

THE STUDY OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
OF OKLAHOMA STATE LEGISLATORS AND K-12
EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

By

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CHAPTER ONE

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

“Rural Schools Try to Survive Tough Times,” “Schools Mull More Cuts” and “School Board Knew Debts Weren’t Paid” are just a few of the disheartening headlines emblazoned on the covers of some of Oklahoma’s recent news publications in the past few years. How did Oklahoma get itself in such dire straits? Many school administrators ask, “When is this budgetary situation for our schools going to end?” According to the Oklahoma administrators, changes have to be made in the way the legislature funds education (“Funding and Time,” 2004).

Research has concluded that prospering and successful schools directly affect the achievement outcomes for students and thus, the community (Kozol, 1991). In an effort to continually improve the state’s number of successful schools, the Oklahoma Legislature has implemented many Federal and State reforms, initiatives, and appropriations at a rapid pace throughout the last 15 years. Some of the most significant changes include the Educational Reform Act of 1990, House Bill 1017, the Reading Sufficiency Act, (OK Facts and Figures, 2003) and most recently the federal mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

The political culture of Oklahoma is quite dynamic and diversified. Oklahoma politicians represent a state whose traditional and conservative roots are now evolving

into a more varied political culture (Morgan, England, & Humphreys, 1991). Oklahoma has fought to form some kind of political identity—an identity that defines its transition from rural traditionalism to a postindustrial economic participant. Morgan et al. state, “Oklahoma remains a paradox—a state struggling with its sense of identity, a place where the old and the new vie for the attention and allegiance of its people” (1991, p. 3).

Two main factors have contributed to Oklahoma’s ever-evolving political culture: land and spatial living patterns. Oklahoma is the 18th largest state, and its land has provided the state with its source of economic contribution via oil, natural gas, and coal. In addition, Oklahoma is populated by only two large cities, Tulsa and Oklahoma City; the rest of the state is characterized with low-density settlements. Because of the historical ties to land and the low-density living patterns, Oklahoma has developed the political image of being minimally diversified in race, religion, ethnicity, and political attitudes and values. This lack of heterogeneity has directly contributed to the state’s relatively slow urbanization and industrialization (Morgan et al., 1991).

However, Oklahoma is in a state of transition. According to Scales and Goble (1982), this is specifically evident in political parties and political identification. To provide a way for citizens to promote their interests and needs, legislative bodies and elected officials have been the principle mechanism for these voices to be heard. Historically, Oklahoma has been a predominately democratic state, albeit a weak democratic state. This is because the official Democratic Party is more inclined to encompass a myriad of views and interests, instead of focusing on democratic ideology. This weakening of the Democratic Party has allowed the Republican Party to grow—especially in the early eighties (Scales & Goble, 1982).

Because Oklahoma lacks of a strong two-party political system, special interests groups have flourished. The lobbies have a significant influence and strength within Oklahoma politics. Some of the most influential interests groups include the Baptist Church, banking lobbies, agriculture interests, oil interests, the elderly, the education lobby, labor unions, and newspapers (Morgan et al., 1991). However, most authorities are not sure of the extent of political power these interests groups have in Oklahoma politics. A 1986 survey revealed that the Oklahoma Legislature identified over 64 special interest groups. Interestingly, the education lobby is considered to be one of the most powerful lobbies in the state (Morgan et al., 1991).

The main goal of educational lobbyists is to effectively market to the state's politicians. Halcomb (1993) advises, "those working within the public schools must be politically aware and proactive for public education" (p.42). Halcomb (1993) identifies state politicians as "our prime target" (p.56). Indeed, the need for our state's legislators and our educational leaders to work together is a must to remedy the present educational funding crisis.

Statement of the Problem

The role of the state's legislators has become more complex as the state's schools become more diverse with the evolvement and involvement of charter schools, home-based education, private schools, and Central Technology schools, as well as the public school systems. The ways in which state legislators choose to address educational funding needs varies.

Public school education was at one time an inexpensive endeavor. But added responsibilities have driven up the cost to maintain our schools; hence, some

services have to be cut. Traditionally, communities have accepted this, but now there are other options. Public schools aren't the "only way" now and parents are taking advantage of the other choices that are available. (Halcomb, 1993, p. 16)

Indeed, our state legislators for the most part, assert that educational issues are a top priority for them, and educators trust our state leaders to make sound decisions that will be conducive to school success.

However, the present state of our public educational system as a whole appears to reflect otherwise; in the years 2001-2003, over 260 million dollars was cut from school funding. To this day, class sizes are still increasing and special programs such as art, music, and athletics are in jeopardy of being eliminated (Education Superintendent Bemoans Funding Woes, 2003).

This problem is one of contradictions—contradictions between our state politicians *wanting* educational issues to be a priority and them *making* educational issues a priority. The reasons behind the contradiction that exists may be revealed by a careful study of the social networks of our state legislators. Granovetter (1973), Braddock, (1980), McPartland and Braddock (1989) and Wells and Crain (1994) would explain these contradictions in terms of strong ties and weak ties. The strong ties would signify historically traditional characteristics of constituents, district environment, economic influence, political actions committees, and peer influence. Conversely, the weak ties would represent the transitional or modern characteristics of the constituents, district environment, economic influence, political action committees, and peer influence.

Purpose of the Study

Given the problem, the purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of Oklahoma state politicians' strong ties and weak ties and the impact of those associations upon their decision-making process, and ultimately, educational funding. The primary focus of this study was to find answers to the following questions:

- In general, what factors influence the decision-making process of our state legislators regarding education?
- Specifically, which constituents have strong ties to educational issues? Which constituents have weak ties to educational issues?
- What is the impact of a legislator's decision-making process regarding to educational funding?

Conceptual Framework

Braddock (1980) and McPartland and Braddock's (1989) theory of perpetuation was used to examine the social networks of state legislators and how these networks impact their decision-making process. Perpetuation Theory, initially, was developed to explore a particular aspect of the desegregation of blacks and whites in a post-civil rights era. Specifically, McPartland and Braddock (1989) posited that the condition of blacks to living, working, and attending school in a desegregated setting was closely linked with length of time spent in such a setting, as well as the age at which one first experienced living, working, and/or schooling in such a setting.

In Braddock's (1980) research, black high school students were specifically studied to determine if the type of experiences of black students in desegregated schools greatly influenced the decision-making process of those students and the colleges they

chose to attend. Hence, a successful, sustained experience in a desegregated high school often influenced black students' decision to attend desegregated colleges. One of the most compelling findings of this study supported the desegregation process as an influential factor in successful social networking with non-blacks in non-black settings. Braddock (1980) stated, "desegregation practice does help to ameliorate the social inertia and avoidance learning that racial segregation engenders." Basically, his findings show that school desegregation is an effective social intervention strategy.

Granovetter's (1973) theory of formal/informal ties was used to help explain the development of network opportunities of our state legislators. Specifically, Granovetter (1973) found that these "ties" were either strong or weak. Formal ties were described as strong ties because they strongly bonded the relationship with and among very close friends and family members. The informal ties were considered to be weakly bonded relationships with distant friends or acquaintances. Essentially these weak ties were vitally important; they served as a way to network with other people which would provide greater access to opportunities.

Perpetuation Theory was initially used to study the continuance of racial segregation. This study shows how this theory was used as a lens to study the decision-making process of Oklahoma state legislators and their actions towards educational funding. Specifically, Perpetuation Theory will be used as a lens to study why state legislators continue to make decisions to prioritize funding for issues other than educational issues. The strong ties and weak ties between Oklahoma state legislators, their constituents, and their social networks was the primary focus of this study.

Research Design and Procedures

According to Crabtree and Miller (1992), “The choice of research style for a particular project depends on the overarching aim of the research (p. 6). Because the research aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of Oklahoma state legislators and their actions regarding educational funding, qualitative research methods was most suitable for this project.

Researcher

One characteristic of the qualitative research method is the identification of the researcher and the researcher’s biases. “Researcher’s biases, angers, fears, and enthusiasms influence their questioning style and how they interpret what they hear” (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 18). Therefore, a brief description of me will help identify personal biases towards educational issues. Hopefully, by communicating existing biases, tainting the data with personal assumptions was avoided.

I have been a public school administrator at a Creek County high school located in northeastern Oklahoma for eight years. Before becoming an administrator, I taught secondary English for seven years at a public high school in Tulsa County. In addition to teaching English, I coached several sports and taught night school. My only other previous teaching experience was my internship at two other Tulsa County high schools.

As a daughter of a former school administrator and educator, I have always had an interest in school administration and the politics involved at that level. Indeed, as a college intern, I accompanied a group of teachers to the Oklahoma City capitol in 1990 to support HB 1017. I visited several legislators in their offices that day and remember being intimidated and speechless. I had so many questions to ask but was too awed to

inquire. A 20-year-old intern, I was out of my league next to these polished politicians. At the time, I did not understand the politics involved with the educational issues and educational funding and found the whole process overwhelmingly complicated.

It has been almost 15 years since I stood on those steps in front of the capitol. Disappointingly, the educational funding crisis is still at the forefront of Oklahoma's educational woes, and I still feel intimidated by the complexity of the issue. However, I now realize that this study has provided me an opportunity to try to understand this complicated enigma called educational politics. In addition, I have learned that Oklahoma's politicians and their decision-making process, as complicated as it seems, is something to be studied and understood.

Data Needs and Sources

The most appropriate sources from whom to get the data are Oklahoma legislators who sit either on education committees and sub-committees, or who either are or were employed in the educational field. These particular politicians would be more active and influential in the decision-making process of educational funding. To answer the research questions presented in this proposal, seven Oklahoma politicians were interviewed.

According to Yin (1994), it is important to cultivate information from a variety of sources. Therefore, in addition to the long interviews, the archival records of each politician were reviewed, which included voting records, committee memoranda, political newsletters, and governmental publications. Included also were direct observations of the politicians in action during legislative session to gain a better understanding of the legislators' environment during session.

Data analysis of the observations, interviews, and the artifacts was an on-going process and provided triangulation. The politicians' responses from the interviews were examined for consistencies as well as inconsistencies. A system of using cards or codes was used to mark the transcripts to highlight the categories. According to Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), the emergent category designation is an effective way to strengthen analysis as long as the categorization contributes meaningful—not just shallow— information (p. 119).

Data Collection

Qualitative long interviewing was used as the main method of data collection. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), “Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others think and feel about their worlds” (p. 1). It is vitally important for the researcher to be able to deeply understand the experiences of the subjects of the study. Qualitative research focuses on a richly detailed description of events. This description leads to nuances that existed in the decision-making process and provided information for school administrators as to how educational funding is determined.

Long Interview Method according to Kvale (1996) is “The purpose of the qualitative research...is to understand themes of the lives daily would be from the subject's own perspectives” (p. 27). Long interviews were conducted to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions about how state legislatures are influenced in their decision-making process.

After a review of the literature of the recent educational funding crisis in Oklahoma, an open-ended questionnaire was developed. Kvale (1996) contends that the

qualitative research interview "...is neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire (p. 27).

Therefore, semi-structured interviews using the three previously mentioned research questions as a guide were conducted to acquire information during the long interview process. A semi-structured interview helped to guide the process towards specific cultural information. This open interview design was used to focus on specific themes without using predetermined questions in a sequential order. This type of interview helped reveal behavior patterns and shared understandings. Metaphors, symbols, and verbal clues were also analyzed for common themes (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

The data collection provided the thick description that was needed to better understand the perceptions of the interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), "Thick description, rooted in interviewees' firsthand experience, form the material that researchers gather up, synthesize, and analyze as part of hearing the meaning of the data" (p. 8).

Participant Selection

According to Kvale (1996), "A common critique of interview studies is that the findings are not generalizable because there are too few subjects (p.102)". On the other hand, interviews should not be so numerous that new information is no longer discovered because the "point of saturation" as been reached (Kvale, 1996, p.102). Therefore, this study involved interviewing seven members of the Oklahoma Legislature. This number of interview participants is somewhat below the recommended number; however, this

number was considered sufficient due to the lack of experience of the researcher and the small window of time allotted during session (Kvale, 1996, pp. 102-103).

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), when a researcher seeks to know if discovered themes hold true in different situations, *dissimilar* sampling is needed (p. 74). Therefore, a great attempt was made to seek politicians who differed in characteristics and backgrounds, the one common thread being that each politician had some type of association to education. Specifically, purposive sampling was used in this study to increase the opportunities to identify emerging themes (Erlandson et al., 1993). Because research suggests that women are different from men in their personal and moral development, this study also included interviews in which three of the four participants were female (Gilligan, 1983). In addition two of the politicians were democrat and five were republican. Finally, an attempt was made to include participants representing both rural and urban districts, and including legislators representing both the House and the Senate was also made.

To facilitate the long interview, an informal approach was used. This informal approach was characterized by its lack of structure and open-ended format (Erlandson et al., 1993). According to *Doing the Naturalistic Inquiry*, the researcher and the respondent should "...dialogue in a manner that is a mixture of conversation and embedded questions" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 86).

Data Analysis

Seven long-interviews were audio-tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The information in each transcript was coded according to common categories and themes. MrCracken's long interview (1988) editing type of analysis was used to search for

meaningful patterns and themes. Data were grouped and rearranged until patterns and themes emerged. Because an a priori conceptual framework existed for me as a researcher, I was able to cast the data collected against the conceptual framework. According to Yin (1994), data analysis is necessary to recombine the information in a way that addresses the initial inquiry.

Throughout the interviewing process, a strong effort was directed towards rethinking or redesigning the interview questions for a more focused progression. Ultimately, “The goal is to integrate the themes and concepts into a theory that offers an accurate, detailed yet subtle interpretations of your research arena” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 227).

Because Perpetuation Theory was the lens used to view the data in this study, influences on the decision-making process of the Oklahoma legislators regarding educational funding was revealed. Data collected throughout the process were coded and categorized. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), “Through examining the information within each category, we come up with overall descriptions of the cultural arena” (p. 228).

Research Criteria

The hallmark of a good qualitative study, overall trustworthiness, has basically four checkpoints: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility is vitally important to the interpretation of the phenomenon being studied. A naturalistic study does not have a single interpreted reality; instead multiple

realities are usually evident, including the respondent's realities and the researcher's reality. This gap between the various realities could be the source for inaccurate assumptions and incorrect assertions which could eventually lead to faulty conclusions. To avoid faulty research, this researcher used two methods to enhance credibility throughout the research: peer debriefing and member checks (Erlandson et al., 1993). The peer debriefer, Dr. Adrienne Hyle, redefined and refocused the research process during this study. Member checks for this study allowed the legislators the opportunity to double-check the data for accuracy.

Transferability

Transferability, another component attributed to a study's overall trustworthiness, occurs when learned information is applicable to another context. According to Erlandson, "Transferability across contexts may occur because of shared characteristics" (et al., 1993, p.32).

To ensure a greater degree of transferability, this researcher aggressively pursued a "thick description" of the phenomena studied. In addition, this researcher used purposive sampling in the selection of the interviewees to increase opportunities to view specific information (Erlandson et al, 1993).

Dependability

A third component of trustworthiness is dependability. Dependability is essentially the consistent ability to replicate similar results (Erlandson et al., 1993). If inconsistencies occur in the findings, then it is important for the researcher to explain the cause of the inconsistencies (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). An audit trail of journalistic

notes, audio tapes, and transcribed interviews was used for detailed accountability of research events to help ensure dependability.

Confirmability

The fourth and final component of trustworthiness is confirmability.

Confirmability is the attempt to produce unbiased findings. In naturalistic inquiry, however, it is not possible or realistic to assume that a study is completely “free from contamination” (Erlandson et al, 1993, p. 34). An audit trail helped to provide a link between research findings and the source; hence, confirmability is more evident for observers. Later, the reader will learn more about this audit trail and its success in increasing confirmability.

Significance of the Study

School administrators as well as other educational leaders need to recognize the factors that influence the decision-making process of our state legislatures. This study provides information that can assist in the development of effective communication between school administrators and the state government. School administrators can benefit from this study by gaining knowledge of the social networks of state politicians and the affect of this networking regarding the decision-making process of educational funding.

Theory

Because of the recent educational funding crisis in Oklahoma, school administrators must recognize how and why decisions are being made when it comes to educational funding. This phenomenon can be viewed through the lens of Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1989).

Braddock (1980) and McPartland and Braddock's (1989) Perpetuation Theory found that minorities who lacked a significant amount of time in an integrated setting at a young enough age were predisposed to segregation. Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties also helped explain minorities' opportunities, or lack thereof, to a more integrated environment. The findings of Wells and Crain (1994) highlighted the importance of weak ties (informal networks). The results of this research project should add to the existing theoretical literature when applied to a different phenomenon (state legislators).

Research

The awareness of the specific strong ties and weak ties that contribute to the social networks may serve as a guide for school administrators in recognizing a pattern of communication or lack of communication with and among their state legislators. This recognition may allow the school administrator an opportunity to detect weakness in his or her own social networks that may influence the decision-making of state legislators and educational funding. Because very little literature exists regarding the decision-making process of state legislators, this inquiry will perhaps broaden existing research findings.

Practice

If school administrators had more insight into the factors that influence the decision-making of their state legislators, they would be more knowledgeable about the political process in general and educational funding in particular. This study could possibly provide useful information to school administrators who, in turn, could see and understand the "bigger picture" of educational funding. School administrators could

possibly develop better plans-of-action for their schools to address the funding issues in their respective schools.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which Perpetuation Theory and network analysis via strong ties/weak ties explain the political culture in Oklahoma. This *a priori* approach will serve as a lens to better focus the research process. Specifically, however, the focus of this study was to determine how outside factors influence the decision-making process of Oklahoma legislators and how that process affects educational funding. This qualitative study allowed for a detailed description of seven Oklahoma legislators' decision-making process. Long interviews were the primary sources of data collection and provided information for a thick description of the politicians' realities.

Reporting

Chapter Two is a review of related literature and Chapter Three presents the data collected from seven long interviews with state legislators. Chapter Four provides an analysis and interpretation of the data, and Chapter Five offers a summary, implications, conclusions, and discussion.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Oklahoma school systems are still reeling from the drastic budget cuts enacted only a few years ago—and now, the President’s No Child Left Behind federal mandates of 2001 are positioning schools to barely keeping their heads above water. The Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration monthly newsletter clearly supports the notion that change requires more than slogans and unfunded federal mandates. Dr. Randall Rayburn, a featured author in the CCOSA newsletter, opines that time, effort, resources and support are needed for true reform (2005, p. 2).

To better understand the dynamics of K-12 educational funding, four areas are reviewed. Both historical and present-day federal and state educational legislations such as HB 1017, IDEA, and No Child Left Behind are reviewed first. Secondly, the basics of Oklahoma government and politics, including the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Governor and his Cabinet, and state lobbyists and interest groups are discussed. The third section reviews literature related to Oklahoma finance, highlighting the process of funding Oklahoma’s educational programs and its impact upon local government. A review of social network literature, including gender differences in networking and communication, comprises the fourth area.

Oklahoma Educational Legislation

Few people would argue the fact that President Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act certainly outlines favorable educational outcomes by raising the standards of

accountability and closing that ever-present achievement gap. President Bush is even proposing a \$2 billion commitment in his FY2006 budget for high school reform alone. However, this commitment of federal funding for NCLB is not really “additional” money because this “new” money is actually rerouted money that is being siphoned out of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical program fund (Wlodarczyk, 2005). This is an example of increasing federal mandates while decreasing federal funding. In reality, Bush’s new budget actually decreases educational funding by \$530 million dollars. A decrease in educational funding has not occurred in 10 years (“President’s Budget Promises Much but Delivers Little,” 2005).

A Nation at Risk is the infamous report that encouraged various educational reforms to develop in many states. Oklahoma was certainly no exception. Oklahoma’s attempts to solve the many problems plaguing its educational system in the early 1980s have been numerous and lengthy. As a response to this crisis, an historical piece of legislation was born, the controversial House Bill 1017. This bill’s main focus was on student outcomes, essentially looking at the quality as opposed to the quantity of a student’s education. In other words, the time it took for a student to be academically successful was of secondary concern compared to the amount of knowledge it took for a student to be academically successful.

Initially HB 1017 proposed that all high school seniors pass a graduation test to receive a high school diploma. If students did not pass the test, they would receive a Certificate of Attendance and Completion as opposed to a high school diploma. As it turned out, however, this obligatory test-taking was never fully realized, and the requirements to pass this exam have yet to be implemented. Even though the testing

issue seems to have faded, the issue of comparative reporting has not. Evidently, schools are required to report student performances for public scrutiny via an annual School Report Card. In addition, the accreditation standards of all schools were revised to allow all students the opportunity to meet the enrollment criteria of Oklahoma's top universities (Garrett, 1993).

House Bill 1017 required all children to attend a half-day kindergarten. Four-year-olds were given the opportunity to attend a Head Start program; those children who met Head Start requirements were given first priority. Students who did not meet Head Start requirements could still attend the program (subject to availability) but would have to pay according to a financial sliding scale. Other areas of focus for HB 1017 included the developing of innovative educational programs, the deregulating of schools, and a revamping of teaching certificate requirements. The revamping of teaching certificate requirements allowed for another avenue for obtaining such certificates for aspiring teachers (Garrett, 1993).

This alternative certification route helped those schools experiencing difficulty finding math, science, and foreign language teachers. House Bill 1017 also addressed the following areas: the office of the county superintendent, the local school board, class size, and parental involvement. Of course, the state pay schedule for teachers was reviewed extensively, and the tenure system for teachers was also revised. Teachers' salaries were ranked 50th in the United States and averaged around \$26,000 per annum despite recent salary increases. Well over a decade has passed since the passage of HB 1017. Oklahoma teachers average around \$35,000 per annum, and they are still ranked 50th in the nation for teachers' salaries (Garrett, 2005).

As paramount as HB 1017 has been since 1991, it has not been the only important political endeavor in Oklahoma. Numerous education legislation laws have been passed. For example, HB 1458 requires all school districts in Oklahoma to have some form of alternative education program. A state-wide system of statutes has already been developed, and all school districts were required to provide the state with a needs assessment of their school to accurately develop an alternative program (OK Facts and Figures, 2003).

Another important legislative issue was HB 2017. This bill dealt with the reading assessment of third graders. Any third grader not meeting proposed reading criteria should be given tutorial assistance. House Bill 2017 is considered a precursor to SB 081—Literacy Improvement Act. This Act requires anyone under the age of 18 to pass a criterion-reference reading test or they must prove reading proficiency to be eligible for a driver's license. One other piece of legislation passed in 1997 considered to be of great importance was HB 2130, requiring every school district to provide some type of written out-of-school suspension plan (OK Facts and Figures, 2003).

When it comes to K-12 education spending, Oklahoma ranks 42nd in per pupil expenditures. This figure takes into account the COL (cost of living) factors. Oklahoma's adjusted per pupil amount is \$4,078, whereas the national average is \$5,330 (K-12 Education Spending, 1). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, Oklahoma now has 541 school districts whereas a decade ago, it had 604. This consolidation of schools is partially a result of funding issues. In addition, state aid appropriation accounts for 70 percent of local school funding, and the State Department of Education has reduced its spending almost twenty percent within the last six years.

Finally, state appropriations for K-12 education in Oklahoma have gone up almost 28 percent (OK Facts and Figures, 2003).

Oklahoma Government

Oklahoma government mirrors the structure of the federal government in that it is segmented into three parts: the executive, judicial, and legislative branches. The governor and his cabinet of appointed and elected officers comprise the executive branch. The governor's main responsibilities include approving or vetoing bills, calling special sessions, commanding the state military, and overseeing the state budget. The judicial branch is comprised of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals, and numerous other Oklahoma district courts. The members of these courts are appointed from names given by the Oklahoma Judicial Nominating Commission. Essentially, the judicial branch interprets laws and decides upon both civil and criminal matters.

The final branch of Oklahoma government and the focus of this research is the legislative branch. The Oklahoma Legislature is generally characterized as a lawmaking body that works in conjunction with the governor to propose and act upon legislation. The legislative branch is also responsible for generating revenue needed to finance the state government. Oklahoma's Legislature is a bicameral body and thus is divided into two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are 101 representatives and 48 senators. Both House and Senate members are representative of specific regions of the state called house and senate districts, respectively. Of the 101 representatives, 48 are republican and 53 are democrats. A member of the House must run every two years and cannot serve more than six terms. Of the 48 representatives, 20 are republicans and

28 are democrats. Each state senator serves a four-year term and is limited to three terms (www.netstate.com, 2005).

The membership of the Oklahoma Legislature is supposed to mirror the characteristics of the state's constituents. However, although the legislature is representative of the Oklahoma in ascribed characteristics like age, gender, race, and religion, it is not really representative in the achieved characteristics like education and occupation. Still, in the ascribed areas of female and minority population, there is still an inaccurate representation in the Oklahoma Legislature (Morgan et al., 1991). Typically, these characteristics include socioeconomic patterns, educational levels, as well as occupational choices (Woods, 25). In the 1970s, most of the Oklahoma state representatives and senators were lawyers, but there was also a notable amount of farmers and ranchers in the Legislature. Frosty Troy, publisher of the *Oklahoma Observer*, once described the Oklahoma Legislature as "a traditionally redneck legislature" (Morgan et al., 1991). Though many of our legislators are still in the law and business professions, the representation for farmers and ranchers has decreased. This is a direct result of occupational changes in Oklahoma (Scales & Goble, 1978).

In their efforts to represent the people of the state, Oklahoma legislators ascribe to one of the three classic role orientations: trustee, delegate, or politico (Morgan et al., 1991). A trustee generally has the notion that he is more informed than the people he represents; therefore, he feels that he owes little compliance in voting exactly the way his constituents want. A delegate, on the other hand, is essentially the antithesis of the trustee. A delegate concludes that he is the voice of the people, and he should vote exactly what the people want. The third and final role orientation is politico. The

politico legislator is somewhat between the trustee and the delegate philosophically. The politico will adhere to the needs and wants of his constituents—especially if a good deal of pressure exists for some issues. However, if the politico believes the issues to be too complicated for his constituents to fully understand the impact of the matter, he will make a decision based on his knowledge, experience, and expertise. Historically, most representatives and senators see themselves as either trustees or politicos. Morgan et al. states, “No, doubt, most lawmakers try to stay in touch with their constituents, and in many cases they may feel that no conflict exists between the way they look at most issues and the views of those they represent (1991, p. 96).

Interest Groups

One of the ways people influence governmental officials is through their participation in interest groups. Interest groups are generally defined as a group of people who share a common outlook regarding an issue. Interest groups basically wish to further their agenda in a very visible and active manner through direct or indirect communication with their legislators. Interest groups are also identified as pressure groups because they seek ways to influence their commitment to their specific goal or goals in frequency or intensity (Woods, 1990).

These interest/pressure groups consist of individuals who are known as lobbyists. Notable lobbyists are information savvy, and they are paramount in the communication process between the interests groups they are representing and the legislators they are trying to influence. Many legislators appreciate a well-informed, well-intentioned lobbyist; however, some lobbyists create tense working relationships with state politicians by harboring negative attitudes and presenting sketchy, one-sided views.

Oklahoma politicians generally classify lobbyists as positive facilitators who are relatively friendly in their advancement of their cause. Some legislators believe that lobbyists make their jobs easier because lobbyists provide essential information and they elucidate complicated issues (Woods, 1990).

Partisanship in Oklahoma

In the past, the Democratic Party has been the majority party in Oklahoma. However, the Republican Party is catching up every year, despite the old saying, “changing party loyalties is like changing churches.” Voter registration is only one way to predict the dominance of one political party of the other. Party competition allows voters to have a real voice, and the competition itself serves as a checks and balances. Oklahoma has long presented itself as a somewhat and literal “confused state.” For example, as previously noted, Oklahoma has historically been a strongly democratic state in terms of politics at the state level. But, at the national level, Oklahoma has historically been in favor of the GOP presidential candidates. As cited in Morgan et al., 1991, Austin Ramey, a noted political scientist of the 1960s, suggests four determining factors to measure party dominance at the state level: (1) gubernatorial vote, (2) number of seats in the state senate, (3) number of seats in the state house, and (4) all terms of control in the governor’s seat and the state house and state senate.

Party Characteristics

The democratic and republican Parties are characterized in pretty generalized terms. The Democratic Party is often thought of the working man’s party, an organization that represents the commoner or blue collar man. Working class people, Catholics, minorities, and labor union members have historically gravitated towards the

Democratic Party. On the other hand, the Republican Party is oftentimes viewed as an anti-government entity, one whose affiliation as historically included business owners, Protestants, and classic W.A.S.P. (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) individuals. These cookie-cutter definitions of the Democratic and Republican Parties demonstrate, of course, the far right and far left individuals (Staffell, 2000).

Oklahoma Educational Finance

The United States government through the power vested in state governments strives to provide equal access to public education to all of its citizens. To accomplish this task, a system of taxing citizens was designed to ensure that access was equitable. Equal opportunity and equitable taxation is the proverbial holy grail of public education. This system of funding can appear to be extremely complex, but it essentially generates money for public education from three primary sources: local taxes, state taxes, and federal taxes. Specifically, the main taxes that contribute to public education are property taxes (local), sales taxes (state), and income taxes (state and local).

Local Revenue

Local revenue is derived mainly from property taxes; these taxes are directly related to the value of one's property including both real estate and personal property. Homes, factories, and land are all examples of real estate taxes whereas cars, furniture, jewelry and livestock are examples of personal taxes. Property taxes do not fluctuate as easily as personal income; therefore, property taxes are valued for their consistency and dependability. Property taxes are considered proportionate taxes—or taxes that are directly related to the value of one's real estate. Essentially, the thought is the wealthier a person is, the more real estate one will possess, and thus the higher one's taxes will be.

However, some sources have determined that a person's wealth is not necessarily tied to ownership of real estate. Hence, in a realistic sense, property taxes can be regressive in that they do not affect taxpayers equally (Alexander & Alexander, 1990).

The unfairness of local property taxes has been hotly debated since its inception. An example of this unfairness can be seen in a school district that has a highly assessed property values but a low number of pupils versus a school district who has low assessed property values with a large number of pupils. The proposed school budget determines the local tax rate. A school district determines its budget by predicting the amount of money needed to operate the school on an annual basis. Since around 80 percent of the district's budget is comprised of teachers' salaries, then the projected amount of the total budget can be closely determined by the number of teachers employed by a school district (Johnson, Collins, Dupuis, & Johanson, 1991).

State Revenue

Another contributor to educational funding is state revenue. State revenue includes taxes from sales and gross receipts, income taxes, licenses, property taxes, mineral taxes, and death and gift taxes. Income taxes and state taxes are considered the lifeblood of state aid. Income taxes are progressive taxes because they are based on the taxpayer's wages. In contrast, sales taxes are regressive taxes because taxpayers all pay the same rate regardless of ability to pay. Food exemptions are the state's efforts to assist in equalizing the regressiveness of sales taxes. Most schools throughout the nation receive around 50 percent of their funding from state revenue (Johnson, et. al. 1991).

State aid is divided into two groups: general use or categorical use. General state aid is set aside for the recipient school to use as it sees fit. It is based off the dollar value

of each state's predetermined notion of basic educational opportunities known as the foundation level. This level dictates the minimum level of local support, which in turn, dictates the level of state aid. This method of funding distribution attempts to better equalize educational opportunities from district to district. Its effectiveness is somewhat limited due to the fact that the initial foundation level may not actually address the actual student expenditures (Johnson et al., 1991).

Categorical aid is considered earmarked funds. These funds must be used for specific purposes in an effort to encourage local school districts to explore new programs or to advance pre-existing programs. These programs include vocational education, driver education, transportation services, as well as special education. Categorical aid is generally distributed in a matching manner; for every dollar that is produced at the local level, a dollar will be given from the state level. Many educators believe this method of funding has definitely met its goal of encouraging school districts to initialize needed school programs (Johnson, et al., 1991).

Federal Aid

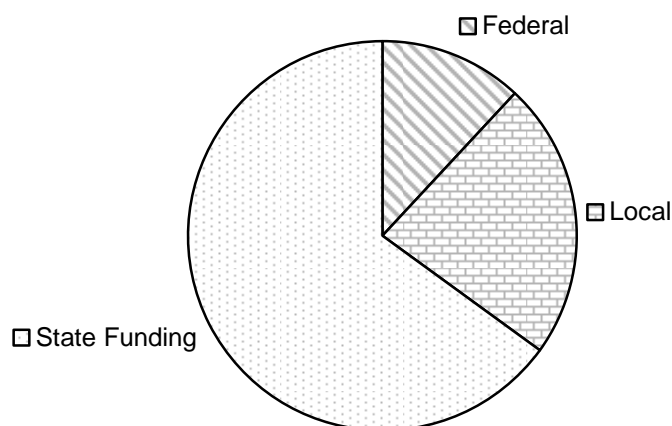
The role of federal aid in educational funding was designed to be one of secondary status—indirect assistance only so as to not directly control the states. Indeed, the Tenth Amendment states that, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited to it by the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people.” Federal aid was initially responsible for providing land for public schools in the late 1700s. According to Alexander and Alexander (1992), “From these beginnings, it was established that the federal government was to play an indirect role in the development of public education, to serve as a stimulus function without direct

control of educational policy and operation (p. 50).” Since that time, almost 200 federal aid laws for educational purposes have been passed (Alexander & Alexander, 1992).

Historically, federal funding has been classified as categorical as opposed to being general. Categorical funds are important in the shaping of a particular educational program. States agree that by accepting federal monies, they will abide by the regulations that govern the usage of those funds. However, in 1981, the Educational Improvement and Consolidation Act (EICA) brought together 28 federally funded educational programs under one umbrella; thus, a block grant was created to address the needs of said programs known as Title II. Title II afforded state and local levels more general discretion as to the allocation of these funds (Johnson, et. al., 1991).

Although on the average, states receive less than 10 percent in state aid, much ado has been made regarding federal funding. Some view federal funding as a form of control, while others view federal funding as a necessary equalizer that local and state funding cannot provide for public education. As previously mentioned, federal funds are the result of personal and corporate income taxes. Section 8 of Article I allows Congress the ability to tax and to spend the taxes collected (Alexander & Alexander, 1992). These progressive taxes were supposed to serve as a balance of the inequalities of the regressive local taxes. Unfortunately, the current educational system is still heavily reliant upon the local taxes.

Table 1

Sources of Oklahoma Public School Revenues Fiscal year 2004

Local Millage Levies

Public schools cannot receive state and federal monies without generating local funding first. How school districts are able to determine their local support is contingent upon their total permissible expenditure levels, known as a millage levy. A district's millage levy directly affects the amount of state and federal money that a school district receives. A levy, in this case, is the ad valorem taxes that a school district receives from the assessment of property values (Thompson, Wood, & Honeyman, 1994). A mill is 1/10 of a cent; thus, a millage levy is taxation in mills per dollar of valuation. For example, if School District X receives 19 percent of its budget at the local level, then that qualifies School District X to receive 73 percent from the state level. The federal government then supplies the other 8 percent to complete School District X's annual budget.

Social Networks

Social network theory primarily derives from sociological and anthropological studies. The social network perspective is primarily relational. According Kuo (1994), “The network perspective examines the relationships of actors directly and sees those relationships as properties that guide social behavior” (p. 7). Within network perspective is the notion of structures. Structures are viewed as routinized relationships that intertwine and point out a course of behavior. In addition, these structures, or patterns of behavior, provide the genesis of a new pattern, or simply reinforce an existing pattern through the decision-making process of the actors within the relationship itself (Kuo, 1994).

Essentially, social network theory acknowledges the overall context of an “actor” as opposed to the individual characteristics of a person. According to Wasserman and Faust (1994), social network perspective does not focus on the “attributes of autonomous individual units,” but instead focuses on “the associations among these attributes for predicting the level of another attribute” (p.8). These associations allow researchers the ability to conceptualize interrelationship patterns and the outcomes of these patterns. There exists a particular area of social network theory research that examines the effect of social networks on employment networking.

Networking

Both strong and weak ties exist within social networks. How strong and weak ties affect a social network has been the topic of many studies. In the specific case of social networks and employment opportunities, however, surprising conclusions came to light. In one particular study, Granovetter (1973) concluded that opportunities for employment

were, in fact, more likely to be discovered from one's weak ties than from one's strong ties. Weak ties are relationships with acquaintances or trivial associates. In contrast, strong ties are relationships with close friends and family members. Granovetter (1983) opines that it is one's weak ties, in fact, that provide an individual with "a crucial bridge to two densely knit clumps" (1983, p. 202). Thus, weak ties help promote new ideas and provide more channels for communication.

A stagnate situation is created in which advancement opportunities are stifled when an individual lacks weak ties. This stagnate situation is representative of McPartland and Braddock's (1981) and Braddock's (1980) notion of Perpetuation Theory. This theory described the results of their study in regards to the perpetuation of racial segregation in institutional and organizational settings suggesting, "both early school desegregation experiences and current community desegregation patterns promote adult desegregation in work environments, with school desegregation showing a greater impact than community desegregation..." (Braddock & McPartland, 1989, p. 286).

Summary

The K-12 funding woes of Oklahoma public schools are both historic as well as current. The perpetuation of this educational crisis is clearly evident and linked to many factors (OK Facts and Figures, 2003). One factor that has a direct effect on this situation is the decision-making process of Oklahoma's state legislators. In an effort to further examine this phenomenon, this study specifically examined the effect of social networks on the decision-making process of both state representatives and state senators in regards to public educational funding. An individual's social network is the personal contacts he or she maintains in an effort to guide his or her behavior or reaction to a situation (Kuo,

1994). In addition, an individual's social network is the result of strong or weak ties, with research pointing to the use of weak ties as a way to gain information in regards to opportunities (Granovetter, 1973). This study used Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties to determine the effect of legislator social networks upon their decision-making process and K-12 educational funding.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

The purpose of this study was to examine the decision-making process of Oklahoma state legislators via their social networks, specifically the effects of this process on K-12 educational funding. Long interviews were the main sources of information and the method of inquiry used for this study. Seven Oklahoma state legislators were selected for this inquiry, and each legislator will be presented in this chapter.

State legislators were selected based on the following criteria: party affiliation, gender, legislative body (Senate or House), and location (rural, suburban, or urban). Those chosen were serving on the House or Senate Education Committee or Education Sub-Committee, were former teachers, or were married to a teacher. Of the seven legislators chosen, three were male and four were female. In addition, there were five republicans and two democrats. Two of the subjects were state representatives and five were state senators. And finally, two of the subjects were from rural locations and the other five represented rural districts that also had urban/suburban areas.

Long Interview Procedures

Each long interview consisted of speaking to a current Oklahoma state legislator who had some direct influence upon the decisions affecting Oklahoma educational funding through serving on either the Education Committee or the Education Sub-Committee and by having personal connections to the educational field. Several of the

legislators recently authored bills relating to educational issues. In addition to the interviewing process, legislator voting records were reviewed, and each legislator's website biography was reviewed. Other documents used in this research were numerous publications from the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Interview Site

Part of the interviewing process was conducted at the Oklahoma State Capitol during the 50th Legislative Session, and part was conducted at the legislator's residence. Pseudonyms were given to each politician. Fictitious numbers were assigned to the politicians and their respective districts as well. These politicians represented Oklahoma, a mid-western state historically characterized by low educational funding (Investing in Oklahoma, 2002).

Respondents

Each representative or senator had an office assistant who was contacted by telephone to ask permission to interview the respective politician. The office assistants were then faxed a copy of the interview protocol for the edification of each politician. Politicians are extremely busy during and immediately after a legislative session. It was not a simple task to schedule an interview, but most of the legislators were very accommodating to requests. Several of the legislators even sent typed responses to the interview protocol in addition to participating in the long interview. This proved to be very helpful during the interview process, as it provided detailed information which was used as a springboard for probing questions.

Interviews

Each politician's office assistant was contacted by phone (Appendix B) and email to schedule an interview. The interview protocol consisted of eight questions. Focusing on the politicians' backgrounds and the factors that influenced the decision-making process of each politician regarding educational funding, the interview protocol is identified as Appendix A. The interviews were approximately 30-60 minutes long. I transcribed each interview and sent respondents a copy of the transcript. This provided assurance that an accurate account of the interview was produced. The respondents confirmed the accuracy of each transcript by indicating that no modifications were necessary.

Document Review

Voting records, biographical websites, and geographical literature were reviewed prior to the interviews. These documents were reviewed to gain more insight to the factors that influence the decision-making process of the state legislators. Publications presented as the State Superintendent's Annual Leadership Conference at the Tulsa Convention Center were also used to better understand the present educational funding situation of Oklahoma.

Reporting

Most of the data for this inquiry were generated from long interviews with seven state politicians. Each interview highlighted four elements: district demographics, district political history, the politician's family background and current political standing, and the factors that influenced the decision-making process regarding educational funding.

Representative Blue, District 1

Representative Blue was elected to the Oklahoma House over two years ago to represent District 1.

District 1 Demographics

Representative Blue's district representation covers almost two counties and over 12 municipalities in the southwestern section of Oklahoma near the Red River along the Oklahoma-Texas border. This part of the state was originally part of the Caddo, Kiowa, and Comanche lands of the Indian Territory which encompasses both mountain ranges and plains lands. District 1 includes the state's fourth largest city (Copeland et al, 1999; Quickfacts Website).

The two counties in District 1 have a population spread of approximately 27 percent under the age of 18, 58 percent between the ages of 18-65, and 15 percent over the age of 65. The median age is 34 years of age. The racial make-up of District 1 is 65 percent White, 19 percent African-American, 6 percent Native American, 8 percent Hispanic or Latino, 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Eighty-five percent of this district's adult population has a high school diploma. The median household income for the residents is \$38,705 and 19 percent of the population is below the poverty line (Copeland et al., 1999; Quickfacts Website).

The largest employers in District 1 include a military facility that has an annual payroll of over \$171 million, a national tire company, the county hospital, the public school system, the city, and a local university. The unemployment rate for District 1 is around 3.9 percent. Much of District 1 is considered to be a farm-driven community where wheat, cotton, sorghum, alfalfa hay, feed grains are produced. Ranching is also

part of the agricultural foundation of this district; however, according to The Almanac of Oklahoma Politics 2000, "...this small county is seeking to become the next economic marvel of the Great Plains region of Oklahoma" (Copeland et al., 1999, p. 308).

Apparently, this county boasts of an industrial park that includes a runway, refueling services, and a reservoir.

District 1 Political History

District 1, described as "unabashedly democratic", has not had a republican state representative at least since 1971 until Representative Blue was elected in 2002 (Copeland et al., 1999, p. 309). Representative Blue certainly supports the above description by stating the following regarding his district: "a lot of people are democrats because mom and dad said you are supposed to be. Because, if you can't vote for Sheriff or if you can't vote in the county commission election, you're not democrat. So, Sally or Johnny, you better be listed as a democrat or you are not going to be able to vote..." (6-21-05, 181).

Probably the most notable legislator in the recent history of District 1 would have to be former Speaker of the House, Representative Brown, a democrat from Liamsville. Representative Brown, a prominent attorney, served in the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 1984-2002. Under his leadership, the 46th Legislature enacted the Juvenile Justice Reform and the 1988 large tax cut. During his campaigns, Representative Brown took full advantage of his district's voter registration—over 12,000 registered democrats and fewer than 3,500 registered republicans—by running unopposed three times and soundly beating his one opponent in the general election 77.8 percent to 22.2 percent (Copeland et al., 1999).

Representative Blue states, “I was filling Representative Brown’s seat. He was retiring. He was a democrat. [It’s] 71 point something percent democrat in my district. But, the same phenomenon that got George Bush 60 percent of the vote from Oklahoma is the same phenomenon that got me 56 percent of the vote in my election...” (6-21-05, 157-159). Representative Blue emphatically opines that he would have probably run unopposed if he had been a democrat. He adds, “But I happen to be a republican, so the democrats had to find a candidate....and it had nothing to do with the party for people except for those yellow dog democrats. If Satan were a democrat, he’d get their vote” (6-21-05, 221).

Personal Background /Current Political Standing

Representative Blue was born in 1961 and grew up in and around the very district he represents. He graduated from high school in 1979 and four years later, he graduated from a local university with a degree in Agricultural Education. Later, he graduated from an auctioneer school in Texas. Representative Blue taught in a few public school systems in his district as an agricultural science teacher, along with his wife, who served as a teacher’s aide. During this time, he earned extra income as an auctioneer for livestock auctions. He also initiated a career in the entertainment industry as a local agricultural radio news personality and a local television commercial star. Most of his commercial work was for a local branch of a national and prominent car dealership. According to Representative Blue, “I started building a listenership...and I was rated higher locally than Paul Harvey which was kind of neat” (6-21-05, 121-123).

Not surprisingly, Representative Blue’s career in the entertainment industry rapidly began to build, and he was soon wooed away from the educational arena. The

chief financial officer of a local bank where Representative Blue's his wife had been working, offered him a rare opportunity. Representative Blue recalls how—much to his surprise and hesitation—he and his wife were given a local branch of a small bank to open. Representative Blue states, “I said I’m not a banker. And he said I know...that’s the beauty of it. We can teach you to be a banker. But what you’ve got is the P.R. skills and the visibility...and your wife has the banking experience and it takes both to make a team work” (6-21-05, 285-286). And so, Representative Blue left his teaching career to begin a new career in banking.

Representative Blue, at this point, was now heavily connected to many community leaders in the agricultural business, the banking industry, and the entertainment industry—not to mention that he still had ties to the educational world from his teaching days. It was not long before a grass roots effort started to emerge to persuade Representative Blue to enter into the world of politics. One of Representative Blue's most influential political actions was when he voted for SB 1644 that would fund the largest teacher pay raise in recent history.

Influential Factors

With the retirement of the democratic incumbent and former Speaker of the House Bill McChristian, District 1 was left wide open. After being cajoled for over a year from local FFA (Future Farmers of America) chapters, bankers, and local businessmen, Representative Blue decided to run for office and said, “The weird part was that I was a republican [and] my wife was a democrat...and I don’t like government controlling us” (6-21-05, 301-302). With the support of Katz and his many supporters in the legislature and in his district, Representative Blue handily defeated his opponent:

“People say to me all the time, ‘You’re just like we see on TV! You’re not so made up, fake and counterfeit. You’re the real deal.’ And I was the real deal” (6-21-05, 487-489).

Representative Blue has been in office for over two years now, since being elected to his second term. He is candid about his opinions on political matters—especially those that involve education. He states, “One of the things I fought in my election and one of the things that really got to me was when mail pieces would come out and question my integrity on educational issues. Will the Republican Party let Representative Blue be himself and think and make his own decisions on education” (6-21-04, 404-406). According to Representative Blue, there are several misconceptions about the Republican Party and educational issues like republicans are against small schools and want to consolidate or republicans are not concerned with rural school issues.

Representative Blue admits, however, that “...there is a little bit of a struggle between the rural-urban split, and the republican Party is more severe than the democratic Party because there are more rural legislators” (6-21-05, 321-322).” Representative Blue is careful to keep good relations with the Democratic Party although he says, “I do have to keep in mind that a lot of my money comes from business people in Cedar Springs” (6-21-05, 325).

Representative Blue reports that he takes each issue on an individual basis, and he looks to see how each issue “affects the people I represent” (6-21-05, 322). He states that he has no problem disagreeing with his party affiliates or for any party for that matter: “I try not to wait for a memo from either party. I’ll stand up to my party if I think they’re wrong” (6-21-05, 331-332). Representative Blue is very specific when identifying who or what influences his decision-making process as a legislator. First, he is skeptical

towards the powerful influence of the OEA (Oklahoma Education Association), “OEA is not your friend. OEA is a very, very, very radical group. They’re talking about endorsing me next time, and I don’t know if I am going to let them” (6-21-05, 341). Representative Blue becomes very passionate about educational issues saying, “I am very sensitive about education, at the same time, I get very frustrated about how hungry education gets” (6-21-05, 361-362).

Representative Blue offers some insight as to how a new legislator makes decisions. He says of his first year in office, “I was just learning. I knew we were going to have a 650 million dollar deficit to deal with, and I didn’t even know how much that was. I didn’t even know where the bathrooms were” (6-21-05, 376-377). Representative Blue looked to a fellow legislator for advice, republican State Representative Dave Goodman. Representative Blue describes Goodman as “old salt” and identifies him as an experienced source of wisdom—someone with whom he shares several commonalities such as small town upbringing and an agricultural background (6-21-05, 379).

Finally, Representative Blue identifies state agencies and commissions as great sources of influence. These agencies are vast and their resources are deep. Representative Blue compares each head of an agency as someone in charge of “a harem” (6-21-05, 431). He points out that unless a person is one of influence, it is difficult to communicate effectively with these powerful entities. He recalls when he first tried to call the head of a particular agency, “I was not a big, bad representative at this point...and his assistant says ‘sir, he’s in a meeting’ [I] said, does he have an assistant I can talk to and she says, ‘sir, he has five assistants’ and I say ma’am, I think I want the one who is filing his nails” (6-21-05, 501-504).

Summary

Representative Blue serves as the voice at the Oklahoma State Capitol of a rural district. District 1 and its demographics are fairly common and not determined to be out of character with other Oklahoma districts of its size. The only two exceptions would be a higher level of hispanic/latino population than other districts and a military facility which is the primary economic force in this district.

It is evident that Representative Blue is a hometown boy, deeply rooted in his community because of his affiliation with the agricultural community, the banking industry, the business sector, the entertainment field, and the educational community as well. Although it is not uncommon for a politician to represent his or her childhood hometown, it is uncommon, however, for a politician to be so closely connected to an array of businesses, industries, and communities on a professional level as well as a personal level. In addition to these entities, there are two more factors that influence Representative Blue's decisions-making process as a state legislator: a fellow legislator who acts as both confidant and mentor and the heads of numerous state agencies and commissions.

Representative Red, District 2

Representative Red was elected just last fall to represent Oklahoma District 2 in the Oklahoma State Legislature.

District 2 Demographics

Representative Red's district representation covers one county in the northeastern section of Oklahoma. This part of the state is home to the Creek Indians which is the namesake for the one of the counties located in this district. District 2 is also known

across the nation for its famous Patterson Pottery. The county seat is located in Littlebear, which is the namesake of the notable Indian Chief Littlebear. This county is gaining a reputation for hosting annual car shows, jazz festivals, and art exhibits. This district also houses the heart of historic Route 66. District 2 is approximately 10 miles from the state's second largest city (Littlebear Chamber of Commerce, 2005).

District 2 is comprised of over 34,000 constituents. The lone county in District 2 has a population spread of approximately 30 percent under the age of 18, 57 percent between the ages of 18-65, and 13 percent over the age of 65. The median age is 37 years. The racial make-up is 81 percent White, 4 percent African American, 10 percent Native American, 4 percent Hispanic or Latino, and less than 1 percent Asian or Pacific Islander. Seventy-eight percent of this district's adult population has a high school diploma. The median household income for the residents of District 2 is \$33,168. Fourteen percent of the population is below the poverty line (Copeland et al., 1999).

This district was historically known for its production of oil and cotton but has been quite removed from the thriving days the oil boom and cotton factories. Presently, this district is productive in ranching and agriculture. The largest employers include two glass factories, oilfield supply companies, steel factories, a pottery manufacturer, and the local school systems. This county is also seeing recent increases in population and industry since the installation of the Connor Turnpike a few years ago (Copeland et al., 1999).

District 2 Political History

Historically, District 2 has never had a republican representative. Indeed, the democrats literally owned this district. The new century also started off under democratic

leadership, until mandatory term limits ended the 12-year run of Representative Ron D. Lee—a popular democrat. This opened up the door for the republicans. It was not until 2004 that District 2 elected its first republican state representative. However, according to Representative Red, “The bottom line is Oklahoma is still a conservative state, and the democrats will vote for conservative candidates—the republicans” (7-28-05, 96-97).

This was a huge victory for the GOP and helped solidify the republican “take-over” of the Oklahoma Legislature made possible, in part, because of the term limit. Oddly enough, District 2 presently maintains around 10,000 registered democrats and only 6,200 registered republicans. Representative Red confirmed this fact by stating, “So there was a massive turnover at the state level. [Representative] Mike Tyler termed out last year...” (7-28-05, 16-17). Representative Red continued saying, “[This district] is primarily democratic. The registration is about 65 percent democrat and 35 percent republican. [But,] the republican registration is growing. It’s probably the highest it’s ever been” (7-28-05, 75-77).

Personal Background/Current Political Standing

Representative Red is certainly considered to be a hometown boy in District 2. He was raised in, and graduated from high school, in this district. This Oklahoma native also graduated from Oklahoma’s largest university with a business degree in petroleum land management. He maintains that he is still a proud “Boomer Sooner.” After college, Representative Red worked for Conoco, an oil production and refining company. After a few years with Conoco, Representative Red began working at a private, family-owned company in down-town Jackson that specialized in oil and gas exploration and production.

During his years of working to help build the family business, Representative Red remained an active member of his community. For example, he served as a city councilman for 12 years, followed by a stint of more than 10 years as mayor. He identifies this period as his “first taste into politics” (7-28-05, 14-15). Ironically, he recalls swearing, “I’d never get involved in politics” (7-28-05, 10). Representative Red also has some ties to the educational field. His wife teaches math at a public middle school in his district. Ironically, Representative Red was excused when the votes for SB 1644 were taken. This bill would have funded the largest teacher pay raise in recent history.

Influential Factors

When it comes to making his decisions on legislative matters—especially those that involve education, Representative Red identifies four factors that influence his thoughts: local businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists, fellow legislators, and local school administrators and teachers. Representative Red was and still is a businessman by trade, and he comes from a family of proprietors. Therefore, it makes sense that he would be conscious about issues that intertwine with the business world. He would rather consult individual business leaders—as opposed to consulting local chambers of commerce—because he feels that “the Chamber is a group of many, many businesses, so I’ll try to go directly to those that I can talk one-on-one with” (7-28-05, 134-135).

Representative Red also communicates with lobbyists. He believes that lobbyists “will come to you before you even have time to get to them because they are carrying the legislation for somebody, so they will want to come and give you their point of view” (7-28-05, 115-118). A third influential factor for Representative Red would be the thoughts

and opinions of fellow legislators. In fact, Representative Red says, “I’m new to the game; therefore, I don’t have the background or the knowledge that some of these other legislators have. I have to lean on people with expertise...” (7-28-05, 111-112).

The fourth and final factor that influences Representative Red’s decision-making process is the opinion of local school administrators and teachers. He states, “My wife’s a teacher and she’s a good source to go to...” (7-28-05, 140). He readily seeks the advice of local school administrators. In fact, he says, “It would probably be helpful on my part to sit down before school starts and find out what’s important” (7-28-05, 148-149).

Summary

Overall, Representative Red’s district demographics are relatively similar to other districts involved in this study; however, the median annual income at \$33,168 is somewhat higher than the average. Representative Red still classifies his district as “mainly...blue collar” (7-28-05, 60). The majority of the constituents in this district come from the county seat, a town of 21,000. District 2 comprises of several bedroom communities to Jackson.

Representative Red is considered to be a legislative rookie, as he has served his district only for two years. Regardless, another legislator involved in this study informally commented on Representative Red’s impact on the legislature in such a brief time. When analyzing Representative Red and his background, it is obvious that this hometown boy is closely connected to his constituents, and he appears to understand that his urban/suburban district still clings to small-town ideas.

Senator White, District 3

Senator White was elected to the Oklahoma Senate in 1998 to represent Oklahoma District 3.

District 3 Demographics

Senator White's district covers four counties in southern Oklahoma encompassing the Kana River out of Texas to the Yutan Mountains of Billings County. This rural part of the state was originally part of the Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory, and is a leading tourist location for Oklahoma. District 3 is known state-wide for its rugged mountains, expansive plains, and beautiful lake resorts. Although District 3 includes several small cities within its boundaries, it mostly comprises smaller towns and municipalities. The largest city has only 25,000 people (Oklahoma Department of Commerce).

District 3 comprises over 73,000 constituents. Twenty-five percent of the households include individuals under the age of 18. Fifty-eight percent of the households have individuals between the ages of 18 and 65, and over 17 percent of the households have someone living in them over the age of 55. The median age is 39 years (Oklahoma Department of Commerce).

The four counties in District 3 have a racial make-up of approximately 83 percent White, 6 percent African-American, 9 percent Native American, 2 percent Hispanic or Latino, and less than 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Seventy-four percent of this district's adult population has a high school diploma. The median household income for the residents of District 3 is approximately \$27,500. Fifteen percent of the population is below the poverty level (Oklahoma Department of Commerce).

The largest employer in District 3 is a national tire plant which employs over 1,800 people. The highest paying employers for working-class jobs would be in the energy sector. Finally, other major employers include a higher education center, a career and technology school, and numerous national chain distribution centers. Senator White reports that his district is getting more industry on a consistent basis. The unemployment rate for District 3 is around 5.5 percent. Much of this district's economy is driven by tourism dollars (7-8-05, 272-276).

Senator White describes his district as having several "hubs" that provide employment opportunities for the residents. He says, "Most people work in the hub area of [their] part of the county. Most of the people in the area, if they don't have a business in their small communities, they go to Castlecreek to work and then go back to their area to live. The largest town in the area is the hub for that area" (7-8-05, 74-76). Senator White indicates that it is the working-class jobs that are the driving force behind the economical success of his district. The preservation and the growth of such occupational opportunities are a top priority for the state senator (7-8-05, 73-78).

District 3 Political History

District 3 is definitely democrat territory, having over 32,000 registered democrats and a mere 6,000 registered republicans. Senator White describes these democrats as "very, very conservative democrats who tend to vote republican...as offices get higher" (7-8-05, 58-59). The Almanac of Oklahoma Politics 2000 reports that every local official in District 3 was a democrat until recently (Copeland et al., 1999). According to Senator White, the year he was first elected into the Oklahoma State

Legislature was the same time the first republican representative for that area was also elected into the Legislature.

Even with such a definitively drawn party line within the borders of District 3, Senator White contends that “the handling of legislation is not so much democrat/republican as it is rural versus urban” (7-08-05, 79-80). This implies that the elected officials and constituents of District 3 are more swayed by matters that are classified more rural than they are by what is determined to be democrat and republican.

Historically, District 3 is remembered for former majority leader, John Housman, a democrat from Castlecreek. After serving this district for 16 years, he vacated his seat to run for congress. Vying for the vacated seat were three candidates, including Senator White and one of his former students. Although Senator White narrowly defeated his former student in the primary, he bested his next opponent in the general election by 63-37 margin.

Personal Background/Current Political Standing

Although Senator White was born in Texas in 1947, he is essentially an Oklahoma native. He grew up in and around a small town in the very district he currently represents. He received both his bachelors and masters degrees in education and school administration from a small college in the southeastern part of Oklahoma. He is married to an elementary school teacher, and the father of two grown children. The majority of his career was spent teaching in his district’s largest school system. He left his teaching career to tend to the family ranch and serve his city as a police officer only to return to teaching with the same school system ten years later. Not only did he teach history and coach, Senator White also spent time as a school administrator.

During this time, Senator White initiated his political career. This was somewhat of a “leap-of-faith” notion to Senator White because no one in his family was involved in politics before—he would be the first. He states, “It [a political career] was something I thought about off and on but my kids were too young for me to be away from them that much the first time around. But, I visited with my wife and said, okay I really want to do this, and I decided I would step into the political ring” (7-8-05, 15-16).

After being encouraged by his community, Senator White ran for city-council in his district’s largest city and won. He says of this period that he “was a servant of the people and I thought that I might be able to help people in my district and somebody might be interested in me [as a politician]” (7-8-05, 23-25). After a successful stint as a city councilman, Senator White ran for mayor and subsequently won that office, too. The next big step, the Oklahoma State Legislature, was only a matter of time for Senator White, and with the help of his wife and daughters, Senator White was poised for success once again. One of Senator White’s most influential political actions was when he voted for SB 1644 that would fund the largest teacher pay raise in recent history.

Influential Factors

Senator White has been in office more than seven years since being elected in 1998. He chairs the Appropriations Sub-Committee for Education and sits on the Education Committee itself. When it comes to legislation regarding educational issues, Senator White is very forthright with his assessment of deciding factors. Senator White indicates that he views most issues in terms of rural versus urban. He, for the most part, sides heavily with fellow legislators who represent rural communities stating, “Anything to do with Oklahoma City and Tulsa are [sic] urban, and everything else is rural. The

needs of the Oklahoma City and Tulsa school districts are considerably different than [sic] the needs of Sapulpa or Ardmore” (7-8-05, 102-105). Senator White estimates that 50 percent of the major bills passed are based on the rural/urban factor as opposed to the democrat/republican factor.

Senator White also references the State Board of Education as a source of information when pondering educational legislation. In addition, he appreciates the insight of fellow legislators who have already done the fact-finding for specific educational issues involving CareerTech schools, satellite instruction, and The Oklahoma School of Science and Math and Science. Senator White says he makes it a point to “...contact 3, 4, or 5 of my [school] superintendents in my school areas—if it’s at that [local] level” (7-8-05, 193-195).

Because he is a former school administrator, Senator White says that he often draws from his own experience in determining education legislation. In fact, he points out that he is one of the few senators to have an educational background, adding that most legislators are attorneys. He provides instances where classroom teachers themselves have come to him to offer their viewpoints on pending educational issues. Senator White appears to appreciate this level of communication with his constituents.

When it comes to communicating with lobbyists, Senator White is very receptive. He makes it a point to listen to lobbyists representing an array of educational occupations—teachers, counselors, principals, superintendents, and even school boards. He reports that there is an endless supply of representation from lobbyists of all facets. When it comes to educational issues, he is dependent upon these lobbyists to be the accurate sources of information that he needs.

However, he emphatically adds that lobbyists of any kind are “...only as good as their word” (7-8-05, 325). He expresses an intense disdain for one-sided versions of the truth, and he makes no exceptions for lobbyists who may attempt to mislead him in any way. Fortunately, Senator White reports that throughout his duration as a legislator, he has had only a single instance of a lobbyist whose information was not as accurate as it should have been. Lobbyists are extremely crucial in his decision-making process—especially regarding educational issues.

Summary

Senator White represents District 3 at the Oklahoma State senate where he works diligently to see that the needs of his rural, conservative district are heard. Mainly a democratic force, the constituents of District 3 have shown a history of voting republican for higher political offices. Statistically speaking, the demographics of District 3 are fairly common. The one exception would be that one of the major economic powers in this district is the money generated from tourism dollars.

Most of these valuable tourism dollars are the direct result of the progressive marketing campaigns conducted by leaders such as Senator White who understand how critical tourism dollars are to the growth of his district.

In regards to Senator White and his background, one would not hesitate to characterize the Senator as “homegrown.” Growing up in the very district which he now serves as a political leader, Senator White is tightly connected with generations of local folk. In addition, Senator White is very in touch with the small-town way of life, remembering how his wife and daughters ran his original campaign for him. In addition, Senator White is a former teacher, school administrator, police officer, city councilman,

and mayor of his district. Hence, Senator White identifies two major factors that influence his decision-making process regarding educational funding: the opinions of fellow legislators who represent rural districts, and educational leaders and lobbyists. Senator White maintains that these sources “...have a good feel for how something is going to affect us [District 3]” (7-8-05, 222).

Senator Green, District 4

Senator Green was elected over three years ago to represent Oklahoma District 4 in the Oklahoma State Senate.

District 4 Demographics

Senator Green’s district representation covers four counties, engulfing Chickasaw Nation in the southern part of Oklahoma. This part of the state is comprised of mostly rural territory, but there a few urban localities as well. District 4 is known for its agricultural roots and its expansive irrigation systems. Productive oil derricks once dotted the countryside over the majority of this district, but the current price of oil is a far cry from the sky-rocketing prices of the early eighties. The borders of this district include parts of the state’s largest city, and the potential for growth in this area is virtually limitless (Copeland et al., 1999).

District 4 is comprised of over 72,000 residents. The population spread of this district includes approximately 26 percent of its residents are under the age of eighteen, 61 percent between the ages of 18-65, and 13 percent over the age of 65. The median age is 36 years. The four counties in District 4 have a racial make-up of approximately 88 percent White, 2 percent African American, 5 percent Native American, and 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Four percent is Hispanic or Latina, and eighty-one percent of this

district's adult population has a high school diploma. The median household income for the residents of District 4 is approximately \$35,000. Twelve percent of the population is below the poverty level (Copeland et al., 1999; Quickfacts Website).

The largest employers in District 3 include government agencies, the medical and education community, and an exploding business industry. This rapidly growing industry is capitalizing upon the accessibility of a strip of land running from one smaller city to the state's largest city. Restaurant chains, movie theaters, and other retail chains are infiltrating this territory at a fast and furious pace. In fact, Senator Green boasts that within a year, her district will be the home of the state's largest movie theater.

District 4 Political History

Historically, District 4 has been more democrat territory than not. In recent years, however, the district has wrangled back and forth with party affiliation. Senator Green states that her district is "more democratic right now but it's heavily republican up north. It's pretty close...a lot of the democrats vote republican" (7-11-05, 59-62). However, when it comes to the senate race for District 4, the constituents have only elected a republican candidate four out of 14 times since 1971 (Copeland, et al., 1999; Oklahoma Quickfacts Website). This said, those four times have been within the last decade (Copeland et al., 1999). This supports Senator Green's assertion, "It's a growing district and becoming more republican" (7-11-05, 66-67).

District 24 contains 9,600 registered republicans and over 25,000 registered democrats. Even though there is a huge difference between the number of registered democrats and the number of registered republicans, the last four elections have been extremely close with the republicans besting the democrats in the 1994 and 1998

campaigns (Copeland et al., 1999). In fact, Senator Green won by fewer than 100 votes in her 2002 election. Interestingly, the incumbent opponent whom Senator Green defeated in the 2002 election was the same opponent who defeated Senator Green's husband in 1994 (Copeland et al, 1999).

Personal Background/Current Political Standing

Senator Green, a native Oklahoman, spent her childhood in and around the district she now represents. After graduating from high school, Senator Green attended a local university where she earned a degree in elementary education. Senator Green spent over 28 years in the classroom, with 25 of those years in a first grade classroom. Senator Green's husband occupied the very seat in which she now resides. He was the State Senator for District 4 in the years 1990-1994 until his defeat in 1994. After her retirement from the world of education in 2002, Senator Green's friends—most of whom were educators—encouraged her to run for the state senate (7-11-05, 19-21).

Although Senator Green acknowledged it was a huge compliment for many to have confidence in her and to encourage her to run for senate, she admits that she was somewhat hesitant to initially run. She said that she “carefully considered” the daunting task before deciding to commit. With her husband being a former elected official, Senator Green was fully aware of the sacrifice needed to run for and win a campaign. She states, “It is very time-consuming, and it takes a lot of work. And, it takes a lot of commitment. And, it takes a lot of dollars to run” (7-11-05, 17-18). In addition, Senator Green's first campaign was against the incumbent. Senator Green explained, “I knew that that would take a lot more money, and I would be able to raise the money as easily if I were the incumbent” (7-11-05, 20-21).

Even though Senator Green was told by seasoned politicians that she would need a minimum of \$100,000 to \$150,000 in campaign contributions to defeat the incumbent, she was not deterred. Instead, she proudly states, “it [her campaign] was kind of a woman’s race because women are good to volunteer to help. And, I had a lot of help from retired school teachers who would keep an office for me” (7-11-05, 35-36). As a result of her concentrated efforts to minimize the costs of her campaign, Senator Green defeated the incumbent having only raised \$42,000-\$45,000. According to Senator Green, 24,000 people voted and she won by only 87 votes (7-11-05, 47). One of Senator Green’s most influential political actions was when she voted for SB 1644 that would fund the largest teacher pay raise in recent history.

Influential Factors

There are several influential factors that Senator Green takes into consideration when pondering educational issues at the legislative level. Senator Green remembers in 2003 when she was first elected that “we [Oklahoma government] were in a financial short. I knew at that time because we had to go in and cut the schools, they had to lay off people—we just didn’t have any money. We had to cut all the agencies, and we cut as little as we could, but it was just a bad year” (7-11-05, 164-165). Senator Green expresses how close she was to this situation, as she had just retired from teaching. She explains, “I knew how teachers dug out of their own pockets” (7-11-05, 166-167). Impressively enough, Senator Green puts her money where her mouth is. When she was campaigning during these times of financial crisis, Senator Green promised to put 15 percent of her legislative salary back into the school system. To this day, she visits over ten schools in her district to personally donate this money.

Senator Green admits that she draws heavily from her own experiences and knowledge as a retired teacher. She understands the inner workings of school system extremely well. In fact, she says of her second year in the legislature that she supported the “commitment to fund education first” (7-11-05, 207-208). She elucidates further by pointing out that school administrators cannot re-hire their staff unless they have the funds beforehand; hence, schools should be given a priority when it comes to funding. According to Senator Green, she supported the decision to increase the educational budget in Oklahoma by 7 percent or 145 million dollars.

Senator Green also consults numerous people and organizations when she is seeking information in order to make her decisions regarding legislative matters. She identifies national organizations, local task forces, the business community, bankers and the Federal Reserve, state agencies, and state commissions as key sources. She also seeks advice from school administrators, even though she feels that with some issues, “They [school administrators] don’t like legislators involved in local control” (7-11-05, 257-258). Of course, she consults her constituents—which constituents in particular is contingent upon “the issue and who it affects the most” (7-11-05, 243). Finally, Senator Green echoes the sentiments of other legislators involved in this study by singling out lobbyists as credible resources or those lobbyists who “are good and tell both sides” (7-11-05, 305).

Summary

Senator Green’s district demographics are similar to the other district demographics analyzed in this research. District 4, however, has the highest percentage of a white population compared to the others. Also, District 4 represents over 72,000

constituents; this is the third highest populated district in this study. District 4 has over 15,000 more registered democrats than republicans, but it still has no dominant party affiliation.

Senator Green is somewhat of a new kid on the block at the Oklahoma State Capitol, but she certainly responds to important legislative matters like a seasoned pro. When analyzing Senator Green's background information, it is evident that Senator Green is very in touch with the needs of her district—especially in regards to educational funding. Senator Green has personal ties to the educational community, as anyone with 28 years of teaching experience should.

In addition, Senator Green has personal ties to the political world, as her husband served in the same capacity and in the same district as she does now. Senator Green listed numerous sources of information that influence her decision-making process as a legislature, ranging from the educational community to the Beef Commission. It seems as though Senator Green views anyone and any organization as a possible source of information, but she certainly leans her ear towards the voices of school establishments.

Representative Black, District 5

Representative Black was elected in 2000 to represent Oklahoma District 5 in the Oklahoma State Legislature.

District 5 Demographics

Representative Black's district representation covers only one county in the northeastern part of Oklahoma. District 5 includes a majority of the Tulsa metro area. Tulsa is this state's second largest city and formerly known as the Oil Capitol of the World. Furthermore, this northeastern part of the state is known as Green Country

because of the lush and bountiful vegetation that covers this area. The Arkansas River runs straight through this district and provides the city with many forms of recreation such as the outdoor amphitheater and an aquarium. There is substantial industry throughout District 5, as well as acres of farmland that fringe the borders of the suburban towns. A private university and a popular community college are assessable in District 5 (Copeland et al., 1999).

District 5 is comprised of over 70,000 constituents. The lone county in District 5 has a population spread of 26 percent under the age of 18, 62 percent between the ages of 18-65, and 12 percent over the age of 65. The median age is 34 years. The racial make-up of District 5 is 78 percent White, 2 percent African American, 12 percent Native American, 7 percent Hispanic or Latino, and less than 1 percent Asian or Pacific Islander. Eighty-five percent of this district's population has a high school diploma. The median household income is \$38,213, and 12 percent of the population is below the poverty line. The largest employers in District 5 include a national airport, numerous oil and gas companies, and the public city and school systems (Copeland et al., 1999; Oklahoma Quickfacts Website).

District 5 Political History

Historically, District 5 has been decidedly democratic territory—especially at the local level. However, according to a 1999 estimate, District 5 maintained around 17,000 registered democrats and 15,000 registered republicans. This small difference between the number of registered democrats and the number of registered republicans could be seen in Senator Black's first campaign; she narrowly defeated the incumbent by only 167

votes. Senator Black proudly reports that she was the “first republican to hold this district” (7-29-05, 174).

Interestingly enough, this district has not had a republican candidate win a seat in the last 17 elections and more—that is over 30 years of democratic dominance until the republican take-over (Copeland et al., 1999). In fact, Senator Black pointed out that the republican registration now outnumbers the democrat registration because re-districting in 2000 eliminated Creek County and kept District 5 in Tulsa County only. Finally, not only was Senator Black the first republican to represent District 5, she was also the first female.

Personal Background/Current Political Standing

Senator Black, a native Oklahoman, was born and bred in the very district she now represents. In fact, she was raised in Brookside, a popular and historic area in Tulsa. After graduating from high school and college, Senator Black began her teaching career in a public school system and still teaches to this day. Senator Black was introduced into the world of politics by her husband, a political science major. Her husband ran unsuccessfully for political office in a northwestern state and in Oklahoma many years ago. Senator Black said that “many years went by and we were at the point in life where we could afford for me to go into politics...nobody really recruited us or asked us to run” (7-29-05, 23-25). One of Senator Black’s most influential political actions was when she voted for SB 1644 that would fund the largest teacher pay raise in recent history.

Influential Factors

There are several influential factors that Senator Black takes into consideration when deciding educational issues at the legislative level. In fact, Senator Black said, “I

keep a rolodex on my desk at the office of business people who have either contacted me or I have contacted them. When we have legislation that's pending that is in regards to their business or something that's closely related to what they do...those are the folks I pick up the phone and call. I'm very tied to my chambers" (7-29-05, 56-59).

Another influential factor for Senator Black would be lobbyists.

"Lobbyist[s]...are people who know the specific topic much better than I do. So, I look at a lobbyist as an educator..." (7-29-05, 120-122). Senator Black's opinion is that a good lobbyist always tells both sides of the story saying, "As long as they're upfront with me, we're going to have a great relationship; but, if they lie to me one time, they are out the door as far as I'm concerned" (7-29-05, 130-132). When it comes to educational lobbyists, Senator Black names two in particular: the United Suburban Schools' Association and the Oklahoma Educators' Association.

Senator Black identifies her final source of influence as area superintendents. She meets with superintendents from Tulsa County as well as surrounding counties on a monthly basis. She states, "When I'm home and have the opportunity, I do meet with them [superintendents] and find out what their concerns are, what legislation is pending that they like or don't like, what their suggestions are" (7-29-05, 113-115).

Summary

Senator Black's district demographics are relatively similar to the other district demographics analyzed in the study. Her district does encompass only one county while most of the others are made of several counties. Senator Black was the first republican as well as the first women to be elected as to represent her district in the state senate. Senator Black's successful campaign essentially initiated the GOP take-over in her

district. Obviously, this was seen as a huge benchmark by the republicans in their quest towards legislature majority.

In addition, Senator Black has personal ties to the political world, as her husband made two unsuccessful runs for office several years ago. Senator Black speaks proudly of her husband, “My husband ran my campaign the first go round in 2000 and has run my campaign since then. He is my number one coach, supporter, speech writer, nanny, housekeeper...” (7-29-05, 25-27). Interestingly, Senator Black oftentimes speaks in plural, referring to her husband and herself, when discussing her political career; hence, “we decided to run” and “nobody recruited us” are good examples of this reference (7-29-05, 24-25).

Senator Orange, District 6

Senator Orange was elected over ten years ago to represent District 6 in the Oklahoma State Legislature.

District 6 Demographics

Senator Orange’s district representation covers three counties and over four cities in the southwestern section of Oklahoma. This part of the state encompasses an urban corridor of the “partisan balance” between the north/south and the east/west sections of the state (Copeland et al, 1999, p. 277). Essentially, this means that Senator Orange’s district is the great dividing line for political affiliation with her district weighing a little heavier on the side of the GOP. District 6 includes part of the state’s largest city and is a little of an hour away from the state’s second largest city.

District 6 is comprised of over 71,000 constituents. The three counties in District 6 have a population spread of approximately 26 percent under the age of 18, 64 percent

between the ages of 18-65, and 10 percent over the age of 65. The median age is 34 years of age. The racial make-up of District 6 is 84 percent White, 4 percent African-American, 4 percent Native American, 5 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 3 percent Asian or Pacific Islander. Eighty-two percent of this district's population has a high school diploma. The median household income for the residents of District 1 is \$38,705. Eleven percent of the population is below the poverty line (Copeland et al, 1999; www.oksenate.gov).

The largest employers in District 6 include the state government, the state's largest university, the state's largest public school system, and the state's largest city payroll. Other major businesses include a national tire company and a national arts and crafts chain. The unemployment rate for District 6 is around 4.3 percent. Much of District 6 is considered to be the chief market for the state's livestock and agricultural industries. Other major sources of income for this central part of the state are oil, manufacturing, and the medical sector. The most notable characteristic of this district is that it houses the state's capitol (Copeland et al., 1999).

District 6 Political History

Historically, District 6 has no definitive affiliation to one party or the other. Brady Jackson, a democrat, held this seat during the sixties and the seventies until a republican takeover in the eighties. Since that time, no democrat has occupied the state senate seat in this district. Therefore, it has only been within recent history that District 6 could be described as more GOP territory than not. Indeed, Senator Orange describes her district as "very independent folks...very affluent, probably one of the most affluent areas in the state and very conservative" (6-30-05, 34-36).

District 6 maintains around 18,000 registered democrats and about 19,000 registered republicans. Even though there is little difference between the number of registered democrats and the number of registered republicans in this district, Senator Orange has bested every opponent by at least 15 percent since 1992. In fact, in the general election of 1992, she garnered 70 percent of the votes. In her last campaign, Senator Orange ran unopposed, and she has since solidified a dominant republican presence in the District 6 seat. Indeed, Senator Orange “encounter[ed] little democratic resistance” as projected by The Almanac of Oklahoma Politics 2000 (Copeland et al., 1999).

Personal Background/Current Political Standing

Although considered to be a native Oklahoman, Senator Orange was not raised in her district. Her childhood years were spent across state in the suburbs of the second largest city in Oklahoma. After high school, Senator Orange attended a southwestern university where she earned her degree in elementary education. She continued her education at the state’s second largest university where she earned a masters degree in special education and a doctorate degree in curriculum and instruction. Senator Orange is a veteran educator as she proudly states, “I’ve been in education all of my life. I have taught for 30 years in the public school [system]” (6-30-05, 7-8). Indeed, not only has she been employed as an educator since 1970, but she was even appointed to the National Advisory Council on Adult Basic Education in 1982 by past President Ronald Reagan. Senator Orange, a mother, is also married to an educator, as her husband is a counselor in a public school.

Being so thoroughly entrenched in the educational community for such a long duration has earned Senator Orange the right to be a respected authority on all matters regarding educational issues, and she hesitates very little when asked her opinion on such matters. Indeed, Senator Orange emphatically states, “We need to be looking at our standards at a national and international rigor. We have to compete internationally now. I want to know that they [our students] are competitive at an international level with all the other kids who graduate from high school” (6-30-05, 103-107). Senator Orange continues by saying, “We [the Oklahoma Legislature] appropriated 145 million dollars in new funding for common ed. I think education is very, very important. I want to see however, that with all the new funding, we just don’t continue to do what we’ve always done. I want to see more accountability in our schools” (6-30-05, 85, 96-98). One of Senator Orange’s most influential political actions was when she voted against SB 1644 that would fund the largest teacher pay raise in recent history.

Influential Factors

When it comes to making her decisions on educational matters, Senator Orange pinpoints her key sources that give her pause. For instance, Senator Orange finds credibility in the literature and research as presented by the Southern Region Education Board. This board is a coalition of 16 southern states who have established common goals for the southern region of the United States. Senator Orange states, “We [the Board] look at what the southern regions in those states are doing...teacher training, standard assessment, leadership” (6-30-05, 133-134). Another group Senator Orange consults is the Education Trust from Washington D.C., “They do great work in

leadership. I read all the time, [and] those are the two groups I focus on for my data” (6-30-05, 134,140).

Senator Orange also feels that it important to listen to “the producers of the wealth in this state” (6-30-05, 148-149). because we cannot improve educational quality if we don’t have the community, city councils, and chambers of commerce as other main sources of influence. She is in support of lobbyists—especially those who represent major businesses in her district such as Dayton Tire and Hobby Lobby. She feels that “lobbyists that represent those areas are very important and I study with them and I study very hard” (6-30-05, 157-159). There are some lobbyists, however, that Senator Orange will not consult regarding educational issues.

Senator Orange is the first to admit the irony of the situation: the fact that she seeks the advice and influence of business lobbyists but dismisses the lobbyists of the OEA—the Oklahoma Educator’s Association. In addition, she does not seek advice from school establishments, school boards, or school administrators. She supports this choice by saying, “Their [schools] goals are very different. They are not interested in building wealth—they are interested in consuming wealth” (6-30-05, 150-151). This is not to say that Senator Orange does not listen to school establishments, but she indicates that her support of schools can only happen by cultivating her district’s economical growth.

Summary

Senator Orange has proudly served her district for almost a decade, and she stands out as one of the most popular senators to have represented District 6 in recent history. District 6 and its demographics are similar to other Oklahoma districts except in two major areas: the number of constituents and the affluency of its constituents. Not only is

District 6 a highly populated area, but its median household income is considerably higher than other districts throughout Oklahoma.

When analyzing Senator Orange and her background, it is clear that Senator Orange is not considered to be a hometown girl in her district, as she is not as deeply rooted in her district's community as some of the other legislators in this study. Her personal ties appear to be with the educational community, as she spent over 30 years affiliated with school establishments. However, this personal relationship with the school system does not appear to influence her as one would think. Instead, Senator Orange leans heavily in direction of supporting the business sector through the communication channels offered by business lobbyists and local chambers of commerce. As Senator Orange herself so aptly states, "I deal with associations more than with individuals because associations are made up of a lot of individuals. I'll ask them [associations] what their opponents think of this bill. I expect them to tell me, so I can know what their opposition is" (6-30-05, 199-200, 230-232).

Senator Gold, District 7

Senator Gold was elected in 1998 to represent District 7 in the Oklahoma State Legislature.

District 7 Demographics

Although District 7 spans over four counties, the majority of Senator Gold's district representation covers the eastern sections of two counties in the northwestern part of Oklahoma. This part of the state consists mainly of endless plains of farms and ranches, but District 7 does encompass several large towns. The outskirts of this district are approximately 30 minutes from the downtown area of the Oklahoma City. District 7

is comprised of over 75,000 constituents and approximately 40,000 registered voters. Twenty-seven percent of the households in District 7 have children under the age of 18 living in them, 61 percent have persons between the ages of 18-65, and 12 percent of the households have persons over the age of 65 living in them (Copeland et al., 1999; www.oksenate.gov).

The racial make-up of District 7 is 86 percent White, 3 percent African American, 5 percent Native American, 4 percent Hispanic or Latino American, and 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Twenty-three percent of District 7 is considered to be college-educated. The median household for the residents of this district is \$34,670. Twelve percent of the population is below the poverty line (Copeland et al., 1999; www.oksenate.gov).

According to Senator Gold, there are very few large industries in his district. He reports the largest employers in his district to be a co-operative telephone association and an air conditioning company. He also includes several smaller oil and gas companies as other major employers. The lack of a strong industrial base is the result of many people in District 7 commuting to Oklahoma City for employment. Because of re-districting a few years ago, Senator Gold actually lost the largest city in his district—and along with that, the numerous employment opportunities the city had to offer.

District 7 Political History

District 7 can be characterized as predominantly republican country. With the exception of famed democrat, Pete McGuire, this district has consistently produced republican representatives. In fact, a democrat has not occupied this Senate district since 1981. Republican Minority Leader Terry Brose represented District 7 in the State senate

from 1991 to 1998. After Senator Brose decided against running for re-election, he retired and returned to his family business. Thus, Senator Gold was the next elected official for this office, and he has presided ever since (Copeland et al., 1999).

When Senator Gold was elected to his first term in 1998, he received almost 65 percent of the votes in both the primary and the general elections. At the time, District 7 reported almost 20,000 registered democrats and 19,000 registered republicans (Copeland et al., 1999). Senator Gold is up for re-election next year, and there is little reason to believe that he will not win again and term-out.

Personal Background/Current Political Standing

Senator Gold was born in 1944 in a city in the district he currently represents. Senator Gold, a husband and father, holds an accounting degree from Oklahoma State University. It was during his college years that Senator Gold first became interested in politics by serving as president of several political organizations. After college, Senator Gold worked as a CPA in an Oklahoma City accounting firm. It was during this time that Senator Gold ran for city treasurer of a small city and won his first political race. Four years later, Senator Gold decided to move his family back to his hometown in order to run the family car and farm vehicle dealership of which he is currently owner and CEO.

Senator Gold continued his political career by serving over 10 years on the school board, and he was also president of the local chamber of commerce. After much prodding from his son, Senator Gold decided to run for a state level office. Senator Gold won his seat in 1998 and will be up for re-election next year. Interestingly, this same son who convinced his father to run for state office is now a state representative himself. Senator Gold considers politics to be a family-affair—which is good in one sense. But,

Senator Gold is also aware that some in his district might see this in a negative light, one in which a certain family has too much power in the area. One of Senator Gold's most influential political actions was when he voted against SB 1644 that would fund the largest teacher pay raise in recent history.

Influential Factors

Senator Gold sits on the following committees: Appropriations, Education, Human Resources, Science and Technology, and Transportation. These committees seem to echo the very factors that influence his decision-making process as a state senator. For example, Senator Gold reports that he is influenced by various businesses, industries, and professions ranging car dealerships to real estate agencies to medical professionals. In fact, the lobbyists who represent these particular organizations are even more influential than the actual organizations themselves. Senator Gold recollects that he “thought lobbyists were evil people before I got elected...as a whole, I’ve had good experiences with lobbyists” (7-20-05, 137-139).

Senator Gold also identifies school superintendents as major sources of information—especially when he is mulling over educational issues. Senator Gold says that he will “usually rely on my superintendents...I have a good relationship with most...” (7-20-05, 120, 124). Interestingly, he also advises school superintendents to “get a network of lobbyists [to] explain their position on...bills” (7-20-05, 125-126).

Summary

The demographics for District 7 are relatively similar to the demographics of the other districts in this study except in the area of industry. Due to the lack of a large industrial base, many constituents in District 7 commute to Oklahoma City for

employment. Historically, the political landscape of District 7 has changed. According to Senator Gold, “In the last 20 years, there has been a major shift in registration from democrats to republicans” (7-2-05, 57-58). Senator Gold emphasizes his point more explaining, “Right now, all the county officials, all the senators and representatives, except for the county assessor and the county sheriff are republican” (7-20-05, 68-70).

Senator Gold is not only a successful businessman, but he is also a successful politician. His success as a politician is so great, that he will probably term-out as a state legislator. Senator Gold and his son, a fellow state legislator, have apparently initiated a family dynasty in the world of politics. Given the fact that Senator Gold is owner and CEO of a major car dealership in his hometown, coupled with the fact that his son is also a state legislator, it is obvious that Senator Gold is someone of great influence in his district as well as the state. Senator Gold lists his major sources of influence when it deciding important legislative issues as lobbyists, state agencies, businessmen and businesswomen, and school superintendents.

Cross-Interview Summary

When comparing data collected from the seven long interviews, a plethora of similarities and differences began to emerge. All of the long interview respondents were chosen in a purposive-random fashion based on their ties to educational issues, urban/suburban/rural representation, party affiliation, and gender. All respondents were in some way linked to educational issues by either being employed as an educator, having a spouse who was an educator, and/or by serving on the Education Committee or Sub-Committee.

Table 3 summarized the demographics of each district. The data revealed many similarities and differences. For example, both legislators from the House of Representatives represent districts of around 35,000. It should be noted that all districts represented in the House of Representatives are around 35,000 in number of constituents. All five of the legislators from the State senate represent districts between 70,000-76,000. It should be noted that all districts represented in the State senate are around 70,000-75,000 in number of constituents. Other similarities included population racial make-up in which the percentages revealed that the majority race in each district was white, with Native American as the second highest percentages in six of the seven districts. The median income for the districts were similar in that all of the districts revealed incomes in the thirty-thousand range with the exception of District 3 which had the lowest median income of \$27,481. It was interesting that District 1 had the highest median income and the highest percentage of high school diplomas, but also the highest poverty level at nineteen percent. The percent of population spread in terms of age was also every similar across the districts in the median age was in the thirties, with the majority of the population in the 18-65 range. All in all, the districts were very similar in district demographics.

Table 2

District Demographics

	District 1 Rep. Blue	District 2 Rep. Red	District 3 Senator White	District 4 Senator Green	District 5 Senator Black	District 6 Senator Orange	District 7 Senator Gold
District Population	34,448	34,182	73,205	72,438	72,809	71,651	75,519
# of Counties in District	2	1	4	4	1	3	2
District Type	Rural	Urban	Rural	Rural/ Sub/Urb	Urban	Rural/ Sub/Urb	Rural/ Sub/Urb
<u>Rounded Percent Racial Make-up</u>							
White	65	81	83	88	78	84	86
African-American	19	4	6	2	2	4	3
Native American	6	10	9	5	12	4	5
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	1	1	1	>1	3	2
Hispanic/Latino	8	4	1	4	8	5	4
Median Household Income	\$38,705	\$33,168	\$27,481	\$35,613	\$38,213	\$38,705	\$34,670
Percent Below Poverty Level	19	14	15	12	12	11	12
<u>Percent Education Level</u>							
High School Diploma	85	78	74	81	85	82	83
<u>Percent Population Spread</u>							
Under age 18	27	30	25	26	26	26	27
Between 18-65	58	57	58	61	62	64	61
Over age 65	15	13	17	13	12	10	12
Median Age	34	37	39	36	34	34	36

Table 4 summarized each district's political history. Similarities that emerged from Table 4 data included that fact that all districts except one had more registered democrats than republicans. Another similarity is that five of the seven districts were predominately represented by democrats since 1971. In contrast, it was interesting to see that three of the predominately democrat districts are now being represented by a republican, whereas the other two predominately democrat districts held on to their democrat affiliation. The two predominately republican districts still retained their republican representatives. This data supports the GOP take-over of the Oklahoma State Legislature in the most recent election. Essentially, three democrat seats were lost to

republicans, and none of the republican seats were lost to a democrat. This is significant information in regards to Oklahomans voting more and more conservatively as many legislators stated throughout their interviews.

Table 3

District Political History

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	District 6	District 7
Number of registered democrats	12,504	9,973	32,303	25,213	17,079	18,436	19,892
Number of registered republicans	3,409	6,233	6,180	9,650	14,488	19,301	18,547
Number of times democrats have held seat since 1971	17	17	18	14	17	5	6
Number of times republicans have held seat since 1971	1	1	0	4	1	13	12
Party occupying seat since 2001	Dem/ Rep split	Dem	Dem	Dem/ Rep split	Dem	Rep	Rep
Party currently occupying seat	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem	Rep	Rep	Rep

Table 5 summarized the background information of each legislator. Similarities emerged from Table 5 included the facts that all seven legislators were married, had college degrees, and were native Oklahomans. Five of the legislators were previously teachers, and two of the legislators were businessmen. In contrast to those similarities, it was interesting to notice the ages of the legislators ranged from the low forties to the sixties. Also, five of the legislators were republicans, and two were democrats. Four of the legislators were males, and three of the legislators were females. This is interesting because less than 15 percent of the legislators in the House of Representative and State Senate are female. As previously mentioned, term limits dictate that no legislator can serve more than 12 years (www.netstate.com).

Table 4

Legislator's Background

Oklahoma Legislator	Rep. Blue, Dist. 1	Rep. Red, Dist. 2	Senator White, Dist. 3	Senator Green, Dist. 4	Senator Black, Dist. 5	Senator Orange, Dist. 6	Senator Gold, Dist. 7
Party Affiliation	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem	Rep	Rep	Rep
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male
Age	44	52	58	54	46	57	61
Year Elected	2003	2004	1998	2002	2000	1996	1998
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married
Native Oklahoman	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation	Teacher Auctioneer Banker Police Officer Rancher Entertainer	Business man, Owner of Oil & Gas Company	Teacher/ School Principal Rancher City Council Mayor	Teacher	Teacher/ Teachers' Union Delegate	Teacher	Business-man, Owner/ CEO, car dealership
College Degree	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Summary

The similarities and differences between each legislator were presented over the following areas: district demographics, district political history, personal background/current political standing, and influential factors.

Summary

Representative Blue, Representative Red, and Senators White, Green, Black, Orange and Gold, are all actively involved in deciding educational legislation as part of Oklahoma's 50th Legislature. Seven long interviews that included district demographics, district political history, personal background/current political standing, and influential factors were conducted for each legislator. The seven long interviews were contrasted

and compared for emerging themes. Chapter IV will provide analysis of this data both individually and collectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Through the lens of Perpetuation Theory, the data were analyzed for each legislator on an individual basis. In addition, the data were also analyzed for all seven legislators as a collective unit as well. Throughout the analysis process, two viewpoints were taken into consideration: 1) legislator social networks and 2) the impact of legislator social networks on the decision-making process and K-12 educational funding.

Social Networks

Deriving from sociological and anthropological studies, social network theory “...examines the relationships of actors directly and sees those relationships as properties that guide social behavior” (Kuo, 1994, p.7). Social network theory entertains the concept of structures. The term *structure* is used within this context to refer to the interlocking patterns of relationships between individuals. These structures can then redirect an individual’s course of action or simply reinforce an existing course of action (Kuo, 1994). Wasserman and Faust (1994) support this notion of structures and add to the literature by identifying links or ties between these individual relationships that ultimately create social networks. These links are divided into two types: strong ties and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973).

Strong Ties

Strong ties are relationships within a social network that are very involved. Examples of strong ties would be close friends and family members. Strong ties can be

defined as “...a collection of close friends, most of whom are in touch with one another—a densely knit clump of social structure” (Granovetter, p.202, 1983).

Weak Ties

Weak ties are relationships within a social network that are less involved. These informal ties are not as developed as strong ties and are defined as “low-density networks—one in which many of the possible relational lines are absent” (Granovetter, p. 202, 1983.) Examples of weak ties would be acquaintances and co-workers. Granovetter explains how a weak tie is “not merely a trivial acquaintance tie but rather a crucial bridge between the two densely knit clumps” (1983, p.202). This “crucial bridge” helps introduce an individual to new ideas or different perspectives.

Tie Components

According to Granovetter, the strength of a tie is contingent upon any combination of the following components: 1) amount of time, 2) emotional intensity, 3) intimacy, and 4) reciprocal services. Granovetter (1973) does consider these components as categorical items; nonetheless, he determined that they are still “intracorrelated” (p. 1361).

Amount of Time. The component of *time* is extremely essential to determining the strength or weakness of one’s ties. Baker (1994, p. 203) defines a strong tie as one that is “a long-term commitment in which...ties are firmly embedded in layers of social relationships.” Basically, strong ties are the result of shared histories and projected futures. On the other hand, a tie that represents very little shared history and little or no future commitments would be characterized as a weak tie.

Emotional Intensity. Another component that determines the strength or weakness of a tie is *emotional intensity*. A strong tie will be the result of a high level of emotional intensity; furthermore, Baker (1994, p.209) explains this type of tie as one that produces a high level of interaction and builds “relationship infrastructure(s).” On the other hand, a weak tie will be the product of a relationship in which the actors have very little or no level of emotional intensity, one in which little interaction occurs.

Intimacy. The third component that determines the strength or weakness of one’s tie deals with the *intimacy* of the relationship. When members share backgrounds, social circles, and organizational positions, they usually tend to develop strong, intimate ties between each other. Baker (1994, p.201) describes this embedded relationship as a “mix of personal, social, and business ties.” Transversely, when members or actors in a network do not share backgrounds, social circles, and organizational positions, then their ties would be described as weak.

Reciprocal Services. A fourth component that determines the strength or weakness of one’s network tie is contingent upon what Baker (1994) identifies as *reciprocity*. In the social network context, Baker (1994, p.98) defines reciprocity as “a kind of organizational glue.” There are many forms of reciprocal services within one’s social networks ranging from exchanging gossip and information to supporting an idea or project. Of course, the exchange of funds or the promise of advancement is another example of these reciprocal services or favors.

Specifically in the political arena, the most common form of reciprocity is called “logrolling”—or the swapping of votes between legislators for each other’s bills. When members within a network feel that a relationship is rewarding to them via reciprocal

services, then that relationship would have strong ties. However, if a member within a network does not identify any mutual benefits or rewards, then that relationship would be characterized as having weak ties.

To better analyze the data of this study, two additional tie components were included to help determine the strength of each legislator's ties. These two components are demographic factors and contextual factors.

Demographic Factors. One's social network can also be defined by various demographic attributes such as economical income, occupational status, educational level, gender, age, and race. It is feasible to assume that the actors involved within an individual's network probably share numerous demographic factors. This type of network would be described as homophilous and indicative of strong ties (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). The more homophilous a network is, the stronger the ties will be. Hence, the less homophilous a network is, the weaker the ties will be.

Contextual Factors. The final component used to determine the strength or weakness of a member's ties dealt with the *contextual factors* of the relationships between the individuals in a network. Specifically, contextual factors of these relationships are based upon the elements of commitment, proximity, and longevity. Relationships that are long in duration, intimate in nature, and involve family members would be describe as having strong ties. Relationships that are brief, convenient, and involve acquaintances and co-workers would be described as having weak ties (Fischer, Jackson, Stueve, Gerson, & Jones, 1977).

The social network of each legislator involved in this study was analyzed using Perpetuation Theory (McPartland & Braddock, 1981) and Granovetter's (1983) notion of

strong ties and weak ties. Six components were used to determine the strength or weakness of each legislator's ties. The components of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, reciprocal services, demographic factors, and contextual factors were then graphed as having weak ties, strong ties, or weak/strong ties.

Representative Blue, District 1

When making his decisions regarding legislative matters—including those that involve educational issues -- Representative Blue used his personal social networks to provide him with feedback regarding the matter at hand. Representative Blue's decision-making process was influenced by the numerous individuals and organizations within his own social network. During his interview, Representative Blue specifically listed six factors within his personal network that influenced his decision-making process including the following: bankers, local businessmen/businesswomen, lobbyists, fellow legislators, state agencies/commissions, and the local Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter.

Personal Network

One of the factors that was part of Representative Blue's personal social network was the banking industry—specifically, the bankers themselves. Although Representative Blue was not initially familiar with the banking industry, he became immediately entrenched in the opening and the operation of a local bank branch. This was also considered a family affair of sorts, because his wife was his partner in this operation. Interestingly, both Representative Blue and his wife were initially educators and had been previously employed by local public school systems. It was only after the solicitation of a friend in the business that Representative Blue and his wife became

involved in the banking industry. This career move proved to be very lucrative, and it provided Representative Blue and his family with great financial security.

The data concerning the network consisting of Representative Blue and fellow bankers very much supported the notion of strong ties. In regards to the tie component of time, Representative Blue's network with bankers exhibits both strong and weak ties. Although Representative Blue does not have a long-term commitment and shared histories with numerous bankers, he does, however, have a long-term commitment and a shared history with one very important fellow banker—his wife. In fact, Representative Blue states, “My wife and I were both bankers...they [bank board] hired us together and we opened up a branch...” (6-21-05, 77-79).

When analyzing Representative Blue's network with bankers using the component of emotional intensity, the findings are very similar to the findings of the component of time. Representative Blue does not exhibit a high level of emotional intensity with fellow bankers except with one—again his wife. There is an assumption that when one works with his spouse, a high level of interaction occurs, thus building to the relationship infrastructure.

The tie component of intimacy is much more obvious than the first two components for it is clearly a strong tie. Several reasons support this notion. First, Representative Blue and the members of his banking network—including his wife—share similar backgrounds and organizational positions (banking executives). Second, Representative Blue obviously travels in the same social circle as his wife, and he probably travels in the same if not similar social circles as other banking executives,

since a friend—who was a banking executive—hired Representative Blue and his wife in the first place.

The fourth tie component evident in Representative Blue's social network with bankers is reciprocity or reciprocal services. Representative Blue explains that he is in the business of protecting investor's money as expected by his bank board and other banking executives. This is an obvious and high level of exchange of services, so this would be considered a strong tie. Representative Blue is expected to loan investors' money in an attempt to create more revenue when the loan is repaid. In exchange for the service he provides, Representative Blue is rewarded with a very lucrative salary. At the legislative level, Representative Blue even compares tax payers' money to those of an investor at a bank. He states, "The people's money that you're borrowing was the tax payers' dollars. So we have to be responsible for those dollars..." (6-21-05, 144-146).

The tie component of demographics between Representative Blue and his banking social network appear to be very similar in the areas of economical level, educational level, and occupational status. Given the demographic background of his district, it is likely that Representative Blue shares other attributes with his fellow bankers such as race and age. It is also likely that his fellow bankers are males, too. This very homophilous network with other bankers would be indicative of extremely strong ties.

The final tie component dealt with contextual factors. It is likely that not all of Representative Blue's relationships with fellow bankers are long-lasting and intimate in natures—as with close friends and family members. However, according to his interview, there is evidence that at least some of his relationships with fellow bankers are long-lasting and intimate. The friend who hired Representative Blue and his wife to open

a bank branch is one example, and Representative Blue's wife, herself, is another example. Therefore, the component of contextual factors would be identified in this context as both weak and strong.

In his interview, Representative Blue states that local businessmen and businesswomen do indeed influence his decision-making process as a legislator. Representative Blue feels that "business people have a grasp of the real world" (6-21-05, 347). Representative Blue's ties to people in the business industry are primarily weak, but there are ties that appear to be strong at the same time. Representative Blue was born and raised in the very district he represents, so he probably has developed some long-lasting relationships and shared histories with some local businessmen or businesswomen in his district via his numerous occupations as an auctioneer, entertainer, rancher, police officer, etc. However, there is also no evidence of a high level of interaction or intimacy with businessmen or businesswomen. In addition, Representative Blue appears to have no long-lasting or intimate relationships with anyone in the business world. Based upon this analysis, Representative Blue has weak ties in four tie components: time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and contextual factors.

On the other hand, Representative Blue's ties with businessmen and businesswomen do have strong tendencies in two areas: demographic factors and reciprocal services. Representative Blue appears to be similar to local businessmen and businesswoman in terms of economical income, occupational status, and educational level. Finally, the data appear to support the notion of strong ties in terms of reciprocity. Representative Blue says that business people "tend to understand the business side of

things”, alluding to the fact that businesses generate money instead of simply absorbing money (6-21-05, 350)

The social network that exists between Representative Blue and lobbyists is one of weak ties in the areas of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, demographic factors, and contextual factors. Indeed, there is no evidence that Representative Blue has any shared histories, intimate or emotional relationships, or similar demographics with lobbyists. However, the data does support the notion of strong ties in reciprocal services with lobbyists. Representative Blue defines lobbyists as “professional contacts...they are who we get our facts and figures on the issues from” (6-21-05, 430-431.) Representative Blue expects lobbyists to present an accurate account of both sides of an issue. This clearly helps him in his decision-making process. This would be an example of reciprocal services because Representative Blue is receiving valuable information and the lobbyists are receiving a chance to advance their causes.

The social network that exists between Representative Blue and other government officials such as fellow legislators and state commissioners is primarily comprised of weak ties. Representative Blue’s relationship with other government officials demonstrates no commitment to continue the relationship, and no emotional intensity or intimacy. There is also no evidence of shared histories with other government officials only some evidence of similar demographic factors such as occupation, education, age, gender, and race. The strongest tie appeared to be in the reciprocal services component. Representative Blue explains in his interview how other governmental legislators probe one another for information and seek advice regarding an issue.

School superintendents are another of one of Representative Blue's social networks. Even though Representative Blue and his wife were former educators, this relationship is comprised mainly of weak ties because Representative Blue shares no history, no emotional intensity or intimacy, and no commitment to future plans with school superintendents. Very few similarities exist demographically between school superintendents and Representative Blue with the exception of possibly educational level, age, and race.

The final network identified by Representative Blue was his association with his local FFA Chapter. This network was comprised of strong ties in all areas mainly because Representative Blue is a rancher and auctioneer by occupation and has been heavily tied to the agricultural industry for his entire life. Representative Blue and the local FFA Chapter had a shared history, were committed to common goals involving ranching and auctioneering, and had mutually rewarding relationships by supporting each in sustaining their common goal of successful agricultural economic issues.

Table 5

Representative Blue, District 1

Influential Factors (Social Networks)	Time	Emotional Intensity	Intimacy	Reciprocal Services	Demographic Factors	Contextual Factors
Bankers	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong/ Weak
Local Businessmen/ Businesswomen	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong	Weak
Lobbyists /PACs	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
Other Government Officials	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong/ Weak	Weak
School Superintendents	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong/ Weak	Weak
Local FFA Chapter/ Agricultural Industry	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong/ Weak

Summary and Impact of Influential Factors/Social Networks

When making decisions regarding education at the legislative level, Representative Blue of District 1 was influenced by six social networks: bankers and banking associations, local businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists and political action committees, other government officials, local school superintendents, and local FFA Chapters and the agricultural industry. Representative Blue's ties with bankers and banking associations as well as with local FFA Chapters and the local agriculture industry showed strong in all areas. Ties with other networks varied. Representative Blue's ties with local businessmen and businesswomen were a combination of weak and strong. His tie components with lobbyists and other government officials showed weak in all areas, with the exception of reciprocal services. There was a strong/weak tie in demographic factors, but overall, this would be classified as a weak-tie network. His ties with school superintendents showed weak as well in all areas, with the exception of reciprocal services. There was a strong/weak tie in demographic factors, but would be classified as a weak tie network. Reciprocal services were strong with all six social networks.

Representative Red, District 2

When making his decisions regarding legislative matters—including those that involve educational issues, Representative Red used his personal social networks to provide him with feedback regarding the issue at hand. Representative Red's decision-making process was influenced by several individuals and organizations within his own social network. During his interview, Representative Red specifically listed four factors within his personal network that influenced his decision-making process including the

following: local businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists representing various organizations, fellow legislators, and local school administrators and school teachers.

Personal Network

One of the influential factors that was part of Representative Red's social network was local businessmen and businesswomen. Representative Red is the son of a self-made businessman and is a businessman, himself. It is no wonder then, that Representative Red would share strong ties with others from the business worlds in all tie component areas. Representative Red shares a life-long history with people in the business world, many whom are family members. These close relationships provide opportunities for relationship infrastructures to develop (Baker, 1994). These relationship infrastructures are reflective of high levels of emotional intensity and intimacy.

The next influential factor identified by Representative Red involved lobbyists representing various factions. This relationship reveals weak tie components in almost all areas. There is no evidence of shared histories, but there is some indication that some level of emotional intensity exists because of shared knowledge relating to particular legislative issues. The demographic factors that may be shared are trivial, therefore weak. There is evidence of a strong tie component in reciprocity because of an exchange of information from the lobbyists for Representative Red's support of the lobbyists' issue.

The third influential factor in Representative Red's social network was fellow legislators. Because he is in his first term as a legislator, Representative Red is fairly new to the world of politics. Therefore, he looks to veteran politicians as sources of wisdom. There is a high level of communication between Representative Red and other legislators,

but this communication is really during a compressed time period of three months—or as long as the legislative session or special sessions last. This situation presents a combination of strong and weak ties in the areas of time and emotional intensity. There is shared information and the relationship is mutually rewarding; thus, the component of reciprocity is a strong tie.

In his interview, Representative Red also stated that local school administrators and school teachers influence his decision-making process. This relationship is full of strong ties. Representative Red is married to a school teacher who teaches in the very district that he represents—not to mention the district in which he was raised and educated. It comes as no surprise that Representative Red is full of shared histories, long-lasting, and committed to future plans. This relationship is mutually rewarding in that he spends time with educators on a personal level, and the educators support their hometown boy.

Table 6

Representative Red, District 2

Influential Factors (Social Networks)	Time	Emotional Intensity	Intimacy	Reciprocal Services	Demographic Factors	Contextual Factors
Businessmen/ Businesswomen	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Lobbyists	Weak	Weak/ Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
Fellow Legislators	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong	Weak
Local School Administrators/ School Teachers	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong

Summary and Impact of Influential Factors/Social Networks

When making his decisions regarding education at the legislative level, Representative Red was influenced by four social networks: local businessmen and

businesswomen, lobbyist representing various organizations, fellow legislators, and local school administrators and school teachers. Representative Red's tie components with local businessmen and businesswomen and with local school administrators and school teachers are strong. Ties with other networks varied. Representative Red's ties with lobbyists show some strong ties in two areas, but overall, the relationship is one of weak ties. Representative Red's ties with fellow legislators are a combination of strong and weak ties; overall this relationship would be considered strong. Representative Red shared strong ties in reciprocal services with all four social networks.

Senator White, District 3

When making his decisions regarding legislative matters—including those that involve educational issues, Senator White used his personal social networks to provide him with feedback regarding the matter at hand. Senator White's decision-making process was influenced by the several individuals and organizations within his own social network. During his interview, Senator White specifically listed four factors within his personal network that influenced his decision-making process including the following: legislators who represent rural district, local school administrators and teachers, the State Board of Education, and lobbyists representing numerous organizations.

Personal Network

One of the influential factors that was part of Senator White's social network was fellow legislators—specifically legislators who represented rural districts like his. Senator White emphasized how important it was for him to see issues—not in terms of republican or democrat—but more in terms of rural and urban. Therefore, it is not surprising that he identifies several fellow legislators as huge sources of information.

The data concerning the network consisting of Senator White and fellow rural legislators pretty much supported the notion of weak ties with a couple of exceptions.

The tie components of time, intimacy, and contextual factors were identified as weak ties for the following reasons: 1) the relationship was not a long-term relationship, 2) the relationship did not have a high level of intimacy, and 3) the relationship was not of close proximity and did not involve close family members or friends. On the other hand, the tie components of reciprocity and demographics were considered to be strong. Obviously, Senator White and the fellow legislators shared occupational status and educational level, and there is evidence of a mutually rewarding relationship in that rural legislators vote collectively. There was also evidence of some strong ties in the tie of emotional intensity because Senator White communicates quite often with fellow rural legislators, and he is quite passionate about issues that affect rural districts like his.

In his interview, Senator White also states that local school administrators and teachers influence his decision-making process. This relationship is full of strong ties. Senator White is a former teacher and school administrator in the very district that he represents, and he is also married to a public school teacher. It is no wonder then that Senator White has a relationship with educators that is full of shared histories, is long-lasting, and is committed to future plans. This relationship is mutually rewarding in that he spends time with educators in a personal level, and the educators support his as their political leader.

The social network that exists between Senator White and the State Board of Education is one of weak ties in the areas of time, intimacy, demographics, and contextual factors. This relationship demonstrates no long-lasting commitments, and it is

void of any or intimacy. Despite the numerous weak ties in this particular network however, there is a considerable amount of communication between Senator White and the State Board of Education to educational issues. In his interview, Senator White referenced the many issues in which he consulted the State Board of Education and inquired as to how the issues affect rural school district like his. This relationship is one of weak ties in the overall relationship, but it is strong when it comes to issues that affect educational issues—especially educational issues that affect rural school districts. The only other strong tie component in this relationship was in the area of reciprocal services. Senator White and the State Board of Education share a mutually beneficial relationship in that because they exchange important information and they seek each other's support on educational issues.

The final network identified by Senator White involved lobbyists. This relationship is very similar to Senator White's relationship with that of the State Board of Education in that it is very weak in almost all of the tie components. Senator White and the lobbyists did not share a history, were not committed to the continuation of the relationship, and shared common knowledge in non-personal issues only. It is also unknown if Senator White shared and demographical attributes with any lobbyists, but it is unlikely except in the most general of areas such as gender and age. The only strong tie component in this relationship would again be reciprocal services. The lobbyists provide information, and Senator White gives the lobbyists a chance to advance their particular cause.

Table 7

Senator White, District 3

Influential Factors (Social Networks)	Time	Emotional Intensity	Intimacy	Reciprocal Services	Demographic Factors	Contextual Factors
Legislators from rural districts	Weak	Weak/ Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak/Strong	Weak.
Local School Administrators and Teachers	Strong	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong
State Board of Education	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
Lobbyists	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak

Summary and Impact of Influential Factors/Social Networks

When making decisions regarding education at the legislative level, Senator White of District 3 was influenced by four social networks: fellow legislators from rural districts, local school administrators and teachers, the State Board of Education, and lobbyists. Senator White's ties with fellow legislators from rural districts demonstrated some components of strong ties, but overall, the ties would be considered weak. Senator White's ties with local school administrators and teachers were strong in all areas. Senator White's tie components with the State Board of Education as well as with lobbyists were weak, with the exception of reciprocal services. Senator White shared a strong tie component in reciprocal services with all four social networks.

Overall, a combination of both strong and weak ties between Senator White and his four social networks influenced his decision-making process in regards to education legislation. However, it is Senator White's strong ties to fellow rural legislators, school administrators, and teachers that appear to influence his decision-making the most. The strong and weak ties that connect Senator White to fellow legislators from rural districts are a crucial part of his decision-making process. He firmly believes that "as we

[politicians] handle legislation, much of what we have to find is that many times, it's not so much democrat or republican philosophy—but rural versus urban” (7-8-05, 79-81).

Senator Green, District 4

When making her decisions regarding legislative matters—including those that involve educational issues, Senator Green used her personal social networks to provide herself with feedback regarding the matter at hand. Senator Green's decision-making process was influenced by the numerous individuals and organizations within her own social network. During her interview, Senator Green specifically listed four factors within her personal network that influenced her decision-making process including the following: fellow legislators from rural districts, local school administrators and teachers, the State Board of Education, and lobbyists.

Personal Network

The social networks that influence Senator Green and her decision-making process includes fellow school administrators and teacher, state agencies and commission, local businessmen and businesswomen, and lobbyist representing various organizations. Because Senator Green is a retired educator from the very district she now represents, it is not surprising to see strong ties throughout this network. Senator Green has deeply shared histories with these fellow school administrators and teachers, as well as high levels of emotional intensity and intimacy. Because her campaign was a grass-roots effort initiated by her former colleagues in the education field, Senator Green developed Baker's (1994) notion of imbedded layers of social relationships. The demographics shared between Senator Green and her former educational colleagues are quite numerous including, but not limited to the following: educational level,

occupational status, sex, age, and employer. The relationship was also mutually beneficial.

The next social network mentioned by Senator Green in her interview was with state agencies and state commissions. The tie components in this social network were overwhelmingly weak except in the area of emotional intensity and reciprocity. The data supported the existence of no shared histories and no future commitments. Depending on the issue, there also may exist a higher level of emotional intensity between the Senator and a particular state agency. There was no evidence of an intimate interaction between Senator Green and the state agencies and commissions, and there was no evidence of shared demographic attributes.

The social network that existed between Senator Green and the local businessmen and businesswomen in her district supported Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties. The data supported the existence of strong ties in the area of time, reciprocal services, and demographic factors. Senator Green has shared histories with many of the local business leaders, and the two entities traveled in the same social circles. The relationship was also mutually beneficial because there was an exchange of information and consideration of each other's ideas and thoughts. There was some evidence of emotional intensity and intimacy that existed outside the boundaries of a working relationship, but nothing overwhelmingly evident.

After analyzing the data, the tie components between Senator Green and various lobbyists are weak in most aspects. Senator Green's relationship with lobbyists is void of any shared histories and is not emotional or intimate in nature. This relationship appears to be strictly professional and has no obvious shared demographics other than educational

level. There is a high level of emotional intensity only when it comes to a particular bill that needs to be passed or a specific issue that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, the strength of the tie in reciprocity is undeniable, as there is an exchange of information for the exchange of expected support.

Table 8

Senator Green, District 4

Influential Factors (Social Networks)	Time	Emotional Intensity	Intimacy	Reciprocal Services	Demographic Factors	Contextual Factors
Fellow School Administrators/ School Teachers	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
State Agencies/State Commissions	Weak	Strong/ Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
Local Businessmen/ Businesswomen	Strong	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong/ Weak
Lobbyists	Weak	Strong/ Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak

Summary and Impact of Influential Factors/Social Networks

When making decisions regarding education at the legislative level, Senator Green of District 4 was mainly influenced by four social networks: fellow administrators and school teachers, state agencies and state commissions, local businessmen and businesswomen, and lobbyists. Senator Green's ties with fellow school administrators and school teachers as well as with local businessmen and businesswomen show strong in all areas. Senator Green's ties with state agencies and state commissions are relatively weak. Senator Green's tie components with lobbyists demonstrate a combination of strong and weak ties; overall, the relationship would be seen as a relationship of weak ties.

Overall, a combination of strong and weak ties between Senator Green and the four social networks influenced her decision-making process in regards to educational legislation. Senator Green's strong ties with fellow school administrators and school teachers greatly shaped her thoughts on educational funding. Obviously, Senator Green's life-long career as a teacher afforded her many opportunities to strengthen her ties with other leaders in the educational field. With this first-hand experience still fresh in her mind, Senator Green recalled her reaction when she was first elected to the Legislature in the middle of the drastic budget cuts three years ago:

I knew at the time...we had to go in and cut the schools, also had to lay off people. They [Oklahoma Government] just didn't have any money. We had to cut all agencies and cut as low as we could, but it was just a bad year as far as funding. There just wasn't the money, and even the year before...it was bad. I knew how teachers dug out of their own pockets to try to fund projects and things in their schools' classrooms that they thought were important, especially in elementary cause there are so many extra things that you use...to supplement the regular teaching classroom. Also, when I ran, I promised that I would give back 15 percent of my legislative salary to the school systems. (7-11-05, 164-177)

Senator Green's strong ties with local businessmen and businesswomen seem to impact her decision a great deal, as she provides specific example in her interview. For example, Senator Green spoke of her concern regarding credit card problems and financial literacy after attending a business conference. She tied this problem back to the educational process and felt that schools needed to be held responsible for educating our students in financial literacy. She stated, "I thought it was important to educate...the

young people in high school and not wait until they get in trouble, because we [Oklahomans] are... in the top ten in bankruptcies and credit card debt..." (7-11-05, 251-252).

Senator Black, District 5

When making her decisions regarding legislative matters—including those that involve educational issues, Senator Black used her personal social networks to provide herself with feedback regarding the matter at hand. Senator Black's decision-making process was influenced by the numerous individuals and organizations within her own social network. During her interview, Senator Black specifically listed five factors within her personal network that influenced her decision-making process including the following: chambers of commerce, local businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists, and area superintendents.

Personal Network

One of the factors that was part of Senator Black's personal social network was the Chambers of Commerce in her district. Although Senator Black had lived in the area her whole life, she did not appear to have shared histories with any representatives from the chambers, and she did exhibit high levels of emotional intensity or intimacy with them either. No major demographics were similar between Senator Black and chamber representatives except for regional location and possibly race, gender, and age. The one certain strong tie area was in reciprocal services. Overall, this relationship is one of weak ties.

When analyzing Senator Black's network with local businessmen and businesswomen, the findings were very similar to the findings of the relationship between

Senator Black and Chambers of Commerce. Weak ties were found in the following tie components: time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and contextual factors. Senator Black shared some demographic traits with the local businessmen and businesswomen in her district. There was also evidence that this was a mutually beneficial relationship.

Senator Black's tie components with lobbyists—especially educational lobbyists—would support Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties. Senator Black was not only a member in her local teachers' union, but she also held an office. The data revealed shared histories between Senator Black and educational lobbyists, as well as Baker's (1994) notion of relationship infrastructures. Senator Black shared similar organizational positions and traveled in some of the same social circles. As a matter of fact, she is on a first-name basis with several members of the teachers' union. However, this evidence of strong ties does not mean that the relationship between the two was always positive. Senator Black recalled how

The OEA has never supported me—even when I was a member and I was running, they did not support me. This year...they supported my opposition. And, I have always found that a little hard to stomach. But, again, that is a personal issue, and I have talked to Sam about that and he admitted their mistake. He admitted their fault in the fact they didn't give me a fair shake. And so, we have to put that aside and move on (7-29-05, 163-168).

The final factor in Senator Black's personal social network was the influence of area superintendents. This relationship was strong for two reasons: Senator Black has a shared history with area superintendents 1) because of her occupation as an educator and a teachers' union delegate, and 2) because Senator Black sets aside time every month to

communicate with areas superintendents. She said in her interview, “I talk to my...administrators all the time via email. I get stuff from Dr. Bias down in Bixby and Dr. Lehman in Jenks” (7-29-05, 201-203). This relationship supports the evidence of reciprocal services in that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

Table 9

Senator Black, District 5

Influential Factors (Social Networks)	Time	Emotional Intensity	Intimacy	Reciprocal Services	Demographic Factors	Contextual Factors
Chambers of Commerce	Weak	Weak/ Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong/Weak	Weak
Businessmen/ Businesswomen	Weak	Weak/ Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong/Weak	Weak
Lobbyists	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak/Strong
Area Superintendents	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak

Summary and Impact of Influential Factors/Social Networks

When making decisions regarding education at the legislative level, Senator Black of District 7 was influenced by four social networks: Chambers of Commerce, local businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists, and area superintendents. Senator Black’s ties with Chambers of Commerce were a combination of weak and strong ties. Senator Black’s ties with local businessmen and businesswomen were mainly weak. Senator Black’s tie components with educational lobbyists and area superintendents were strong. Senator Black shared a strong tie component in reciprocal services with all four social networks.

Overall, a combination of strong and weak ties between Senator Black and the four social networks influenced her decision-making process in regards to educational funding. Senator Black’s weak ties to the business world via the Chambers of Commerce

or the individual businessmen and businesswomen themselves very much impacted her decision-making process. Also, Senator Black's strong ties with the teachers' union and area superintendents apparently play a huge role in her decision-making process. All in all, Senator Black feels that "as a Senator, I represent 75,000 people, and they're all going to have different points of view. But, there's no way that I can represent [them] if they don't tell me what they think" (7-29-05, 208-210).

Senator Orange, District 6

When making her decisions regarding legislative matters—including those that involve educational issues, Senator Orange used her personal social networks to provide herself with feedback regarding the matter at hand. Senator Orange's decisions-making process was influenced by the several individuals and organizations with her social network. During her interview, Senator Orange specifically listed four factors within her social network that influenced her decision-making process including the following: the Southern Regional Education Board, area businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists, and local community leaders.

Personal Network

One of the factors that was part of Senator Orange's personal social network included a very specific organization, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). The data concerning Senator Orange and the SREB very much supported the notion of weak ties. In regards to the component of time, Senator Orange's relationship with the board was not long-lasting and had relatively low levels of emotional intensity and intimacy. There did appear to be some level of emotional intensity in the definition of Baker's notion of "relationship infrastructure" Senator Orange speaks of working with

other members of SERB to “look at what southern regions in those areas of teacher training, standard assessment, and leadership (6-30-05, 83-84). It also appeared as if Senator Orange’s relationship with the SREB was void of future commitments and was not close in proximity. Senator Orange, however, did share some minor demographics with the members of the SREB such as educational level, occupational status, and the southern regional demographic itself.

Another factor involved in Senator Orange’s social network was the influence of local businessmen and businesswomen. The “producers of wealth” shared weak ties with Senator Orange in terms of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and contextual factors. Specifically, there was no evidence that the relationship was long-lasting, committed, and intimate. Obviously, Senator Orange did share some demographic attributes with the local business leaders such as occupational status and perhaps educational level. There was also evidence of reciprocal services between Senator Orange and the SREB in that information was exchanged and positions were supported.

Senator Orange identified the third influential factor in her social network as lobbyists. Senator Orange found lobbyists to be an extremely important and necessary part of her social network. Just like her ties with the SREB and local businessmen and businesswomen, Senator Orange had developed weak ties with the lobbyists in her network. Again, there was no evidence that this relationship was long-lasting or had future commitments. There was also no evidence of intimate interaction, and there did not appear to be any shared demographics. The only strong tie was seen in the area of reciprocity because the relationship was mutually beneficial to both parties.

The final influential factor in Senator Orange's social network involved the community members in her district. Senator Orange included members of the city council and the chamber of commerce in this category. This relationship did not appear to have any shared histories—probably because Senator Orange was not raised in her district. There was also no evidence of an intimate or emotional intensity in the relationship. The only strong tie again appeared in the area of reciprocal services.

Table 10

Senator Orange, District 6

Influential Factors (Social Networks)	Time	Emotional Intensity	Intimacy	Reciprocal Services	Demographic Factors	Contextual Factors
Southern Regional Education Board	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong/Weak	Weak
Businessmen/Busi nesswomen	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong/Weak	Weak
Lobbyists	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
Community Leaders	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong/Weak	Weak

Summary and Impact of Influential Factors/Social Networks

When making decisions regarding education at the legislative level, Senator Orange of District 6 was influenced by four social networks: the Southern Regional Educational Board, local businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists, and local community leaders. Senator Orange's ties with the Southern Regional Education Board were essentially weak, with the exception of reciprocal services. Likewise, Senator Orange's ties with local businessmen and businesswomen were basically weak in nature, with the exception of reciprocal services. Senator Orange's ties with lobbyists as well as with local community leaders were weak, with the exception of reciprocal services.

Overall, a pattern of weak ties between Senator Orange and the four social networks influenced her decision-making process in regard to educational funding. Although Senator Orange was a retired educator and was married to a fellow educator, it was interesting to see that she did not list educational leaders specifically as main sources of influence. The assumption can be made that Senator Orange would have strong ties with educational leaders, and it appears that she does not use these strong ties to influence her decisions in regards to education. Senator Orange uses social networks to which she has weak ties to shape her thoughts when it comes to common education funding. Senator Orange also references lobbyists and a regional education board as sources of influence. Senator Orange stated, “I deal with associations more than with individuals because associations are made up of a lot of individuals” (6-30-05, 153-154).

Senator Gold, District 7

Personal Network

One of the factors that was part of Senator Gold’s personal social network included the local businessmen and businesswomen from his district. Because Senator Gold was born and raised in the very district that he presently represents, strong ties were clearly evident in his relationship with the local businessmen and women in his district. Senator Gold was and is currently a businessman himself, as he is President and CEO of a family-owned car dealership. His relationship with many of the business leaders in his district demonstrates shared histories and higher levels of emotional intensity and intimacy. Other businesses leaders in his district are family members as well. Senator Gold does travel in the same social circles with his fellow business leaders, and he shares numerous demographic attributes with them, also. Senator Gold also shares common

information and goals with the other business leaders; hence, there is evidence of a mutually rewarding relationship between the two.

Senator Gold also stated that he was greatly influenced by the many lobbyists who contact him regarding issues—especially those that involve educational issues. The ties of this social network between Senator Gold and lobbyists were consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of a relationships of convenience—one that did not have a shared history and was not long lasting. The relationship had no evidence of commitment or intimacy and was based on a working-type relationship as opposed to a family relationship. Because there was an exchange of information from the lobbyists for the possible future support from Senator Gold, this relationship was very strong in the area of reciprocity.

Senator Gold also used local school superintendents as sources of information when making decisions regarding educational issues. The ties in this social network were essentially weak with the exception of two areas: reciprocal services and demographics. Senator Gold receives important information from school superintendents; in return, school superintendents attain an opportunity to advance their cause or particular issue. This is a mutually beneficial relationship. Several demographics are shared between Senator Gold and his local school superintendents such as occupational status and educational level. For the most part, however, this relationship is one of weak ties. The relationship does not really have high levels of emotional intensity and do no appear to be very intimate. This relationship is basically based on a professional level and is convenient in nature.

Senator Gold identified a final source of influence in the form of state agencies. He specifically spoke of the Department of Human Services and the Department of Corrections as sources of influences. His ties within this network appear to be weak overall. There is no long-lasting relationship with certain individuals, no commitment, and no intimacy. This appeared to be a strictly professional relationship. This relationship was strong in the area of reciprocal services in that information was shared and ideas were supported or at least acknowledged.

Table 11

Senator Gold, District 7

Influential Factors (Social Networks)	Time	Emotional Intensity	Intimacy	Reciprocal Services	Demographic Factors	Contextual Factors
Businessmen/ Businesswomen	Strong	Strong/ Weak	Strong/ Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong
Lobbyists	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
School Superintendents	Strong/ Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong	Weak
State Agencies	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak

Summary and Impact of Influential Factors/Social Networks

When making decisions regarding education at the legislative level, Senator Gold of District 7 was influenced by four social networks: local businessmen and businesswomen, lobbyists, school superintendents, and state agencies. Senator Gold's ties with local businessmen and businesswomen were strong. Senator Gold's ties with lobbyists were weak, with the exception of reciprocal services. Senator Gold's ties with school superintendents were a combination of weak and strong ties. Senator Gold's ties with state agencies were weak, with the exception of reciprocal services. Senator Gold shared a strong tie component in reciprocal services with all four social networks.

Overall, a combination of strong and weak ties between Senator Gold and the four social networks influenced his decision-making process in regards to educational legislation. Senator Gold's strong ties to the business world greatly shaped his thoughts on educational funding. Although Senator Gold recognizes the need for money in education, his background in business and accounting influence him to consider how to generate money for education as opposed to merely spending money on education. Senator Gold stated, "Whatever you raise locally, you got to keep. The way it is now, the more you raise locally, the less you get from the state. So, there's no advantage to getting local money" (7-20-05, 192-194). Finally, Senator Gold's strong tie component in reciprocal services is similar to the data found with the other legislators.

Collective Analysis

The social networks of the seven legislators and the impact of those social networks on the decision-making process of each legislator were analyzed.

Impact of Social Networks

When making their decisions regarding K-12 educational funding, the seven legislators who participated in this study used numerous social networks to influence and shape their decision-making process. A collective analysis of the seven interviews reveals that the social networks of the legislators can be categorized as the following: businessmen/businesswomen, lobbyists, fellow legislators and other state officials, school administrators and teachers, and miscellaneous.

Businessmen/businesswomen. Six of the legislators identified local businessmen and businesswomen as sources that influence their decision-making process. This network with local businessmen and businesswomen consisted of both strong and weak

ties. Overall however, out of these six legislators, five of them revealed strong tie relationships with the business people in their district. Representative Blue of District 1 and Senator Gold of District 7 are businessmen by trade and have numerous connections in the corporate world; therefore, it is not surprising that they are sensitive to educational needs but feel that there should be accountability for educational funds. In fact, Senator Gold made decisions in previous legislation to author bills that would allow school districts to vote up to ten mills. He sees this as a way for schools to be more self-supportive, much like a self-owned business is operated.

In addition, Senator Orange is especially affected by local businesses, and she essentially summed up the sentiments of the other five legislators when she stated, “I’m very pro business, pro economic development because we cannot improve education if we don’t have the funding for it. I listen to the producers of the wealth in our state...” (6-30-05, 114-115).

Lobbyists. The influence of lobbyist as a social network was evident in all seven of the legislators interviewed for this study. Six out of the seven social networks between legislators and lobbyists revealed weak ties. However, all seven legislators shared a commonality in having a strong tie component in reciprocal services with lobbyists. The impact of lobbyist in the decision-making process of legislators is undeniable according to the responses of the legislators interviewed in this study. Every legislator basically shared the opinion that lobbyists are a crucial part of decision-making process. Senator Black of District 5, as well as the other six legislators, view lobbyists as great sources of information. She stated that lobbyists “...are the people who know the specific topic much better than I do. So, I look at a lobbyist as an educator rather than what people

normally would think of as a lobbyist” (7-29-05, 121-122). Representative Blue of District 1 echoed this thought when he stated, “A lot of people bad mouth lobbyists. But lobbyists are professional contacts basically. They are the ones who we get our facts and figures on issues from. Well, they take a lot of people out to dinner, but part of that is relationship building” (7-12-05, 433-434).

An interesting point to be made about lobbyists is that every legislator made a reference to the credibility of the lobbyists. Time and time again, the legislators spoke of the unwritten rule, “your word is your bond,” when consulting lobbyists. Senator Black stated that she will consult lobbyists “as long as they tell me the truth and tell me both sides of the story...” (7-29-05, 130-131). Senator Gold supported this notion when he said, “The only thing a lobbyist has is their honesty. If they ever mislead you, they’ll never be trusted again” (7-20-05, 137-138). Senator Gold alludes to contacting other legislators about a dishonest lobbyist, thus supporting and enforcing the social network through the use of weak ties among legislators. Senator White supported Senator Gold’s opinion of dishonest lobbyist when he stated, “If a lobbyist ever lied to one of us [politicians], they’d never get in our office again. And we would talk about it with other legislators. If you’re a lobbyist and you’ve lied to me, then you can forget about coming back into my office” (7-8-05, 324-326). Overall, every legislator responded as having very positive, harmonious, and trusting relationship with lobbyists, with the exception of one—teachers’ union lobbyists.

Interestingly and ironically, several of the legislators do not trust lobbyists representing OEA and NEA regarding educational issues. In fact, Representative Blue compared these lobbyists to spoiled children when he stated, “It’s like a screaming kid,

and if you don't throw it a cookie...the screaming kid wants a cupcake. No screaming kid, how about a cracker? That screaming kid is not going to settle for a cracker" (6-21-07, 211-217).

Fellow Legislators. Five out of the seven legislators reported that another source influence would come from fellow legislators or other governmental officials representing state agencies. Four out of these five legislators revealed weak ties in their social networks with fellow legislators and other governmental officials. Again, there was overwhelming evidence to support the notion that state legislators are greatly influenced by fellow politicians and other governmental officials. Representative Blue stated, "I've got a tremendous amount of respect for Darrel Bryce, for instance. Darrel is a former congressman...his issues may vary, but I really think he has very sound judgment. He has a very good grasp on how this [a political decision] is going to affect you" (6-21-05, 441-453). Representative Red, Senator White, Senator Green, and Senator Gold all responded as being greatly influenced by fellow legislators or other governmental officials when making legislative decisions. In fact, Senator White said in his interview, "We have 48 senators. Twenty-five percent of them are lawyers...there are five or six with an education background, car dealers...insurance salesmen, retired people, probation officers...we have male, female, black, white, young, old, urban, rural. We have to work together" (7-8-05, 295-299).

School Administrators and Teachers. The influence of school administrators and teachers as a social network was evident in six out of the seven legislators interviewed. Four out of the six legislators revealed having strong ties with school administrators and/or teachers on their district. The data from the interviews supports the notion that the

impact of the social networks between school representatives and local politicians is a huge determining factor in the decision-making process.

Representative Blue, Representative Red, and Senators White, Green, Black, and Gold all stated that local school superintendents, principals, and teachers greatly influenced their decision-making process regarding educational legislation. Senator Black stated, “I consult all of my superintendents on a monthly basis” (7-29-05, 105). And, Senator Green stated, “Most of the time...I contact the [school] administrators in that area [and] visit them” (7-11-05, 298-300).

The one legislator (Senator Orange) who did not reference any school personnel as an influential factor did, however, cite a regional education board as an influential factor. This information essentially supports the fact that basically all seven legislators are influenced in some fashion by school representatives at various levels.

Miscellaneous. The influential factors or social networks that could not be categorized into local businessmen/businesswomen, lobbyists, fellow legislators, or school representatives were classified as miscellaneous networks. These networks include sources such as FFA chapters, specific community leaders, and close friends or family members who were not part of the other categories. This is not to assume that these miscellaneous sources are not as important as the other social networks; it is simply that they were not cited as frequently in the interviews as the other four categories.

Summary

The social networks of seven Oklahoma legislators play an important role in the decision-making process of Representative Blue, Representative Red, and Senators White, Green, Black, Orange, and Gold. Both strong and weak ties are evident in social

network categories that include local businessmen/businesswomen, lobbyists, fellow legislators, and school representatives.

Representative Blue, Senator Green, and Senator Black's social networks that influence educational legislation are comprised equally of both strong and weak ties, whereas Representative Red's social networks were comprised mainly of strong ties. Senator White, Senator Orange, and Senator Gold's social networks were comprised mainly of weak ties.

Summary

The individual networks of seven Oklahoma legislators were examined to determine what influential factors (social networks) affected their decision-making process on educational legislation and the impact of those social networks. In each interview, every legislator cited that local businessmen/businesswomen, fellow legislators, and/or school representatives greatly affect their decision-making process. Every legislator also reported that lobbyists hugely impact their decision-making process. The data is somewhat consistent with the notion of Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981), network analysis (Wells & Crain, 1994), and tie strength (Granovetter, 1973) in that two of the cited social networks, lobbyists and fellow legislators, revealed a weak tie relationship.

However, what is not consistent with these notions is that the other two social networks, local businessmen/businesswomen and school personnel, revealed a strong tie relationship. Essentially, the data from this study revealed a combination of both strong ties and weak ties equally affected the decision-making process of the seven legislators

interviewed in this study. The summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of this study are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND COMMENTARY

This chapter includes a summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications, and commentary. This information was gathered from the data of seven long interviews with legislators from the 50th Oklahoma Legislature.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of Oklahoma's state politicians' strong ties and weak ties and the impact of those associations upon their decision-making process, and ultimately, K-12 educational funding. The purpose of this study was accomplished by

- Data collected from long interviews from seven members of both the State Senate and the House of Representatives based on their ties to education via committee or occupation, gender, rural/urban/suburban demographic, and party affiliation;
- Data presented and summarized individually and collectively in four areas: district demographics, district political history, legislator personal background and current political standing, and influential factors upon each legislator's decision-making process in regards to educational legislation; and
- Data analyzed individually and summarized collectively through the lens of Braddock (1980) and McPartland and Braddock's (1981) Perpetuation Theory in conjunction with Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties and weak ties in six

- Tie component categories: time, emotional intensity, intimacy, reciprocal services, demographic factors, and contextual factors.

Respondent Demographics

A review of pertinent literature was completed before any data collection commenced, and the data were cast against the literature through this study. Respondent demographics were categorized into four sections: district demographics, district political history, personal background information and current political standing, and influential factors.

District Demographics The seven districts represented in this study were similar in district demographics. The median incomes for the districts were within a ten thousand dollar range with six of the seven districts differing by only five thousand dollars. In addition, the districts demonstrated similar results in racial make-up, population size, and population spread. However, the data revealed notable differences in the number of counties represented in each district, high school education, and poverty level. An interesting note was that the district with the highest median income also had the highest poverty level.

District Political History The state trend of having more registered democrats was reflected in this study with the exception of one district. Also reflecting the state trend was the dominance of the Democratic Party until the recent take-over by the Republican Party. In the most recent election in regards to the districts represented in this study, three democrat seats were lost to republicans, whereas none of the republican seats were lost to the democrats. These data support the current trend of Oklahoma voting more conservatively at the local, state, and national levels.

Personal Background/Current Political Standing Similarities in this area were revealed in the legislators' marital status, educational levels, and Oklahoma native status. A majority of the legislators were former educators, and two of the legislators were businessmen. The ages of the legislators ranged from the early forties to the late sixties. Four of the legislators were male, and three were female. This does not reflect the state trend in which less than 15 percent of the state's legislators are women. Party affiliation was split fairly evenly between democrat and republican, and term limits ranged from 2-11 years.

Influential Factors The social networks of seven Oklahoma legislators play an important role in the decision-making process. Both strong and weak ties are evident in social network categories that include local businessmen/businesswomen, lobbyists, fellow legislators, and school representatives. Representative Blue, Senator Green, and Senator Black's social networks that influence educational legislation are comprised equally of both strong and weak ties, whereas Representative Red's social networks were comprised mainly of strong ties. Conversely, Senator White, Senator Orange, and Senator Gold's social networks were comprised mainly of weak ties.

Findings

Using the lens of Braddock's (1980) and McPartland & Braddock's (1981) Perpetuation Theory in conjunction with Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties and weak ties, this study analyzed the data to reveal the influences on the decision-making process in regards to educational funding of seven Oklahoma state legislatures.

Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) and the concept of strong ties and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) served as a useful tool in

determining the influential factors of Oklahoma's state legislators and the impact of these social networks on educational funding. These theories provided a lens in which to view the inner workings of political networks. At times, however, it was difficult to determine if a tie was strong or weak because Granovetter (1973) did not identify a definitive way to accurately measure the four tie components.

Several researchers after Granovetter, however, further studied the concept of weak and strong ties. They provided specific definitions as to more accurately define a tie component's strength or weakness. Baker's (1994) analysis of the tie components of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services was conducive in determining the strength or weakness of one's ties. Furthermore, the tie component of demographic factors, as defined by McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001) provided yet another way to ascertain the strength of one's ties as a result of a homophilous network. Finally, the tie component of contextual factors and the notion of a relationship of convenience provided a mechanism in which to further explain weak ties (Fischer et al., 1977).

The following specific findings emerged:

- State legislators use both strong and weak ties to seek information regarding legislative issues. Overall, the social networks as a result of weak ties appear more prevalent and influential than the social networks as a result of strong ties.
- Legislators, whose occupations had been in the business world, clearly have strong ties with local businessmen and businesswomen, and these strong ties greatly influence the decision-making process of the legislators. The data from Representative Blue, Representative Red and Senator Gold's interviews showed that these strong ties are important in their decision-making process. When

legislators do not have strong ties to local businessmen and businesswomen, they still identified people in the business world as sources of tremendous influence; therefore, legislators are greatly influenced by people in the business world, regardless of the ties between them.

- Legislators are greatly influenced by local school administrators, teachers, and other school personnel regardless of the strength or weakness of the ties. With the exception of Senator Orange, all the legislators in this study identified school personnel as sources of influence. This finding is somewhat ironic because Senator Orange is a former teacher.
- Legislators are extremely influenced by lobbyists. The social network between legislators and lobbyists is one of weak ties. The only exception to this is that the tie component of reciprocal services is one of strong ties. Legislators clearly have a “quid pro quo” relationship with lobbyists in that information is exchanged for support of one’s issue. This social network, however, is weak overall and appears to be the most influential of all the networks mentioned in this study. Ironically, legislators are not influenced by educational lobbyists. As a matter of fact, there is a relationship of distrust between legislators and the Oklahoma Educator’s Association and the National Educator’s Association.
- Both male and female legislators have very similar social networks. There is no evidence that gender affects or determines the sources of influence in making decisions at the legislative level.
- State legislators are heavily influenced by fellow legislators or other governmental officials, and this is a relationship of weak ties. The data also

reveal some evidence that demographics affect the decision-making process of legislators. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook's (2001) notion of a homophilous network appears in the strong tie relationships of the rural legislators versus the strong tie relationships of the urban legislators.

Conclusions

The results of this research generated several conclusions about the decision-making process of legislators in the Oklahoma Legislature in regards to K-12 educational funding. First, legislators are extremely busy individuals because most have full-time occupations in addition to their legislative duties. During session, they work unthinkable hours and dedicate a tremendous amount of time studying issues ranging from agriculture and transportation to business and education. They are forced to make decisions in a very short time that may have huge ramifications. Oftentimes, most politicians cannot do the fact-finding themselves and must rely on the opinions, advice, and thoughts of others. The communication with these influential sources, coupled with the actions of the legislators, have a tremendous impact on education legislation. Link this conclusion to ties/networks. I think this can be done quite easily.

Second, legislators basically identify the same networks as being the most influential in regards to educational legislation. These networks include local businessmen/businesswomen, lobbyists, other governmental officials, and school personnel. These networks reflect both strong and weak tie relationships; however, the weak tie relationships appear more prevalent and influential—as is the case with lobbyists.

Third, the relationship between legislators and lobbyists should never be underestimated. Lobbyists are extremely powerful entities—more powerful than party affiliation and gender association. Legislators view lobbyists as accurate sources of information, and the relationship is surprisingly honest and one of courtesy. The only exception would be the relationship with educational lobbyists. Legislators do not appear to respect or value the opinions of these two organizations, nor do they seek out the opinions of the OEA and the NEA. Essentially, legislators trust educational lobbyists very little, when ironically, lobbyists for other interest groups are the most trusted. School administrators should recognize the lack of ties and networks between educational lobbyists and legislators and make extreme efforts to remedy this situation.

Fourth, the educational community has much ground to make up in terms of being a recognizable force in regards to educational legislation. The educational community does have a voice and they are influential, but not nearly as much as the business sector or other governmental persons. Legislators do listen to school personnel, but there seems to be a “black spot” on the face of the educational community in the form of teachers’ unions. Legislators dismiss these entities as merely greedy labor unions that are either not aware of or not sensitive to the bigger picture of the state’s economics. It is important that educators build ties and networks with the business sector which will, in turn, build ties and networks with state legislators.

Fifth, the ties (both strong and weak) among legislators and the business community perpetuate the continued practice of placing a higher priority on business issues; thus, business-related items are more likely to influence the decision-making process of legislators when it comes to funding.

Sixth, the weak tie relationship among educational lobbyists and legislators does little to affect the decision-making process of the legislators when it comes to funding K-12 education. The last two findings do not support Perpetuation Theory entirely (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) in that the weak ties were not a factor in the perpetuation of business.

Recommendations and Implications

The findings of this research produced substantive results in the areas of theory, research, and practice. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) provide that a notable study is one that makes a contribution to research by further developing or adding to existing knowledge and by impacting current practices.

Theory

Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) was used as a lens to examine the effect of Oklahoma state legislators' social networks on their decision-making process in regards to K-12 education funding. This study was conducted by using Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties to analyze the strength of the legislators' collective and individual social networks. This research revealed that the weak tie relationship between legislators and lobbyists impacted their decision-making process more so than the strong tie relationships between legislators and other social networks. The research added to the knowledge base of theory by showing the usefulness of Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) and strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) in identifying how the extreme strength of a single tie component (reciprocity) in a weak-tie relationship greatly impacts the decision-making process of a politician.

Oddly, Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties is limited by the subjective definitions of the tie components themselves. Researchers, in trying to determine the strength or weakness of a particular tie component, must rely on their own value judgments before labeling a tie as "weak" or "strong". I, in this particular study, actually counted the number of "weak" and "strong" labels that I assigned to each tie component. Whichever label had the higher count is the label that I bestowed upon that particular tie component. This method seemed too subjective, and I second-guessed several of my "labels"—especially if the counts came out even in number or close to it. A more specific definition and a more objective way of measuring one's tie components would be conducive to social network theory.

Furthermore, an additional research study needs to be undertaken to specifically examine the effect of the tie component of reciprocity or "logrolling" between the social networks of legislators themselves and the impact of logrolling on K-12 funding. It is imperative that the specifics of this relationship be studied in order for educational proponents to gain a better understanding of this process. Perhaps by fully comprehending this particular relationship, educational proponents will be able to better position themselves in the reciprocal process; thus, the perpetuation of abysmal Oklahoma educational funding will be thwarted.

Research

The findings of this study broadened the knowledge base by providing documentation of the effect of Oklahoma legislators' social networks on their decision-making process in educational funding. This study can be used by local school boards, school administrators, and educational lobbyists to give them insight into Oklahoma

legislators' perspectives when making decisions that will affect educational funding. No previous research was found in the literature that involved Perpetuation Theory and the political decision-making process and educational funding.

Additional research might examine other states such as New Jersey and Connecticut, who traditionally have the highest levels of common educational funding, and the social networks of their state politicians. How do these states perpetuate the practice of making educational funding a top priority year after year? What are their state legislators' social networks, and how do these social networks help cultivate and maintain the premise that the education of their state's youth is a funding priority? In essence, why is Oklahoma perpetually one of the worst states when it comes to educational funding, and why is New Jersey perpetually one of the best?

Also, according to the findings of this study, educational lobbyists, like the NEA or the OEA, have little impact on the decision-making process of our state legislators. Not only do these lobbyists have little impact, they actually appear to have an adverse impact. The legislators involved in this study spoke of these groups with such disdain, it is reasonable to assume that the legislators dismiss these groups as merely greedy, ill-informed consumers of wealth. NEA and OEA are purportedly powerful entities, but as seen in this study, they are highly and ironically ineffective. Why is this so? A study of the social network between legislators and educational lobbyists may reveal data that would better explain this situation.

Practice

In an effort to make educational funding a top priority in the state of Oklahoma, educational leaders have been encouraged to develop ties with their local politicians.

Previous research has provided that social network ties are instrumental in the information-sharing process and therefore conducive to future change (Granovetter, 1973).

This study demonstrated how the legislators' practice of seeking advice from lobbyists—except of course educational lobbyists—allowed them to access information that they identified as practically instantaneous and mostly accurate. In the brief time that state legislators have to make important decisions that affect an entire state, it is imperative that they have the facts at their fingertips. They expect these facts to be trustworthy and the sources to be credible. This is simply not the case in present-day Oklahoma when the educational lobbyists are practically avoided at the legislative level. Therefore, the implication of this study is that Oklahoma educational leaders should form a different educational lobby that is far-removed from the NEA and the OEA. This lobby should include school board members, school administrators, teachers, and even community leaders. Their goals should include achieving and maintaining access to our state legislators and to be viewed as credible, trustworthy sources of information. If educational lobbyists were to achieve the same level of credibility as other lobbyists, Oklahoma state legislators would more likely seek information from them, and thus include them in the decision-making process.

Commentary

This study began as an attempt to explain the continued lack of educational funding in the great state of Oklahoma. The beginning assumption was that politicians, because of their disconnect or lack of connections with the educational world, did not have a real and current picture of the educational economical quagmire that encompasses

this state. It was also assumed that even if legislators had connections to the educational world, this did not mean that they necessarily understood or even agreed with the current situation of an “educational crisis”. Finally, it was assumed that a study of the legislators’ social networks would reveal that their strong-tie relationships with people close to them would be very influential in their decision-making on legislative matters, including education legislation. This research did not entirely support those assumptions.

What the research did demonstrate was that while the strong-tie relationships among the legislators and their social networks did affect their decision-making process, these strong-tie relationships were not nearly as effective as the weak-tie relationships between legislators and lobbyists, with the exception of educational lobbyists. This study also revealed that educational lobbyists are quite ineffective, and state legislators find little credibility in groups like NEA and OEA. It is essential for our state educational leaders to realize the importance of developing and maintaining a credible educational lobby.

At the beginning of my dissertation process, I knew that I wanted to focus my study on an area that I identified as a weakness. Of course, I immediately identified politics and educational funding as subject areas about which I knew very little. At the beginning of this study, I *tentatively* believed politics and educational funding to be overwhelming, overly-complicated content areas. Now, at the end of my study, I *firmly* believe politics and educational funding to be overwhelming, overly-complicated subjects.

Although I am still not an expert when it comes to politics and educational funding, I am no longer wholly intimidated by funding formulas and governmental

hierarchy. A year ago at age 33, I became the youngest principal, as well as the first female principal, hired at Sapulpa High School; I wasn't even sure as to how to pay the phone bill, let alone understand the intricacies of an entire state budgeting process. However, since completing this study, I now have a modest understanding of educational politics and educational funding. Throughout the process of this study, I have gained both the knowledge and confidence to develop good relationships with the politicians in my area. In order to be a better educational advocate in the future, my goal is to become more politically active in my district in order to broaden my own social networks with our state's politicians.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(After introducing myself, I will engage in conversation around the following grand tour questions.)

Background

1. Please tell me about yourself – as an individual and as a state legislator.
2. Please tell me about your district.
3. Please describe the latest decisions regarding educational funding.
What are your feelings regarding these developments?
4. May I have a copy of your voting record?
5. Do you have any other documents that might explain the decision-making of state legislators?

Perpetuation Theory

6. From whom did you get advice?
7. Whom do you contact or who contacts you during the voting process?
(friends, political action committees, constituents, lobbies, etc.)
8. Why did you contact these individuals? Why do the individuals contact you?
9. Who or what had the greatest influences on your voting?

APPENDIX B IRB APPROVAL

PLEASE CONSULT THE IRB APPLICATION GUIDE BEFORE COMPLETING THIS APPLICATION.

<h1 style="margin: 0;">Application for Review of Human Subjects Research</h1> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">Submitted to the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board Pursuant to 45 CFR 46</p>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> IRB Number FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
Title of Project: The Study of the Decision-Making Process of Oklahoma State Legislators and K-12 Funding		
Is the Project externally funded? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, complete the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Agency: Grant No: OSU Routing No:		
Type of Review Requested: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited Special Population <input type="checkbox"/> Full Board		
Principal Investigator(s): <i>I acknowledge that this represents an accurate and complete description of my research. If there are additional PIs, provide information on a separate sheet.</i>		
_____ Name of Primary PI (typed)	_____ Signature of PI	_____ 5-5-05 Date
_____ EAHD Department	_____ College of Education College	
_____ 729 S. Boyd, Sapulpa, OK 74066 PI's Address (Street, City, State, Zip)	_____ 1-918-227-5019 Phone	_____ jenyferg@sapulpa.k12.ok.us E-Mail
_____ Name of Co-PI (typed)	_____ Signature of Co-PI	_____ Date
_____ Department	_____ College	
_____ PI's Address	_____ Phone	_____ E-Mail
Adviser (complete if PI is a student): <i>I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are properly protected.</i>		

Dr. Adrienne Hyle Adviser's Name (typed)	_____ Signature of Adviser	_____ Date
EAHED Department	College of Education College	
202 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078	1-405-744-6368	aeh@okstate.edu
Adviser's Address	Phone	E-Mail

NOTE: If sufficient space is not provided below for a complete answer in sufficient detail for the reviewer to fully understand what is being proposed, please use additional pages as necessary.

<p>1. Describe the purpose and the research problem in the proposed study.</p> <p>The present state of our K-12 funding represents a contradiction within the Oklahoma Legislature. Specifically, most politicians claim to place a priority on educational funding; however, schools seem to have always struggled with a lack of funding, and even more so since the drastic budget cuts from 3 years ago. Why does this contradiction exist?</p> <p>Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore ways in which Perpetuation Theory and network analysis via strong ties/weak ties explain the decision-making process in regards to K-12 funding of 8 Oklahoma legislators.</p>
<p>2. (a) Describe the subjects of this study:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Describe the sampling population: Members of the 50th Oklahoma State Legislature 2) Describe the subject selection methodology (i.e. random, snowball, etc): Purposive Sampling 3) Describe the procedures to be used to recruit subjects. Include copies of scripts, flyers, advertisements, posters or letters to be used: Faxed copy of interview protocol (Appendix A) 4) Number of subjects expected to participate: 8 5) How long will the subjects be involved: 20 to 30 minute interview 6) Describe the calendar time frame for gathering the data using human subjects: 1 week at state capitol during the month of June 2005 or July 2005. 7) Describe any follow-up procedures planned: Transcript of interview will be provided to legislators <p>(b) Are any of the subjects under 18 years of age? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>If Yes, you must comply with special regulations for using children as subjects. Please refer to IRB Guide.</i></p>
<p>3. Describe each proposed condition, intervention, or manipulation of human subjects or their environments. Include a copy of any questionnaires, tests, or other written instruments, instructions, scripts, etc., to be used.</p> <p>Eight Oklahoma legislators will be the subjects of long interviews that will be audio-taped. Governmental documents may be used as well. Questions for interview appear in Appendix B (attached)</p>
<p>4. Will the subjects encounter the possibility of stress or psychological, social, physical, or legal risks that are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>

If Yes, please justify your position:	
5. Will medical clearance be necessary for subjects to participate because of tissue or blood sampling, administration of substances such as food or drugs, or physical exercise conditioning? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, please explain how the clearance will be obtained:	
6. Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, please explain:	
7. Will information be requested that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, please explain: The subjects will be asked about their personal attitudes, opinions, and value-conflicts regarding their decisions on educational funding and the factors that influence these decisions.	
8. Will the subjects be presented with materials that might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, please explain, including measures planned for intervention if problems occur.	
9. Will any inducements be offered to the subjects for their participation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, please explain:	
NOTE: If extra course credit is offered, describe the alternative means for obtaining additional credit available to those students who do not wish to participate in the research project.	
10. Will a written consent form (and assent form for minors) be used? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, please include the form(s). Elements of informed consent can be found in 45 CFR 46, Section 116. Also see the IRB Guide.	
If No, a waiver of written consent must be obtained from the IRB. Explain in detail why a written consent form will not be used and how voluntary participation will be obtained. Include any related material, such as a copy of a public notice, script, etc., that you will use to inform subjects of all the elements that are required in a written consent. Refer to IRB Guide.	
11. Will the data be a part of a record that can be identified with the subject? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, please explain: Although pseudonyms will be used and specific details about the identification of the respondent will be altered, some information could possibly be identified with the respondent.	
12. Describe the steps you are taking to protect the confidentiality of the subjects and how you are going to advise subjects of these protections in the consent process.	
Participants in this study will be assured confidentiality, and all personal details will remain confidential. Audiocassettes and transcripts of the interviews will be kept under lock and key, and only I will have access to the tapes. Data will be kept for two years and then it will be destroyed. Pseudonyms will also be given to each subject.	

13. Will the subject=s participation in a specific experiment or study be made a part of any record available to his or her supervisor, teacher, or employer? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please describe:

14. Describe the benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society. *Note that 45 CFR 46, Section 46.111(a)(2) requires that the risks to subjects be reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits. The investigator should specifically state the importance of the knowledge that reasonably may be expected to result from this research.* The findings and conclusions resulting from this study should contribute to the development and refinement of theories of perpetuation. As well, it should generate practical knowledge to help school leaders better understand the social political networks of the Oklahoma Legislature in regards to K-12 educational funding. Realities and recommendations for future legislative action should emerge.

Concurrence:

Department Head (typed)	Signature	Date	Department
College Dean or Research Director (typed)	Signature	Date	College

Checklist for application submission:

- X Research plan*
- X Informed consent/assent forms
- X Outline or script to be provided prior to subjects= agreement to participate
- X Instrument(s) [questionnaire, survey, testing]
- X Bio, resume or vitae for all PIs (student or faculty) and advisor
- X Department/college/division signatures
- X Grant Proposal

*Research plan should be a brief summary of research, the methodology,

risks to subjects, and benefits. This plan is generally used for thesis or

dissertation research or other unfunded research.

Number of copies to be submitted (based on type of review required):

Exempt	2
Expedited	3
Expedited Special Population	5
Full board	17

NOTE:

1. Any changes in the project after approval by the IRB must be resubmitted as a modification for review by the IRB before approval is granted. Modifications do not change the period of initial approval.
2. Approval is granted for one year maximum. Annual requests must be made to the IRB for continuation, as long as the research continues. Forms for continuation and modification are available on the web at <http://compliance.vpr.okstate.edu/hsp/forms.htm>

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: The Study of the Decision-Making Process of Oklahoma State Legislators and K-12 Funding

INVESTIGATORS: Jenyfer Winton-Glisson, M.Ed., B.A.

PURPOSE:

This study, which is research conducted for a student dissertation, is being conducted through Oklahoma State University. The purpose is to examine Oklahoma state legislators and their decision-making process and the factors that influence their decisions in regards to K-12 funding.

PROCEDURES:

The project will involve a 20 to 30 minute interview. The interview protocol will involve four background questions and four Perpetuation Theory/strong ties/weak ties generated questions. The interviews will be audio-taped and transcripts will be written. Specifically, the interview questions will reference the legislators' personal background, individual district descriptors, and opinions regarding K-12 funding in Oklahoma. In addition, the Perpetuation Theory questions will probe each legislators' decision-making process and what influences this process.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:

There are no risks associated with this project, including stress, psychological, social, physical, or legal risk which is greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. If, however, you begin to experience discomfort or stress in this project, you may end your participation at any time.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

The findings and conclusions resulting from this study should contribute to the development and refinement of theories of perpetuation. As well, it should generate practical knowledge to help school leaders better understand the social political networks of the Oklahoma Legislature in regards to K-12 educational funding. Realities and recommendations for future legislative action should emerge.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information about you will be kept confidential and will not be released. Transcripts and record forms will have pseudonyms, rather than names, on them. All information will be kept in a file cabinet that is accessible only to Jenyfer Glisson. This information

will be saved as long as it is scientifically useful; typically, such information is kept for two years after publication of the results. Results from this study may be presented at professional meetings or in publications. You will not be identified individually; we will be looking at the group as a whole.

The OSU IRB has the authority to inspect consent records and data files to assure compliance with approved procedures.

CONTACTS:

I understand that I may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should I desire to discuss my participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Jenyfer Glisson of 729 S. Boyd St. Sapulpa, OK 74066, 918-227-5019. I may also contact Sue Jacobs, Ph.D., Institutional Review Board, 415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-1676 with any questions concerning participant's rights.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of Researcher

Research Plan

Date

VITA

Jenyfer Lynn Winton-Glisson

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE STUDY OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF OKLAHOMA
STATE LEGISLATORS AND K-12 EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

Major Field: Education Administration

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Glenpool High School, Glenpool, Oklahoma; received Bachelor of Arts in English Education from Northeastern University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in School Administration degree from Northeastern University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, December, 2006.

Experience: Employed by Union Intermediate School, Tulsa, Oklahoma from 1992-1999. Served as Assistant Principal for Sapulpa High School, Sapulpa, Oklahoma from 199-2004, then as Principal from 2004-Present.

Professional Memberships: National Association of Secondary School Principals
Oklahoma Association of Secondary School Principals
Sapulpa Rotary Club (current member and past board member)
Creek County Literacy (past board member)
Sapulpa/Sand Springs Westside Alliance (past member)
Creek County Juvenile and the Justice (past member)
Miss Creek County (board of directors)

Name: Jenyfer Lynn Winton-Glisson

Date of Degree: December, 2006

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE STUDY OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF
OKLAHOMA STATE LEGISLATORS AND K-12 EDUCATIONAL
FUNDING

Pages in Study: 140

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major Field: Education Administration

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to examine Oklahoma state legislators and their decision-making process and the factors that influence their decisions in regards to K-12 educational funding. The conceptual framework of Braddock (1980) and McPartland and Braddock's (1989) theory of perpetuation was used to examine the social networks of the state legislators. In addition, Granovetter's (1973) theory of formal/informal ties was also used to help explain the development of network opportunities of the legislators. Participants in this study were seven state senators and state representatives who were selected through purposive sampling according to the following criteria: gender, party affiliation, geographic location, house affiliation, and educational connection. A semi-structured interview protocol was used for interviewing purposes.

Findings and Conclusions: Results indicated that state legislators and their decision-making process in regards to K-12 educational funding are heavily influenced by their weak-tie relationships with lobbyists. The social network between the legislators and educational lobbyists, however, was found to have very little influence and at times an adverse impact upon the decision-making process and educational funding. In addition the weak-tie relationship between state legislators and fellow legislators, local educators, and community members tended to impact the decision-making process more than the strong-tie relationships with family members and close associates. Finally, both male and female legislators were found to have very similar social networks. There also was no evidence that gender affected or determined the sources of influence in making decisions at the legislative level.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Adrienne Hyle
