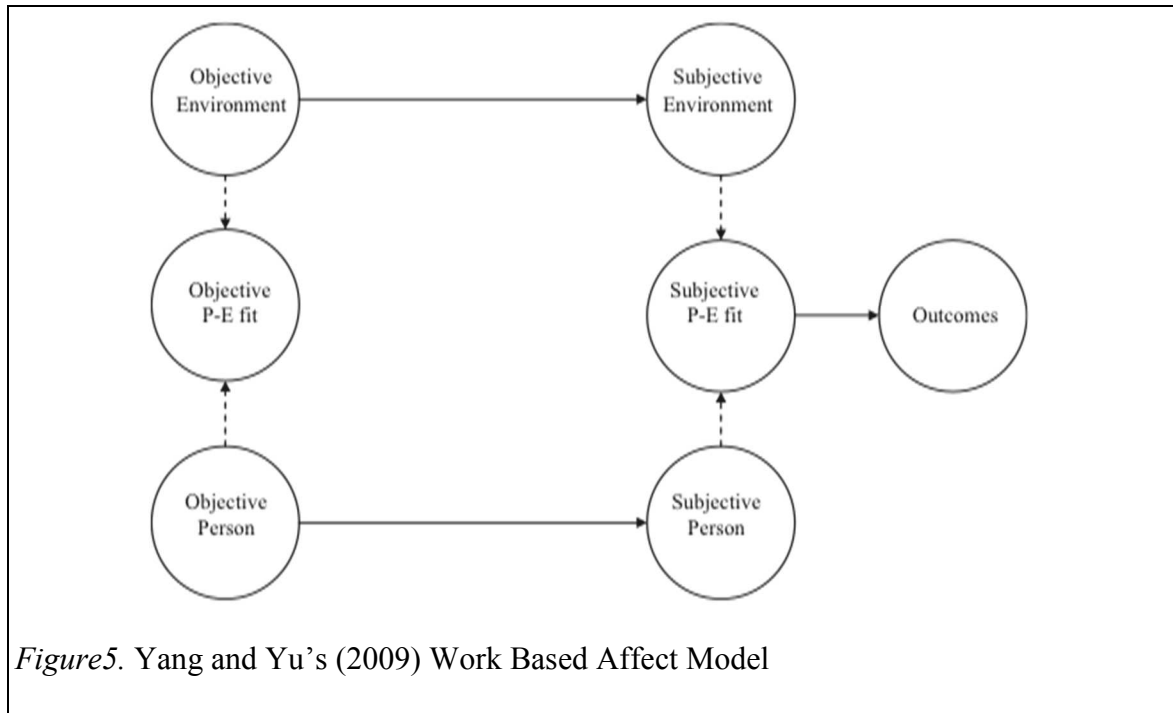
Figure5. Yang and Yu's (2009) Work Based Affect Model

Truxillo et al. (2012) extended these concepts with their study focusing on crafting careers to create better job satisfaction, work output, and organizational commitment throughout a worker's career changes as they age, "We are only beginning to learn how to design jobs for workers across the lifespan to promote their satisfaction, engagement, and productivity" (p. 2). While following the narrative of Bob's story, I observed with increasing frequency, how each step of his career led to the next. He was able to take on increasing responsibilities, more complex financial issues, and larger initiatives as his expertise and career grew. Bob continues to craft his career adjusting to age related health issues and adapting to changing technologies. He continues to maintain a vital role in his school district despite his age. He presides over board meetings and directs bond issues. Central office administrators, while given a great deal of autonomy still answer to Bob. I definitely got the sense that he is still in charge. Bob's associate superintendent described his working relationship with Bob:

I think he delegates and oversees. He asks you to do something, he trusts you to

do it and then he's communicating with you. How's it going? Where are you at

with this? He's letting you do it but periodically he checks in to make sure it gets

done. I think if you have questions… even if you don't have questions; he's

always training you. He'll train you and then he'll say, "go," and then he will

trust you to do it. But he'll always ask how it's going. (Rusty, personal

communication, March, 2017).

The feelings of satisfaction, engagement, and productivity were common threads

throughout the data collection. His associate superintendent put it this way, "I think this

is his passion. He enjoys this! He doesn't think of it as work. I think he's doing what

he's supposed to be doing and he's good at it. He is happy with life." Indeed, in recent

years, he has demonstrated a gradual pulling back from the day-to-day responsibilities of

the position while still piloting the vision. This aligns with Truxillo et al.'s (2012)

explanation of the career trajectory of someone who has experienced success and

satisfaction throughout their work years. Truxillo et al. wrote (2012), "A lifespan

perspective is useful for examining the interplay between age and work characteristics

because adults spend a significant part of their lifespan at work, where they have ample

opportunity to display these adaptive processes" (p. 6). This is particularly salient when

considering someone, as in Bob's case, whose career has encompassed much of his

lifespan.

According to Truxillo et al. (2012), "Adaptation is a proactive process involving

self-regulation by individuals applying life management strategies to cope with changes

in their environment, loss or gain of resources, and success or failure in the achievement

of goals," (p. 6). This adaptation process is illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

> I think our demographics have changed a lot. I think he loves a challenge and he just wants to find a way. This whole budget crisis thing was a challenge that he wanted to take on. You could see him sitting there today in staffing. We're cutting 15 and he's thinking about what he's going to do with that. He gets this whole thing of we pay less than most other districts and he wants to fix that. So I would say he likes the challenge and trying to find a way to meet the new need whatever it is. (Brianna, personal communication, June, 2017)

Another example of this adaptation process is evident in his decision to move to a larger district after his successes at Indianhead. This was the one major move her made within his lengthy superintendent's career. This move was made on the precedent that his current school district could never provide the resources needed to further his instructional leadership vision. Therefore, he built on his successes and used those as an impetus to a new position in a larger district with greater resources. This is evidenced in one interviewee's statement:

> He had done all that he could do there. In a bigger city you have more people. You have more resources. You get connected to more people who can help you make this come true. And he knew that. He was smart enough to know he couldn't ever do all that he wanted to do at Indianhead. So that was why we moved up here. It was to get the resources to help promote this the way it should be. (Candy, personal communication, April, 2017)

Truxillo et al. (2012) postulated that when employees have a high level of control and autonomy in their careers as they age they are able to select and focus on job goals best aligned with decreasing physical and intellectual capacity. This allows them to age gracefully in their career. Truxillo et al. (2012) stated, "People then allocate their resources to maintain peak performance across work domains, and thus choosing goals and outcomes to successfully match one's resources to demands" (p. 6). A school superintendent's position, given a healthy relationship with the school board, provides such control and autonomy. I believe this to be the situation in Bob's case. This is evident through some of the risks Bob took in his latter career in regards to identifying accurate student drop out rates and openly sharing the harsh realities of student achievement in his district. Through all of this, as well as the notoriety involved in suing the state department of education, Bob's contract was renewed more than once. His board has displayed continuing confidence in him throughout the years.

Lu, Wang, Lu, Du and Bakker (2014) sought to explore and expand on Yang and Yu's (2009) work by conducting a study of how work engagement might affect employees' perceptions of Person-Job fit. Job-crafting is suggested as a means by which work engagement and therefore PJ fit might be increased, "Crafting a job involves shaping the task boundaries of the job (either physically or cognitively), the relational boundaries of the job, or both" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179). This involves making changes in the type and/or quantity of job related tasks, looking at the job mentally through a different lens, and controlling how much and with whom one works while accomplishing job goals (Wrzsesniewski & Dutton, 2001). I have concluded that Bob did a great deal of job-crafting over the many years of his lengthy career. He has

been able to focus on goals that supply his personal job demands. He has been fortunate to work with school boards that afforded him this freedom in choosing what aspects of the job he wanted to focus and dedicate time to while delegating less engaging tasks to others. He has also had a great deal of leeway in who he has chosen to work with and how much time he spends with those employees. When in the "thick" of a project, Bob has been known to work alongside programmers and curriculum builders long into the night for days on end. His time commitments are to those things he is passionate about making happen and he has been able to employ acolytes who are willing to work grueling hours with him. Lu et al. (2014) also concluded that job engagement is enhanced when job security is low. The job of school superintendent is never a given from year to year and most superintendents are offered no more than a three-year contract. Any superintendent knows that his/her job is tenuous at the best of times. Perhaps this fuels the drive to accomplish goals and drive initiatives.

Recently, Darrow and Behren published a mixed methods study, *Person-Environment Fit is a Formative Construct* (2017). Simply put, the many variables of several types of fit lead to or cause overall person-environment fit instead of the construct of person-environment fit leading directionally to the various types of fit and on to the individual variables of each type of fit. According to Darrow and Behren (2017) "this suggests that the dimensions and levels of fit combine to form employees' perception of fit… The formative conceptualization of fit is more useful in predicting organizational outcomes," (pp. 2-3). Kristof-Brown and Jansen, (2007) recommend studying the multiple dimensions of P-E fit as, "Meta-analytic results suggest that relationships between fit and outcomes may differ based on which dimensions are measured" (p. 5).

My study brings the multidimensional aspects of fit to a personal level. Bob's story is an

interesting and individual representation of how many different types and levels of fit

combine to ensure an overall person to job fit that cannot be explained by a simplistic

needs/supplies and abilities/demands congruence. Darrow and Behren's research

suggested that some dimensions of fit are more strongly correlated with job fit success,

but that multidimensional fit is the strongest "predictor of work-related outcomes" (2017,

p. 5). Apart from the needs/supplies and abilities/demands congruence between Bob and

his chosen career several other factors emerged as helping to create success and longevity

in the superintendent's position. Darrow and Behren's formative model of person-

vocation fit beautifully illustrates how many different facets of fit created an overall

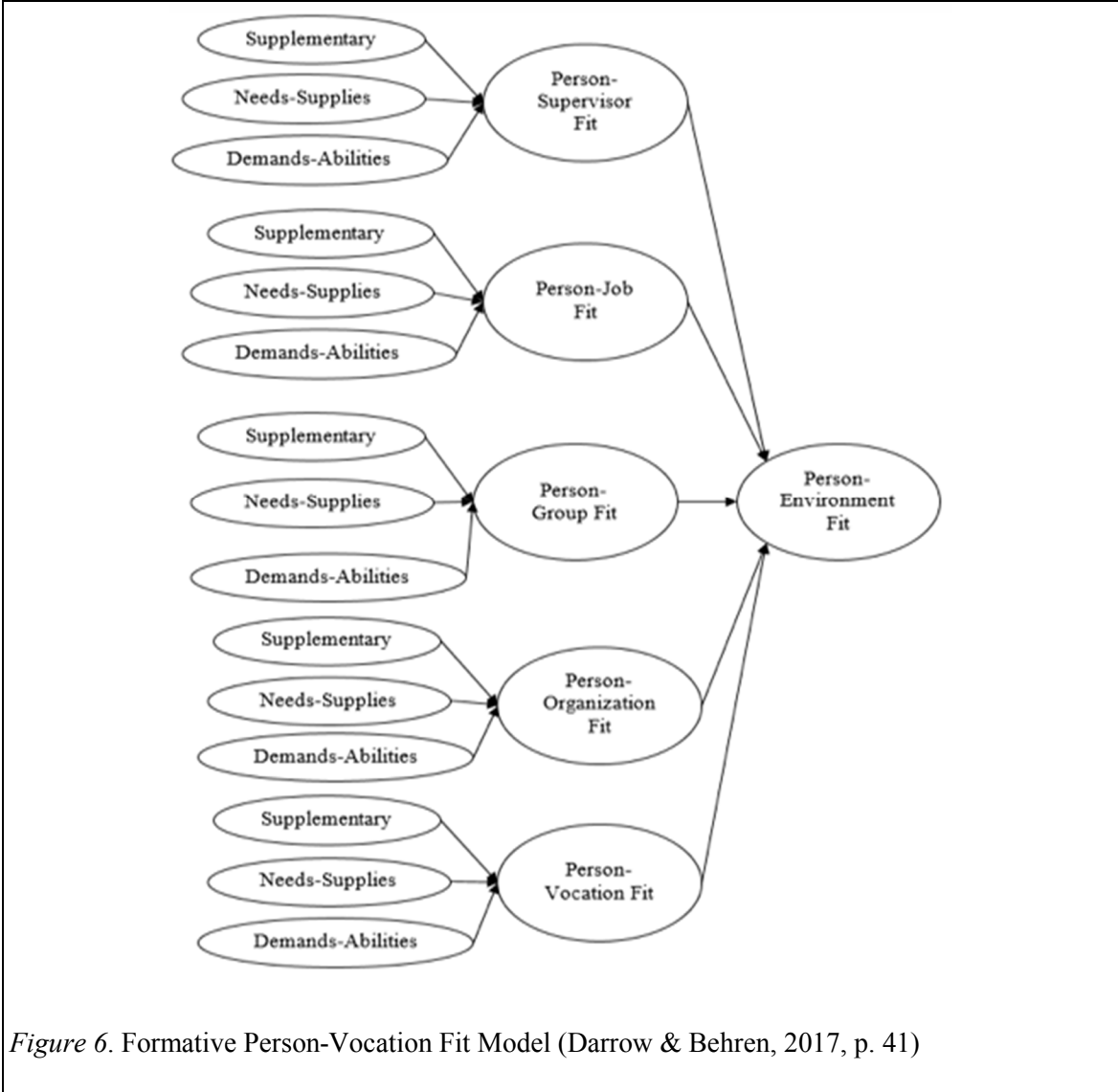successful fit for Bob in his position as school superintendent (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Formative Person-Vocation Fit Model (Darrow & Behren, 2017, p. 41)

Implications

This study has potential contributions to practice, research and theory.

Implications for Practice

The findings have practical implications for current superintendents, those who are pursuing the profession, and those who are training superintendent candidates. Current superintendents have much to gain from the insights shared by Bob in regards to school finance, school board relations, and school accountability. Bob's particular experiences could provide rich material for crafting meaningful curriculum for doctoral level coursework in educational leadership. Herreid and Schiller (2013) described, "Case study teaching has been extolled for its ability to engage students and develop critical-thinking skills, among other things" (p. 62). Careful consideration of Bob's career story gives concrete examples of the complexity of the superintendent's role. There is a great deal to be garnered from the many relational challenges Bob has faced throughout his career. In case study instruction, there is not always a right solution, but students are able to analyze the situation as well as the outcomes derived from the protagonist's decision. The superintendency should only be entered with an understanding of the complex demands of the position. Such training would better prepare potential superintendents for the rigor of the job and help confirm or negate the decision to continue pursuing the profession.

Implications for Research

In regards to research, this narrative opens the door for further exploration of the superintendency through a qualitative lens. One study under consideration is comparative case study of Bob's career to one or more long-term superintendents from

the same state. A superintendent who served a much larger school district and a superintendent who served a much smaller school district are potential subjects. Both of these superintendents enjoyed many career successes and a healthy level of job approval from their constituents. A comparative analysis of data obtained using semi-structured interview questions utilized in the present study might prove fruitful in discovering shared characteristics and qualities. Such a case study might also reveal little in regard to shared characteristics and spark further investigation by creating different and untried hypotheses.

The findings of this study might also be used to craft a survey instrument to be administered to a larger population of long-term superintendents. Kowalski et al. (2011) have provided a cache of data in regards to superintendent longevity on a national scale in their work *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study.* However, this study was a quantitative nationally encompassing study. Statistics were provided based on a survey answered by 1,867 superintendents across the nation (Kowalski et al. 2011). Kowalski's study was limited to personal perceptions of individual superintendents limiting its objectivity. The data shared in the aforementioned study was comprehensive in its explanation of obstacles and stressors to successful longevity but lacked the explanation more personal examples provide for characteristics necessary for overcoming the difficulties inherent in the job. A similar but more specific study conducted in one state and including surveys of varying stakeholders could provide a rich source of data for educational leadership research.

Some research, most of which is quantitative, has been conducted in regards to superintendent tenure and student success. Perhaps more qualitative work could be

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pursued in the field of superintendent longevity and district success. I would be particularly interest in a longitudinal study about student success in the adult world post high school. A mixed-methods study following student cohorts from school districts deemed successful five years and ten years post high school would provide cutting-edge research in the study of the relationship between superintendent tenure and long-term student success. A body of research determining the relationship between superintendent tenure and student achievement exists (Alsbury, 2008; Bird, Dunaway, Hancock, & Chang, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2010); however, relating student achievement on standardized tests to continued academic and life success is lacking. As the importance (or lack thereof) of student performance on standardized tests has been called into question in recent years (Belasco, Rosinger, & Hearn, 2015; Westrick, Le, Robbins, Randunzel, & Schmidt, 2015) a more in depth look at continued student success post-high school is an open field for educational research.

Implications for Theory

This study underscores the complexity of Person-Environment Fit Theory. According to Edwards and Billsberry (2010), "The notion of multidimensional fit has emerged as a reaction to the difficulty researchers have had pinning down the concept of fit" (p. 476). Conceptually, P-E Fit is based on perceptions; individual perceptions as well as organizational perceptions (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, and Shipp, 2006). Additionally, the theory impacts many individual and organizational decisions (Edwards et al., 2006). Bob's narrative identifies several factors that contribute to his satisfaction with his career supporting the theoretical work of Yang and Yu (2009) and McCauly and Brutus (1998). The impact of positive feedback indicated in Yang and

Yu's (2009) iteration of the theory is supported by the outcomes discovered in the present study. It also provides confirmation McCauley and Brutus' (1998) concept of career adaptability over a lifetime.

Gabriel et al. (2013) claimed a lack of research on the impact of "in-person" changes on P-E Fit. If the theoretical components of P-E Fit have changed over time, then it makes sense that the individual's perceptions of his own fit changes over time (Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). This study adds to the notion in theory that the individual may adapt and change over time in order to maintain or improve P-E Fit. Yang and Yu (2009) found "in addition to cognitively distorting their perceptions, individuals may be motivated to manipulate their objective selves and work environments so P-E fit will be consistent with their feelings" (p. 1212). Bob's career evolution was marked by his adaptation and manipulation of his environment. His career goals and job performance were not only in sync with his needs and abilities but he also adapted his perception of his own role in job success throughout his career. As job conditions, expectations, district demographics, and political setbacks arose he drew on positive feedback and changing "in-self" perceptions to maintain a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment as a school superintendent. This may also add to the theoretical application of P-E fit throughout the lifespan (Truxillo et al., 2012).

Limitations

This study is certainly limited in scope and cannot be generalized to a larger population. Bob's career history is that of an individual and does not reflect the superintendent population as a whole. However, his uniqueness was the motivation for conducting the study. Outliers are often studied when seeking information on how their

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uniqueness propelled them to success (Nolan & Heinzen, 2014, p. 13). As the study of

outliers is sometimes used to look at what is working rather than what is not working

(Heath & Heath, 2010), this type of research fulfills a purpose.

One of the limitations of interpretivism is that it is non-critical. Its purpose is not

to provide a critical analysis of the data, but rather was "crafted" to tell the story from

Bob's perspective. This narrative inquiry does not provide other voices. Bob's critics are

not heard in this story; so the other side of the story is not a part of what I have chosen to

publish. Qualitative inquiry does not claim to be generalizable however some of the

identified skills and traits could certainly be transferrable to other educational leadership

situations.

In addition, my own familiarity with the subject prior to engaging in the research

limited my objectivity in parsing the data. Although I was introduced to much new

information concerning the subject's career, I could not completely ignore my

preconceived prejudices concerning his leadership strengths and weaknesses. According

to Peshkin (1987) "whatever the substance of one's persuasions at a given point, one's

subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed" (p. 17). Although I had reflected

on the consequences that putting the details of personal conflicts and state and national

interactions in writing might have on the subject and his colleagues, there was so much I

did not know prior to my data collection that I would have to consider when presenting

the data. Although my subject's integrity was never questioned throughout the data

collection, there were those he interacted with on many different levels who were not

always portrayed in a positive light. Even though pseudonyms were used for all

individuals, locations, and organizations, I was concerned about maintaining anonymity

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when sharing the story. I also deliberately chose not to interview someone who I was not comfortable discussing the main subject with even though that person had a very close working relationship with the main subject for many years. Additionally, most interviewees were hesitant to provide what they considered leadership weaknesses when I asked the question. Those who did provide examples of weaknesses were people who were not hesitant to share those directly with Bob themselves. I struggled with how to present these weaknesses in a story I knew Bob would be eager to read himself. These were all limitations to the presentation of a fully objective recounting of his career.

Summary

Chapter I identified superintendent career longevity as the focus of this study. Arguments were presented supporting the importance of the superintendent's role in district success (Fullan, 2002; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Superintendent turnover was identified as problematic (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Shulte & Hong, 2011). In addition, the stressful nature of the position was noted (Lamkin, 2006; Grogan & Andrews, 2002). The problem emerged as the lack of career sustainability in spite of high levels of experience and educational preparation. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the life and career of one long-term mid-western superintendent serving in a mid-sized urban school district through a narrative inquiry methodology.

Chapter II presented a review of the literature on the American school superintendent. The various roles of the superintendent throughout history were defined and described. In addition, commonly accepted obstacles to surviving in the superintendent career were identified (Kowalski et al., 2010; Wilmore, 2008). Research

concerning successful superintendents who have sustained their careers was explored (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012; Skrla, 2000; Worner, 2010). Chapter II also presented the discussion concerning the possible links between superintendent longevity and improved student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Alsbury, 2008; Chingos et al., 2014). Finally, person-environment fit theory was defined and explained (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2012; Truxillo et al., 2012).

Chapter III provided an explanation for the choice of narrative inquiry as a methodology. Additionally, data sources, data collection and data analysis using the narrative method were described. Finally, chapter III covered verification procedures, ethical considerations and the plan for results.

Chapter IV presented the data using Riessman's (2007) method of thematic narrative analysis. The analysis process is described and the themes are identified with supporting literature.

Chapter V presented Bob's story in narrative format and Chapter VI provided an analysis of the data using the Person-Environment Fit Theory. Also included in Chapter VI are study limitations as well as implication for research, theory, and practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Adult Consent Form

Oklahoma State University

PROJECT TITLE: That Dog Don't Hunt: A Narrative Inquiry About the Life and Career of One Long-Term Superintendent

INVESTIGATORS: Melissa Yarbrough, Doctoral Student, Graduate College of Educational Leadership

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to gain insight into superintendent leadership through the study of career development and life changing critical incidents in the life of one long-term superintendent. The main subject and those close to him will be asked to participate in order to gain insight into his career persistence over forty years. I am seeking stories of critical incidents that influenced the direction of his life and career and his decision to remain in the profession for over forty years. This study will contribute to the research on superintendent longevity in a novel way.

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Ancillary Subjects

1. What is your relationship to _____?

2. How long have you known him and how would you describe your relationship
    with him?

3. What can you tell me about his personal qualities? Is there an event you can
    describe that illustrates this any of these qualities?

4. How would you describe his leadership style? His strengths and weaknesses?

5. Why do you think he has persisted in the superintendency?

6.   Is there anything you wish he had done differently career-wise?

Appendix C

Recruitment Script

"Hello, my name is Melissa Yarbrough. I am doing research for my dissertation at Oklahoma State University. I am conducting a narrative inquiry about school superintendent longevity, particularly (insert name of subject) and his lengthy career. I am calling to ask if you would be willing to let me interview you. It should take about 30 minutes to complete the interview.

If you would be willing to participate in this interview, we can set up a time now or you can let me know when a good time would be to schedule it."

If interested, investigator will set up date and time and will provide the subject with investigator contact information. "I have you scheduled for an interview on _____. If you have questions, I can be reached at 405-830-6683 or Melissa.yarbrough@okstate.edu. Thank you for your help." If not interested, investigator will end the call: "Thank you for your time."

VITA

Melissa Kay Byars Yarbrough

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THAT DOG DON'T HUNT: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ABOUT
          SUPERINTENDENT SUSTAINABILITY

Major Field: Educational Leadership

Biographical:

   Education:

   Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy/Education in your
   major at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2018.

   Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Educational
   Administration at Southwester Oklahoma State University, Weatherford,
   Oklahoma in 1996.

   Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education
   at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1982.

   Experience:
   Undergraduate Instructor/Research Assistant Oklahoma State University 2016-
           2018
   Adjunct Instructor Southern Nazarene University 2017- present
   Educational Consulting Coyle Public Schools – 2018
   Principals' Coach Western Heights Public Schools 2016-2017
   Building Administrator Western Heights Public Schools 1998-2016
   Elementary/Spanish/ELL Teacher Yukon Public Schools 1983-1998

   Professional Memberships:
   American Educational Research Association
   University Council for Educational Administration
   Cooperative Council for Oklahoma Administrators
   Phi Kappa Phi