Superintendent turnover in Montana : case studies of small, rural schools
by Annette Marie Carson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education in School Administration
Montana State University
© Copyright by Annette Marie Carson (1999)

Abstract:
The study utilized a qualitative multiple case study approach to investigate superintendent turnover in five small, rural school districts in Montana, which showed a historically low rate of superintendent tenure over the last 21 years. All five schools historically employed a superintendent in the dual role of principal and superintendent, and were agricultural and geographically isolated. Three groups of informants were interviewed face-to-face. Informants were school board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents. In all, 38 interviews were held. Two key informants assisted in selection of the five school districts studied. Interviews were analyzed using content analysis in two ways: (a) idiosyncratic analysis within each case and within each group of informants, and (b) cross-case analysis using nomothetic analysis between and across perceptions of those cases and groups. Constant comparative analysis was applied to generate grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The guiding theoretical construct used to investigate superintendent turnover in this study was a modified version of one advocated by Miskel and Cosgrove (1985).

Research questions revolved around four topics: (a) career paths of superintendents, (b) superintendent selection processes, (c) role perceptions and expectations, and (d) reasons for superintendent turnover.

Major findings from the study were tied to sociological descriptions of the rural context and its role in superintendent turnover in small rural schools. The rural context is characterized by themes of culture maintained by solidarity. Solidarity is the sharing of a common identity through use of sacred symbols. Frequent informal interactions across a variety of contexts builds solidarity. Solidarity is maintained by establishing a boundary which imposes sanctions against those who violate sacred symbols. Those who violate sacred symbols are often viewed as suspicious newcomers. Schools are seen as the primary way that rural communities transmit their legacy and culture to their children. The bureaucratic arrangement of the school in the rural community and the expectation of the superintendent as an educational expert often conflicts with the rural context. Informants' descriptions of the career aspirations and career paths of superintendents was found to conflict with their descriptions of the ideal superintendent to serve in their schools.

SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER IN MONTANA:

CASE STUDIES OF SMALL, RURAL SCHOOLS

by

Annette Marie Carson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Education

in

School Administration

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY—BOZEMAN
Bozeman, Montana

April 1999

D378
C2391

APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Annette Marie Carson

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

Dr. B. Keith Chambers B. Keith Chambers 3/25/99
(Signature) (Date)

Approved for the Department of Education

Dr. Gloria Gregg Gloria A. Gregg 3/26/99
(Signature) (Date)

Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

Dr. Bruce McLeod Bruce L. McLeod 4-6-99
(Signature) (Date)

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree at Montana State University—Bozeman, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. I further agree that copying of this thesis is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with "fair use" as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Requests for extensive copying or reproduction of this thesis should be referred to University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, to whom I have granted "the exclusive right to reproduce and distribute my dissertation in and from microform along with the non-exclusive right to reproduce and distribute my abstract in any format in whole or in part."

Signature Annette Carson

Date April 7, 1999

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the chair of my committee, Dr. Keith Chambers, the readers, Dr. Priscilla Lund and Dr. Peter Carparelli, along with the other members of my committee, Dr. Leroy Casagranda, Dr. Eric Strohmeyer, and Dr. William Wyckoff, for their help in this project. Special thanks to Dr. Ric Scarce of the sociology department who assisted me in data analysis procedures. I also want to thank the people who volunteered to be informants in this study, who shared their experiences, insights, and perceptions with me. Without them this study would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

The School Board 2
The District Superintendent 5
Superintendent Tenure 9
Jurisdiction of the Study 11
Significance of the Study 12
Definition of Terms 20
Literature Review 22
Superintendent Succession 22
Career Paths 22
Types of Career-Bound Superintendents 28
Role Perceptions and Superintendent Turnover 30
Successful and Unsuccessful Superintendents 31
Satisfaction with Superintendents and Superintendencies 33
The Superintendent with Longevity 35
Superintendent Characteristics 38
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover 41
Politics and Superintendent Turnover 47
Testing the Dissatisfaction Model 53
Changes in the School Board and Superintendent Turnover 53
Board Incumbent Defeat and Superintendent Turnover 54
Holistic Tests of the Dissatisfaction Model 55
Superintendent Selection 59
Processes Used in Superintendent Selection 60
Criteria Used in Superintendent Selection 62
Summary 64

2. CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY 66

Introduction 66
Theoretical Construct 67
Research Questions 69
Generating Theory 70
Design of the Study 71
Case-Study Research Methodology 73
Validity 75
Informants 79
Criteria Used in Informant Selection 79
Description of Informants 80
Locations of the Study 81
Sources of Evidence 81

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Page
Procedure....82
Instrumentation....84
Procedures for Collecting and Analyzing Data....86
Limitations....89

3. CHAPTER THREE: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS....91

Introduction....91
Site Descriptions....92
Idiosyncratic Analyses: Within Each Case....94
Casterbridge....94
Description of the Community....94
Description of the School....95
Informants....97
Career Paths of Superintendents....99
Superintendent Selection Processes....100
Role Perceptions and Expectations....103
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover....105
Job Satisfaction....107
Description of Relations....109
Political Climate....111
Previous Superintendent Effects....112
Effects on the School District....113
Glaston....115
Description of the Community....115
Description of the School....116
Informants....117
Career Paths of Superintendents....119
Superintendent Selection Processes....121
Role Perceptions and Expectations....122
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover....125
Job Satisfaction....128
Description of Relations....130
Political Climate....132
Previous Superintendent Effects....133
Effects on the School District....134
Marygreen....135
Description of the Community....135
Description of the School....136
Informants....138
Career Paths of Superintendents....140
Superintendent Selection Processes....141
Role Perceptions and Expectations....143
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover....145
Job Satisfaction....148
Description of Relations....150
Political Climate....155
Previous Superintendent Effects....157
Effects on the School District....157

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Page
Melchester 160
Description of the Community 160
Description of the School 161
Informants 163
Career Paths of Superintendents 165
Superintendent Selection Processes 166
Role Perceptions and Expectations 168
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover 170
Job Satisfaction 172
Description of Relations 173
Political Climate 175
Previous Superintendent Effects 176
Effects on the School District 177
Sherton 179
Description of the Community 179
Description of the School 180
Informants 182
Career Paths of Superintendents 184
Superintendent Selection Processes 185
Role Perceptions and Expectations 189
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover 190
Job Satisfaction 193
Description of Relations 196
Political Climate 199
Previous Superintendent Effects 200
Effects on the School District 201
Idiosyncratic Analyses: Within Each Group 203
School Board Chairpersons 203
Description of Informants 203
Career Path of Superintendents 204
Superintendent Selection Processes 206
Role Perceptions and Expectations 208
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover 211
Job Satisfaction 215
Description of Relations 218
Political Climate 223
Previous Superintendent Effects 224
Effects on the School District 226
School District Clerks 228
Description of Informants 228
Career Path of Superintendents 230
Superintendent Selection Processes 231
Role Perceptions and Expectations 234
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover 236
Job Satisfaction 238
Description of Relations 239
Political Climate 241
Previous Superintendent Effects 242

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Page
Effects on the School District 243
Superintendents....244
Description of Informants....244
Career Path of Superintendents....246
Superintendent Selection Processes....247
Role Perceptions and Expectations....248
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover....252
Job Satisfaction....255
Description of Relations....259
Political Climate....262
Previous Superintendent Effects....263
Effects on the School District....265
Nomothetic Analyses....268
Nomothetic Analysis Across Five Sites or School Districts....269
Career Path of Superintendents....269
Superintendent Selection Processes....269
Role Perceptions and Expectations....270
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover....272
Job Satisfaction....273
Description of Relations....274
Political Climate....274
Previous Superintendent Effects....275
Effects on the School District....275
Nomothetic Analysis Across Three Groups:
School Board Chairpersons, District Clerks, and Superintendents....276
Career Path of Superintendents....276
Superintendent Selection Processes....277
Role Perceptions and Expectations....278
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover....279
Job Satisfaction....282
Description of Relations....283
Political Climate....284
Previous Superintendent Effects....284
Effects on the School District....285

4. CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS....287

Introduction....287
Summary of the Study....288
The Rural Community....294
Transmission of Culture and Solidarity....295
Sacred Symbols....298
Boundary Maintenance....300
Legacy and Culture....305
The Rural School....306
Problems Faced by Rural Schools....309
Conflicts in Rural Schools....312
Reasons for Superintendent Turnover:
The School Board Chairperson and District Clerk Perspective....314

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Page
Satisfaction With Superintendents....315
Critical Incidents....317
Relations....318
Superintendent Selection in Rural Schools....319
Processes....319
Criteria Used in Selection....321
Superintendent Career Paths....322
Role Perceptions and Expectations....323
The School Board in Rural Schools....325
Effects of Superintendent Turnover on Rural Schools....328
The Superintendent in the Rural School....330
Career Paths of Superintendents....330
Role Perceptions and Expectations....335
Superintendent Turnover: The Superintendent Perspective....336
Political Climate....337
Job Satisfaction....341
Relations....342
Previous Superintendent Effects....343
Effects of Superintendent Turnover on the Rural School....344
Implications....345
Implications for the Aspiring Superintendent....346
Leadership in Rural Schools....346
Effects of Superintendent Turnover....349
Implications for Preparatory Programs for School Administrators....351
The Rural Community and School....351
Career Orientations of Rural Superintendents....351
Implications for the Rural School Board....352
Expectations of Superintendents in Rural Communities....352
Exploring Alternatives....354
Recommendations for Further Research....355

REFERENCES CITED....358

APPENDICES....370

Appendix A—Montana Superintendent Turnover Statistics....371
Superintendent Turnover in Montana School Districts....372
Montana Superintendents Mobility Patterns and Turnover....377
Appendix B—Sample Forms....378
Consent Form....379
Introductory Letter—First Contact with Informant....380
Interview Protocol—School Board Chairperson....381
Interview Protocol—School District Clerk....384
Interview Protocol—Superintendent....386
Appendix C—School Districts' Organizational Histories....388
Casterbridge....389
Glaston....390
Marygreen....391
Melchester....392

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Page
Sherton 393

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. School Board Chairperson Informants....204
2. School District Clerk Informants....229
3. Superintendent Informants....245
4. Superintendent Mobility in Montana....332

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

1. Iannaconne and Lutz Community Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy 51

2. Community Dissatisfaction With Schools is Focused on 57

3. Theoretical Construct 68

ABSTRACT

The study utilized a qualitative multiple case study approach to investigate superintendent turnover in five small, rural school districts in Montana, which showed a historically low rate of superintendent tenure over the last 21 years. All five schools historically employed a superintendent in the dual role of principal and superintendent, and were agricultural and geographically isolated. Three groups of informants were interviewed face-to-face. Informants were school board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents. In all, 38 interviews were held. Two key informants assisted in selection of the five school districts studied. Interviews were analyzed using content analysis in two ways: (a) idiosyncratic analysis within each case and within each group of informants, and (b) cross-case analysis using nomothetic analysis between and across perceptions of those cases and groups. Constant comparative analysis was applied to generate grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The guiding theoretical construct used to investigate superintendent turnover in this study was a modified version of one advocated by Miskel and Cosgrove (1985). Research questions revolved around four topics: (a) career paths of superintendents, (b) superintendent selection processes, (c) role perceptions and expectations, and (d) reasons for superintendent turnover.

Major findings from the study were tied to sociological descriptions of the rural context and its role in superintendent turnover in small rural schools. The rural context is characterized by themes of culture maintained by solidarity. Solidarity is the sharing of a common identity through use of sacred symbols. Frequent informal interactions across a variety of contexts builds solidarity. Solidarity is maintained by establishing a boundary which imposes sanctions against those who violate sacred symbols. Those who violate sacred symbols are often viewed as suspicious newcomers. Schools are seen as the primary way that rural communities transmit their legacy and culture to their children. The bureaucratic arrangement of the school in the rural community and the expectation of the superintendent as an educational expert often conflicts with the rural context. Informants' descriptions of the career aspirations and career paths of superintendents was found to conflict with their descriptions of the ideal superintendent to serve in their schools.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The public school superintendent has been the focus of many studies. Superintendent career paths, mobility patterns, ability to cope with stresses of the job, role perceptions, competency areas, selection processes and reasons for turnover have all been investigated. The broader relationship between the superintendency and its societal context has received somewhat less attention. This study focuses on the small school superintendent in rural communities which have histories of excessive superintendent turnover, investigated by means of a qualitative case study approach.

Montana has 473 school districts, with 72% considered rural according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. In a pilot study (Carson, 1998) conducted in preparation for this research it was found that from 1977/78 to 1997/98, the annual average turnover rate was 20%. For small, rural school communities with a school district population under 1,000, the annual average turnover rate was 27% from 1977/78 to 1997/98. During this time the state-wide average length of

time a superintendent spent in one district was 5.1 years. For small, rural school districts the time spent in one district was four years. While there is a great deal of anecdotal folk wisdom among professional educators regarding the apparent volatility of the superintendency in smaller districts, systematic study of the phenomenon has been lacking.

Questions and rumors persist among professional circles regarding an alleged cadre of superintendents who consistently move from one small, rural district to another, and why these districts continue to hire these roaming superintendents. Questions are also asked about why several small, rural school districts are "volatile" for anyone in the role of superintendent, since no single superintendent seems to stay in those particular districts for any length of time. This study questioned whether existing theories are adequate to explain the complex phenomenon of superintendent turnover in the context of a small, rural school district.

The School Board

One aspect of schools that has changed very little over time is the local nature of control over schools. Local communities in the United States historically have maintained control of schools through their local school boards. Before the 1900s the school board's responsibilities were primarily those of policy and decision making. During the 1800s school boards were also known as school committees. In most of the large cities

these committees were made up of members elected from city wards. Since there were many wards, there were many members on the school board. The primary aim of each member was to look out for the ward which he or she was elected to represent. This was a form of grassroots politics that made the position extremely political, and which critics of ward politics said tended to lead to corruption. Through their political representatives, wards vied for sites of school construction, and in ante-bellum times wards advocated applied political pressure to ensure that veterans from their wards be appointed as teachers. Wards competed to secure financial gains by ensuring that merchants from their ward be appointed to outfit schools with supplies. These ambitions often superseded the central task of ensuring quality classrooms for their children according to critics like Cubberley (1927).

Small schools had similar problems. Small rural schools were believed to be inefficient. Vocal city superintendents and professors in university research institutions advocated consolidating these schools in order to make them more cost efficient while improving educational standards. After consolidation, students would be exposed to a broader curriculum, better facilities, and would be taught by more qualified teachers.

A wide disparity existed in the quality of small rural schools. For example, in one particular school district there could be dozens of small schools each struggling with their individual governmental and curriculum problems. Standardized administrative procedures and centralized decision-making was viewed as a means for resolving the chaos.

Seeing various problems with traditional administrative mechanisms, Cubberley, an advocate of the efficiency movement, had a vision for the future school that was quite different. His plan was not a district plan of administration but rather a county-wide plan. He believed his plan would solve the problems of the small rural school by consolidating them into one that was centrally administered. This county plan would also eliminate problems with the local school board largely by by-passing local politics altogether. About the only "rights" these people would give up would have been, "the right to elect a horde of unnecessary school trustees, and often in addition to mismanage the education of their own children" (p. 233). Such was Cubberley's sympathy for democratic localism.

Despite educational visionaries who argued for changes in school governance, strong vestiges of local district governance remains today. Such a form of governance is not without certain inherent problems, however. Perhaps no one has been more affected by these problems than

the school superintendent. Until the social dynamics in these school districts have been thoroughly analyzed and mapped it will remain a mystery why school superintendents come and go as they do. The study must be able to take into account not only the professional duties of the superintendent but the more subtle social, cultural, political, and historical dimensions of the communities these individuals are supposed to serve, and nowhere is this broader, naturalistic perspective more necessary than in small districts where, to an extent not often appreciated, the school is the very heart of the community. Superintendents who expect to treat the position of superintendent merely as a job may often discover that their failure to connect with the community itself is their greatest point of vulnerability. While this assertion has often been made, it has not to date been systematically studied.

The District Superintendent

The role of the superintendent has evolved into something entirely different from what it was initially (Callahan, 1962). Originally the role of the superintendent was close to that of a schoolmaster, a supervisor of teachers and students, with the board of education making all the major decisions. The growth of the superintendency has been linked to the evolution of the school board. Early superintendents were vocal defend-

ers of the common school movement, and approached their mission with a kind of messianic zeal.

The first designated superintendent of schools was an educational advocate named Gideon Hawley. Hawley's position as a state superintendent was the forerunner of the position of city superintendent. He was appointed in 1812 as a state officer of New York "to look after the establishment and maintenance of all the schools throughout the State" (Cubberley, p. 158). His appointment was short-lived due to the fact that he "gave such offense to the politicians of the time". He was removed from office and in 1821 the position was eliminated. Nonetheless, in 1854 New York again established the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and by 1867 Vermont, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Illinois had also established the state office. The kind of volatility Hawley experienced in his position seems to have been a hallmark of the superintendency at many levels ever since.

A lack of consistency in schools was a fact that Horace Mann (1796-1859) uncovered in his investigation of Massachusetts' schools during the mid 1800's. His findings contributed to a broadening of the superintendent's functions to include, among other things, requiring some form of a teacher's certificate, ensuring that school subjects re-

quired by law were taught in the schools, and ensuring that schools were opened at least for the amount of time required by the law.

Cubberley (1927) states that by 1861 thirty-four states had also created an office for a county superintendent of schools. Additionally, twenty-five cities had created a city superintendent of schools by 1861. These positions were at one time filled by election, and some still are today. Superintendents of schools' main responsibilities were collection of statistics and exhorting the people to maintain and support schools. Early school superintendents also had the responsibility of attempting to institute some semblance of standards in the schools.

This role, for which laypersons were once elected, evolved into one that could only be filled by a person having professional training and knowledge. Of particular significance in the early 1900's were the effects that the emerging "scientific management" principles had on the superintendency. Highly centralized, bureaucratic and hierarchical school organizations were formed to transform schools along the lines of the industrial model. Scientific management promised highly efficient organizations with increased "production" levels. Superintendents took over many of the decisions that school boards had made. The industrial model of management remains prominent in the governance of schools, even today.

The status of the superintendency changed after World War II. Callahan (1962) explains that the major events that jolted the educational leaders in the 1950s included the threat of communism, the launch of *Sputnik,* the Supreme Court ruling that separate schools for blacks and whites were inherently unequal, and lastly, the large yield of children from the baby boom and the demand for increased funding for schools. With the increased emphasis on bureaucratic and industrial management models of governance, and the increasing financial commitment communities made to their schools, the superintendent's role changed from that of an educational expert who operated independently of the political turmoil around him to a role that is inextricably political in nature.

Throughout the years that followed, the superintendent had to deal with increasingly vocal demands from various societal groups. Democratic processes that began with the Civil Rights movements of the 1960's have created a society in which all constituents understand their right to be heard. The superintendent faces more and more pressure from groups demanding representation and desire for control over the public schools. In time these groups have garnered political clout necessary to elect their own representatives to the school board. This happens in the politics of large schools systems, but it also happens in small dis-

tricts where the constituent groups may not be as clearly delineated from the view of the casual observer.

Superintendent Tenure

In his book, Call School: Rural Education in the Midwest to 1918, Paul Theobald (1995) examines characteristics of the rural school. The underlying assumption about the ideal rural teacher, in the view of the typical board of education in the early 20th century, was an individual who "kept excellent discipline, made do with whatever books or equipment were on hand, maintained a secluded personal life in the community, and moved on to a different school when the term was over" (p. 100). Of course, the rural teacher in those days was the sole professional responsible for the small rural school.

As this study will show, there is an analogous perception today, not only by rural school boards, but also by superintendents who serve them. Superintendents are often viewed as transient figures. According to Carlson (1972), superintendents are caught in a dilemma concerning a long tenure in the position. They realize a superintendent cannot always act in a manner that assures re-election year after year, and at the same time maintain a quality standard of education in their district.

A story written in 1916 and published in the American School Board Journal (Anonymous, 1916) captures quite nicely the conditions of the superintendency. The cover of the issue was appropriately titled, "The Sword of Damocles in the Schoolroom", and was illustrated by a picture of a teacher with a sword hanging above her head. The sword was embellished with "Dismissal or Re-election?" The author of an article included in this issue called himself, A Veteran Fighter in the Field of American Education and titled the article "Why Superintendents Lose Their Jobs". In the article the Veteran Fighter described the informal conversations between superintendents that took place at a national school superintendent convention in Detroit. The author explained that the one topic of interest to all superintendents, raised informally quite often but never addressed in the formal meetings, was the crucial problem of the superintendent's tenure of office. The author pointed out several times that, "*nothing, absolutely nothing,* was of more vital consuming interest to the average superintendent of schools than the tremendously important question of whether he will be retained in his present position for the coming year" (p. 18). The story continues with the author describing a conversation held among four of the superintendents who spoke with sincerity concerning their tenure in office.

> Said one, "Are you going to remain in _____ next year?"

> "No, I'm not," replied the one addressed. "The floral tributes are now being prepared."
>
> . . .The third man volunteered the information that at the last election of his board of education, the balance of power which had for the past several years enabled him to retain an eyelid hold on his position, had been disturbed. The odd man was now against him. The petitions for his retention were being circulated, but the obituaries were even then under way.
>
> . . .The fourth man drew from an inside pocket a small morocco bound note book. "Gentlemen," he said, "your conversation is full of information. I have in this little book the reasons, compiled at some expense of trouble and correspondence, for the enforced resignation of school superintendents in my state for the past ten years. While sympathizing with your several misfortunes, I have the strong interest of a professional collector in your experiences. With your permission I shall record the details of your official executions in my directory of the professional defunct."
>
> Nothing ever assailed me with such violent tenacity as my curiosity to see the contents of that morocco-bound book. The thought immediately entered my mind that here was an object of educational interest. . .I knew this man possessed information of consuming interest to the thronging thousands in attendance at the convention. (p. 18)

A comparable interest can be found today among superintendents. This study focuses on the superintendent in the small rural school in Montana and the reasons behind high superintendent turnover.

Jurisdiction of the Study

The aims of this study are to investigate conditions and reveal patterns surrounding superintendent turnover in selected small, rural K-12 school districts in Montana. Five small rural school districts with ex-

cessive superintendent turnover were selected for study from among the pool of districts that have shown a historical pattern of volatility for superintendents.

Significance of the Study

A 1992 study of the American superintendency showed that most superintendents spend 15 years as superintendents in no more than three districts, with three-fourths of the superintendents having served in their current position for at least five to six years (Glass, 1992). This national study, conducted every ten years by the American Association of School Administrators, found in 1990-91 the average tenure of a superintendent to be six years. Broken down by enrollment of districts, the study found that the average tenure was 5 years in districts with 300 or fewer students, 7 years in districts with between 300 to 3,000 students and 6.6 years in school districts with between 3,000 and 25,000 students. The 1982 ten year study found the average length of superintendent tenure to be 5.6 years. In the 1971 ten year study the average tenure was six years. At the national level, Feistritzer (1988) found the average tenure of a district superintendent to be 6.7 years.

Studies of superintendent turnover in Montana are less reliable. Mattocks (1987) found that the average length of tenure for a superin-

tendent in Montana to be 2.0 years. From reading the study, it is unclear how this statistic was figured. Erdie (1987) compiled a ten year database of superintendents who served in all Montana school districts. However, no state-wide average tenure was calculated in his study.

According to the Montana School Board Association and the School Administrators of Montana (B. Anderson, personal communication, June 1997), on average, one fourth of all school superintendents in Montana leave their jobs each year, with generally over one half of those being superintendents of small schools who also serve as either a high school or elementary school principal. The Directory of Montana Schools (1996-97) listed 198 school districts that employed a superintendent. Of those districts, 38% of them have historically employed a superintendent in the dual role of both superintendent and either high school or elementary school principal (Carson, 1998). Montana has 473 school districts that are classified as either elementary, high school or as combined elementary and high school districts. Seventy-two percent of all the school districts in Montana are considered rural according to the National Center for Educational Statistics.

In a pilot study conducted in preparation for this research (Carson, 1998), it was found that from 1977/78 to 1997/98, on average the annual turnover rate was 20% for Montana superintendents (Appendix A).

For small, rural school districts with a district population under 1,000, on average 27% of the superintendents left their jobs annually from 1977/78 to 1997/98. During this time the state-wide average length of time a superintendent spent in one district was 5.1 years. For small, rural school districts the time spent in one district was four years. Montana has 75 small, rural school districts. These districts have historically had a superintendent who served in a dual role as both superintendent and either high school or elementary school principal. These districts are also those that historically have had high school enrollments under 100 and were both a high school and elementary school district. In these small rural K-12 districts from 1977 to 1997, 60% of the superintendents stayed for less than four years.

Rural schools are plagued by various problems that can make the role of the superintendent a precarious one. Lack of financial resources, increased state and federal mandates, and heightened parental and community expectations contribute to superintendent instability (Chance & Capps, 1992). A heightened sense of political turmoil, and frequent board turnovers are commonly associated with these problems. Grady (1992) points to critical incidents between the school board and the superintendents as catalysts for turnover.

Superintendent turnover effects are detrimental to the health of a school, especially in the small school where the responsibilities of the superintendent are broadened (Grady & Bryant, 1990). The superintendent of a small school typically wears many hats and is involved in almost every aspect of the school to some degree. The school occupies a central role in most rural communities, which means the school superintendent is in a highly visible role (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1989). Administrator turnover affects school climate, growth, continuity of programs, and the extent of community satisfaction in their schools. Frequent superintendent turnover in small districts creates barriers to the development of trust on the part of the staff. This trust is necessary for successful school renewal efforts. When rapid turnover is endemic, school staff, especially long-time staff, tend to take a pessimistic attitude toward change (Miller & Hull, 1991). What is needed, the authors assert, is a consistent and stable community-supported leadership in rural schools, that grows from an understanding of the history of the school and the community. The superintendent plays a potentially key role in the climate and culture of the school by the example he or she sets. Ultimately it is the children who suffer when there is a lack of educational leadership in their schools, which may also contribute to a decay of community spirit (Grady, 1992).

Wirt (1989) asserts that superintendents of today are caught between old role definitions and new demands, causing them to act in a political fashion, and that this has resulted in a greater rate of superintendent turnover. Research has not provided a fully elaborated picture of the superintendent as a political figure. Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston (1987) advocate for "a sensitive portrayal of the various cultural contexts that influence and are influenced by superintendents". The metaphor used to describe the role of the superintendent in their book, is that of a baseball manager: Superintendents win some and lose some. Sergiovanni, et al. (1987) claim "descriptive studies are lacking that would provide some sense of how superintendents deal with wins or losses" (p. 281). This is one of the reasons this researcher chose to pursue ethnographic study based on case studies.

Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) believe that a basic framework is needed to guide research in the area of superintendent turnover which would focus on pre-arrival and arrival conditions, as well as on the effects of turnover on the school district. Pre-arrival factors would include (a) reasons for turnover, (b) selection process, (c) reputation of the new leader, and (d) orientation of the new leader. Arrival factors to investigate would be (a) demography of the organization, (b) organizational structure, (c) school culture, (d) educational programs, and (e) successor actions.

Turnover effects would include changes in the pre-arrival and arrival conditions that could be attributed to superintendent turnover. This structure of inquiry has been used in this study.

This study was designed to contribute to the current knowledge about the superintendency in small schools, in particular by adding to what is known about superintendent/board/community relationships, competency areas and role perceptions, superintendent career and mobility patterns, and reasons for superintendent turnover.

This study was designed to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between communities, school boards and superintendents, and help to promote an understanding of what is needed for effective board/superintendent relationships (Loashing, 1988). Such research should help to guide school boards, aspiring superintendents, current superintendents, professional superintendent search consultants, and preparatory programs in school administration to better understand the differences between large and small districts, which may impact superintendent and board turnover (Loomis, 1995). Additionally, Loomis said that future research should focus on the role of the board chair in superintendent turnover, and the difference in superintendent turnover between superintendents who also serve as principals and those who do not. Superintendents who have served in a dual role of

both superintendent and principal are one of the groups that will be studied, along with school board chairpersons and district clerks in five selected school districts.

Preparatory programs, aspiring superintendents, current superintendents, school boards, and professional superintendent search consultants would also benefit from research in the area of the ever-changing nature of roles and responsibilities of the superintendent, according to Seybert (1993). His research found that school board members and superintendents have significantly different perceptions toward factors related to success and dismissal of superintendents in Montana. According to Seybert, further research is needed to find out why superintendents in Montana think they are doing a good job in those competency areas important to them, while they are not focusing on competencies their boards of education think most worthy of superintendent attention.

Blankenship (1995) recommended further research be done on superintendent selection after studying the processes and success ratios in Wyoming schools. A better understanding of selection processes and conditions present in small school districts could impact practice. The relationship between success ratios and the type of selection process

used in these small school districts could contribute to the present knowledge base.

Understanding current career patterns of school superintendent mobility in small rural schools, and why such patterns exist, would be valuable to preparation programs for school administrators as well as those aspiring to the superintendency. These programs would benefit from research that explained the complex interaction of various factors, such as lateral and geographic mobility, and the manner in which they influence career patterns (Miklos, 1988). Erdie (1987) recommended additional research is needed on superintendents of either small, medium, or large school districts in Montana. According to Erdie, such a study should be done to determine the effects that lateral mobility of superintendents has on education in Montana.

Importantly, this study focuses on the small school superintendency. Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) state that qualitative case studies in a number of diverse settings have provided excellent insights about the turnover process and organizational leadership. While their reasons seem compelling, no qualitative multiple case studies were found to be done that focused on the superintendency of small rural school districts in Montana which have a history of excessive superintendent turnover. This study seeks to fill that gap. Many of the key ideas and recommen-

dations found in the studies just cited have been brought together into a single, comprehensive research design in order to elicit a clearer picture of life in small schools and the conditions that lead to superintendent turnover.

Definition of Terms

1. Board of Trustees (or School Board): A legally constituted governing body of the local school district in each Montana school district, consisting of three members in the smallest districts to a minimum of seven members in the larger school districts. Small rural school district boards generally consist of five board members. The term *school board* will be used in this study instead of *board of trustees*.

2. District Classification of I, II, III: Montana school districts are classified as I, II, or III according to the population based on census information. This is done every ten years with the most recent being 1990. According to Montana Code Annotated (20-6-201), districts are classified in the following manner: (a) first class, if it has a population of 6,500 or more; (b) second class, if it has a population of 1,000 or more but less than 6,500; or (c) third class, if it has a population of less than 1,000. This classification is used by county superintendents in determining how many school board seats each school district must have.

3. District Clerk: A person employed and appointed by the board of trustees who is not a member of the board of trustees, whose responsibilities are to attend all meetings of the trustees to keep an accurate and permanent record of all the proceedings of each meeting (School Laws of Montana, 1993).

4. District Superintendent: The chief executive officer of the Board of Trustees of a Montana elementary and/or secondary school district.

5. School Board Chairperson: Person chosen as the chairperson of the school board at an annual organizational meeting of the board of trustees.

6. School Board Member: A registered voter in a local school district who was elected or appointed to serve on the school board.

7. Small Rural School: The rural school is generally accepted as a school relatively small in size and isolated from professional support. This isolation and small size results in a school and district with fewer bureaucratic layers, integrated roles, informal communication, and variant resources (Nachtigal, 1982). For the purpose of this study, a superintendent in a small rural school serves in a dual capacity as a principal of either the high school or elementary school. Additionally for the

purpose of this study, the small rural school is situated in a district with a population less than 1,000 with an economic base being primarily agricultural.

8. Superintendent Mobility: The career paths of superintendents as they move from one superintendency to another or to another position. The movement from place to place within a layer or stratum is termed horizontal mobility, while vertical mobility is movement from one layer or stratum to another (Hills, 1982). In this study, superintendent mobility is the movement within and between certain populations of school districts. These populations are Class I, II, and III school districts in Montana.

9. Superintendent Turnover (or Succession): The occurrence of a new superintendent in a school district.

10. Superintendent Tenure: The period of time that a superintendent occupies the position of superintendent at a given school.

Literature Review

Superintendent Succession

Career Paths. Research on administrative succession patterns has attempted to explain the paths that administrators move through from the beginning to the end of their careers. This path usually includes

classroom experience as well as experience as a principal (Cuban, 1976). Secondary principals, rather than elementary principals, are more likely to move into the superintendency according to research done by Cokendolpher (1959) and Gaertner (1980).

In Carlson's (1979) research on superintendent lateral mobility (movement from organization to organization in which the individual holds the same position) in Oregon from 1966-1974, no patterns could be discerned with respect from either size of the district or geographical location of the district. In earlier research, Carlson (1969) grouped superintendents into two categories: career-bound and place-bound. Career-bound superintendents were those who planned for the job in terms of training and made career moves strategically, in hopes of ending up in a prestigious position. They saw their purpose as one of action, and were more confident, optimistic, and progressive than place-bound superintendents. Place-bound superintendents found themselves in the leadership role without actually planning for such a career move. They felt as if they were in the right place at the right time. Generally, these were individuals who came up through the ranks and were appointed to the position in their own districts. Place-bound superintendents were less involved in the social network of superintendents and had lower status among chief school officials. Subsequent studies done on Carlson's the-

ory have collected data that support the idea that career-bound superintendents move with greater frequency (Eaton, 1990, p. 28). However, as Eaton noted most of what Carlson described is *voluntary* turnover among school superintendents.

Burlingame (1977) studied superintendent turnover in Illinois from 1960-1976. His findings paralleled findings in other states. Regarding rural superintendents, his findings were (a) small districts had the highest rate of superintendent turnover, with the shortest tenure, (b) small districts usually employ individuals as superintendent with no previous experience or those who had served as superintendents in small districts previously, and (c) approximately one superintendent of every five is new to the district every school year. Importantly, what Burlingame found was that true upward mobility among superintendents was small. Rather, most superintendents' mobility could be described as horizontal, obtaining jobs in schools with approximately the same enrollment.

From factors contributing to superintendent turnover in Illinois during 1980-1984 (Thomas, 1985), the following superintendent mobility patterns became visible. Superintendents who changed jobs were typically older than 45 years, held an advanced degree beyond the masters, with less than 10 years of experience, and changed jobs for a salary increase of less than $6,000. Superintendents in this study tended to

move to districts of the same size or those with slightly larger enrollments. A later study in Illinois (Bevan, 1988) reported that most of the superintendent turnover was a result of either recruitment or a mutual understanding that superintendents used the position as stepping stones to prepare themselves for more desirable positions. The researcher concluded that superintendent mobility patterns were clearly related to the superintendent's expectations of length of tenure. Of the superintendents in Illinois that changed jobs during 1988-89 (Hudgens, 1991), most had not had formal training in educational politics or accountability and had not participated in administrative field experience.

In a study of the factors that affected the mobility of superintendents in Indiana, Pruis (1986) found that superintendents move to school districts that employ more teachers and have more students, but that the type of community served by the school district was similar for each superintendency. The new position was selected because of its attractiveness due to better compensation, increased responsibilities, change in the composition of the school board, and for recognition/prestige in the new community.

A database of superintendent attrition rates in Colorado, from 1961 to 1986 (Mundy, 1988), revealed that the yearly attrition rate was 19.2% with the new superintendents remaining an average of three

years. Colorado superintendents were defined as not mobile, since 76.7% remained in only one district. Rural districts were found to show a higher proportion of personnel turnover.

To find out mobility patterns of superintendents in California from 1974-1989, Giles and Giles (1990) collected information from every California school district and compiled a database using past issues of the California Public School Directories. Additionally, they conducted questionnaire surveys of all superintendents new to their positions in 1988-89. Findings were that superintendents went to other superintendencies, other administrative positions and into retirement, whereas mobility patterns for a significant number of superintendents could not be accounted for. From their database the majority of those superintendents taking other administrative jobs did not go to larger districts, as previous studies indicated. The percentage of these vacating superintendents who did not take another superintendency within a two year period was 80%.

When studying the mobility of superintendents in Montana grouped by district size, Erdie (1987) revealed that in a ten year period approximately 32% of superintendents from small districts moved into superintendencies of medium sized districts. In the same period, only four percent of small district superintendents moved into the superin-

tendency in large districts. There were no superintendents of large districts taking superintendencies of small districts in the ten year period.

In a nation-wide study, Anderson (1989) found that the average length of tenure for a superintendent was fewer than 5 years, but once a superintendent remained more than 5 years, he/she tended to stay in the job for 8 more years. If the superintendent could hold on to the job for 8 years, then he/she would be likely remain up to ten years in the position. The greatest turnover rates were found among superintendents with small districts of less than 350 students. Florida and New Mexico held the highest annual turnover rates of 23% and Montana followed with 21%. The lowest annual turnover rates were found in Nevada with three percent, Vermont with seven percent, and South Dakota with eight percent. The average length of tenure in urban settings was 8.7 years, and suburban settings slightly longer at 8.9 years. The average length of tenure in small towns across the United States was 7 years and rural areas 6.8 years. School districts that consisted of only elementary schools had the highest rate of tenure, an average of 8.8 years, those with only high schools had 8.1 years, and those districts with both elementary and high schools found a superintendent tenure of 7.3 years.

Sabatino (1993) found that the career path of superintendents serving in small rural districts consisted of two steps (teaching and prin-

cipal experience) rather than the three-step pattern (teaching, principal, and central office experience) of superintendents serving in larger districts. Likewise, these superintendents from small districts had more classroom teaching experience and were older at the time of their first administrative post.

Types of Career-Bound Superintendents. Previously, an explanation was given of Carlson's (1969) theory of career-bound and place-bound superintendents and mobility tendencies of each group. In later work, Carlson (1972) describes the career-bound superintendent in more detail. The labels of career-bound and place-bound are meant to denote a distinction between the level of commitment that each group holds for their career as a superintendent. In explaining the commitment of career-bound superintendents, Carlson further distinguishes three different types of superintendents. The first type of career-bound superintendent is the *hopper*, earning the title from frequent moves from one school district to another. Hoppers tend to move from districts of the same size and similar to the one before. While hoppers are employed in one district they are always on the search for the next superintendency.

Specialists make a longer commitment to a district, but leave once the task has been completed. This task is one that the superintendent is known for accomplishing well. Usually specialists have reputations as

experts in buildings, finance, curriculum, public relations or personnel. Carlson explains that the specialist moves from small district to small district where the superintendent is the entire administrative force. These small districts lack the personnel who could become specialists.

The final type of career bound superintendent is the *statesman*, who holds a different commitment level. This superintendent stays in a district for a longer period of time, until the school district is at the point where the leader can improve it no more. The statesman moves to a larger system with each new superintendency, and works hard to establish a good reputation.

The career-bound superintendent comes into an organization with "a new lease on life" (p. 104). Thus, this leader is generally able to gain the initial support of the staff, who has no knowledge of the superintendent's past. However, those staff having a high stake in the organization may resent the new career-bound superintendent. These staff members may be anxious about anticipated changes in their jobs, which may cause them to retrench as an initial manifestation of resentment. Carlson points out, however, that succession from outside sometimes acts as a catalyst to bond the organization together, providing the new superintendent with a powerful tool to utilize in organizational improvement.

This goal of improvement is generally tied to the presence of a mandate for change that the school board entrusted to the new superintendent.

Role Perceptions and Superintendent Turnover

Differences in expectations of the superintendent between board members and themselves could be the cause of tensions that ultimately lead to superintendent turnover. This theory has lead to research on role perceptions in the superintendency that is presented in this section. Much of the research is premised on the belief that understanding one's role as a superintendent would lead to less conflict with the school board.

A lack of role consensus regarding the role of the superintendent was found between board members in Minnesota (Kinn, 1980) and also in Texas (Littleton, 1983). Additionally, both studies found that the enrollment of the district impacted the way in which school board members viewed the role of the superintendent. Further research done in Virginia (Maschal, 1985) found that a significant relationship existed between school system size and the board's expectation that superintendents concentrate efforts on improving the financial status of the district. Sweet (1987) found that the larger the district the more involvement the board granted the superintendent in South Dakota. A general recommendation on role perception research indicates that superintendents

should have their roles clearly defined by the board and agreed upon yearly.

A study of the differences between the roles and perceptions of superintendents serving in small rural school districts compared to superintendents in medium to large districts in the United States was conducted by Sabatino (1993). He concluded that there existed a significant difference in characteristics and roles in these two groups. Superintendents from small rural districts showed greater concern for board/ superintendent relations than did superintendents from larger districts. Additionally, superintendents from small rural districts were younger, less well-educated and experienced, and had fewer multi-year contracts than superintendents from larger districts. The role of the superintendent in small rural districts was found to be more multi-faceted than those from larger districts, due to the fact that there were few central administrators in small districts.

Successful and Unsuccessful Superintendents

> School superintendencies frequently change hands. . . This does not mean, however, that the replacement of the superintendent is unimportant. With succession comes a sense of excitement, apprehension and expectation. It is an event that calls forward an array of feelings from school personnel. Some see it as an opportunity, others as a threat (Carlson, 1972, p. 107).

Superintendent turnover has been studied from a variety of perspectives with an underlying belief that a change of administrators is a significant event in the history of the organization. An examination of career-bound versus place-bound superintendents in the late 1960s (Carlson, 1969) had an impact on the beliefs about superintendent mobility. In the 1980s the dominant topic discussed in journals regarding superintendent turnover was the quality of relationship between the superintendent and the board. Also popular, and related, was the study of the relationship between incumbent board member defeat and superintendent turnover. The majority of this research was grounded in the theory that community politics had a direct effect on superintendent turnover.

In his 1983 study of predicting turnover, Berger summarizes three theories used to explain reasons for superintendent turnover found in literature on the topic during the 1970s through early 1980s. The first theory used to predict turnover was for reasons of poor performance. Administrative change is caused by the need to improve organizational performance. Secondly, the theory that turnover may occur when there is a crisis in the organization was the focus of study. A new administrator is sought who is not entrenched by utilizing the same ineffective strategies to solve problems. Lastly, explanations for turnover were as-

sociated with the theory that an administrator's relationship with the school board affected superintendent turnover.

Considerable attention is given in this section to studies that investigated superintendent turnover. Reasons for success in the superintendency, as well as factors that contributed to a superintendent's unsuccessful attempt at tenure have been the focus of numerous studies. To begin, an overview is given of studies that provide information on satisfaction levels board members had with their superintendents, and what superintendents found satisfying, or not satisfying about their job.

Satisfaction With Superintendents and Superintendencies. Board members nation-wide responded to questions concerning their thoughts on superintendent turnover and selection, in an attempt to determine levels of satisfaction board members had with their superintendents (Yock et al., 1990). The percentage of board members who wanted to keep their superintendent was 81% and 82.6 % were satisfied with their superintendent's performance. While 68.3% reported that they would prefer to hire a superintendent who would spend the rest of his/her career in their school district, the majority of board members reported that 6-10 years would be an ideal length of tenure for a superintendent. Interestingly, 60% of the board members who responded did not think a change of leadership was necessary peri-

odically to bring new ideas into the organization. The study also found that board members who were involved in the hiring of their superintendent remained satisfied, whereas those who were newcomers to the board after the superintendent was hired were most often the ones who registered dissatisfaction with the superintendent's performance. The longer the superintendent was employed the more critical board members were of his/her performance and the more likely board members were to favor looking for a replacement. Board members from smaller districts preferred shorter contracts with their superintendents than did board members from larger districts. The study revealed that the length of a board member's tenure was shorter than the length of the superintendent's tenure.

Factors which superintendents found satisfying about their job in a 1989 study (Lindstrom) were not related to the size of the school district. The study sought to discover what variables associated with job satisfaction contributed to superintendent turnover in California school districts having a range of enrollment figures. Superintendents who changed jobs frequently had a different set of job satisfiers than those superintendents who remained in their positions. However, in those districts with high superintendent turnover there was not a significant difference in the job satisfiers of board presidents and superintendents.

Voluntary superintendent turnover in the state of New York was the focus of a related study (Czarnecki, 1996). Superintendents reported that factors influencing their decisions to change jobs were a lack of privacy, limited opportunities in the district, dislike for the position, frustration with the politics, differences with the board on educational philosophy, finding the position too time-consuming, and a significant change in the membership of the school board.

The Superintendent with Longevity. Study of the successful superintendent, defined in many instances as the superintendent with tenure, has been the focus of research. The premise of this research is the belief that understanding characteristics of successful superintendents will lead to a more accurate prediction of superintendent longevity.

Research has tested a hypothesis that a superintendent's ability to survive in high conflict situations will increase his/her length of tenure. One such study (Knisley, 1980) found that superintendents who acted in a representative manner, valued public debate and action, viewed administrative action as separate from the board's policy function, and kept separate from any faction of the arena council behavior in the school board, would be able to survive in high board/community conflicts. Arena council behavior, according to Lutz and Merz (1992) is defined as boards who think of themselves as representatives of the people, who

dedicate themselves to putting into policy what they believe the people demand, rather than that which the board believes is best for the people.

Another study (Kerr, 1986) resulted in the assertion that long-term leadership was associated with the superintendent's ability to survive in a crisis in which he/she played an active leadership role, using a "zone of tolerance".

From a 1981 national study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (Iannaccone), two major themes emerged that surviving superintendents possessed. One was a deep personal commitment to the democratic process, including facilitating opportunities for groups to express their positions. The second theme was a belief that school will make a difference in the lives of children. These surviving superintendents rejected the idea that one must concentrate efforts on surviving, but rather efforts must be focused on fulfilling one's mission to make a difference.

Anderson (1989) developed an equation to predict tenure in the superintendency after studying superintendents and board members who held positions nationwide from 1983-1985. Superintendent variables that had an impact on tenure were:

1. Age. Longer length of tenure was associated with a younger superintendent.

2. Same ethnic group. If the superintendent was of the same ethnic group as the community the chance of a lengthier tenure was increased.

3. Intent to use position as a stepping stone. These superintendents did move on quicker than those who did not intend to use the position as a stepping stone.

4. Orienting new board members. If the superintendent played an active role in orienting new board members, his/her chance of increasing tenure was higher that those who did not participate.

Variables having an impact on superintendent turnover from the board's realm of influence were:

1. Recent board member defeat. Defeat of a board member was associated with shorter superintendent turnover.

2. Length of contract. Shorter contracts for superintendents resulted in longer tenure than contracts with more years.

3. Formal interview format. Superintendents who were hired using a formal interview format had shorter tenure.

4. Salary. Superintendents who received a higher salary had a greater length of tenure.

5. Board instability. More coming and going of board members was associated with a shorter length of superintendent tenure.

District variables that had an impact on superintendent tenure were:

1. Per pupil expenditure. Higher per pupil expenditures were not related to superintendent tenure.

2. Enrollment. Districts with smaller enrollments had superintendents with less tenure than districts with higher enrollments. Anderson emphasizes that 40 % of the factors affecting superintendent tenure had nothing to do with decisions, character, and attitudes of the superintendent, board members, or others.

A qualitative case study of long-term rural superintendents with 15 or more years of experience in Oklahoma (Copeland, 1993) revealed that characteristics and attributes of the superintendents were not innate, but learned. These learned skills were associated with the superintendent's ability to relate to others. People skills, the researcher claimed, are dependent on the development of mutual respect and trust that require a lengthy time to acquire. In this study superintendents, principals, teachers, board members, and community leaders from each district were interviewed.

Superintendent Characteristics. Researchers have speculated that defining characteristics of the successful superintendent and unsuc-

cessful superintendent could provide more accurate predictors of superintendent longevity.

In an effort to describe the short length of tenure of superintendents in West Virginia, Zickfoose (1979) analyzed perceptions of current and former superintendents and board members as to reasons for superintendent turnover. Counties were identified as having either successful superintendents, those with tenure, or unsuccessful superintendents, those without tenure. Board members from counties with successful superintendents ranked the ability of the superintendent to communicate with the board as more important to the superintendent's success than those board members from counties with an unsuccessful superintendent. Superintendents felt that communication with the board was more important to their success than did the board members, who felt that the superintendent's communication with the staff was more important to the success of the superintendent. Board members from counties with unsuccessful superintendents felt that it was more important for the superintendent to have good communication with the community than those board members from counties with successful superintendents. Zickfoose also found great discrepancy between superintendents and boards regarding reasons for superintendent turnover and circumstances surrounding turnover. From her research, Zickfoose

concluded that evaluations on superintendents by their boards were critical to their success, and both superintendents and boards function better when roles and expectations were more alike and more fully understood.

Perceived success competencies and factors leading to superintendent dismissal were investigated in Montana during 1992 (Seybert, 1993). School board members and superintendents were surveyed. Superintendent perceptions regarding competencies needed for success were not significantly related to demographic variables of the size of the district, age of the superintendent, year of superintendent experience, or the superintendent's level of academic attainment. However, significant differences were found when examining board chairpersons' perceptions regarding superintendent competencies needed for success. The larger the district, the more important the competency of policy formation became. The smaller the district, the more important public relations was perceived as a success factor. Seybert's proposed reasons for this are that smaller districts in Montana are generally informal, and the relationship between board and superintendent may be more cooperative, which may lead to boards in smaller districts putting less emphasis on policy formation. Seybert remarks, ". . .(I)t becomes understandable that the smaller the district, the more concerned board chairs were that their

superintendent be friendly and willing to interact with the community" (p. 135).

Montana superintendents perceived educational leadership, public relations, and superintendent/board relations as more important to their success than did board chairpersons (Seybert, 1993). Board chairpersons perceived curriculum development and finance competencies as more important factors of success than did superintendents. Differences existed between superintendents and board chairs regarding factors likely to lead to dismissal. Superintendents perceived that incompetence in accomplishing goals set by the board, public relations, and superintendent/board relations were more likely to lead to dismissal, whereas board chairpersons perceived that incompetencies in the areas of curriculum development, educational leadership, personnel management, and school finance were more likely to lead to dismissal.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Board members, departing superintendents and their replacements have been asked questions to find out the reasons for superintendent turnover in hopes of providing answers for complex challenges that come with a change of leadership.

Involuntary turnover has been the focus of studies of superintendent turnover. When Evans (1974) questioned the board about causes related to non-reemployment of superintendents in California, the most common general reason given was because of a weakness in community relations. However, the researcher determined after further analysis of participants' response, that most reasons concerned matters of integrity. Another reason cited was a failure of the superintendent to execute board policies and wishes.

In a similar study done the same year, the perceived reasons of involuntary superintendent turnover during the 1971-72 and 1972-73 school years in Kansas (Steinle, 1974) revealed the greatest difference of perceptions between the departing superintendent and the board presidents. Interviews were held with these two groups and also with the successor superintendent and a central office staff member. Most frequently, reasons for involuntary turnover were attributed to either perceived weaknesses of the superintendent or of the board. Most often it was difficult for either of these parties to recognize their own self-weaknesses.

Studies have focused on reasons for superintendent turnover, specifically questioning departing superintendents and often times board

members and superintendents hired to replace them. Causes of superintendent turnover from 1970-1980 in South Dakota (Light, 1985), analyzed from four population groups: (a) past superintendents from highly mobile districts; (b) superintendents of zero turnover districts; (c) highly mobile superintendents; and (d) presidents of school boards of high turnover districts. The community profile of high turnover districts had little impact on superintendent tenure. The author concluded that attitude differences between past superintendents and board presidents in these districts may have contributed to high turnover problems.

All superintendents who changed jobs in Illinois during 1980-84 school years were questioned to find out primary reasons for turnover (Thomas, 1985). Primary reasons cited were for career advancement and because of poor relationships with the school board. Burlingame (1979) reported from studying Illinois superintendents who served in small rural districts that the major factor prompting superintendent turnover was differences in beliefs about what schools should be doing. These differences were found between superintendents, school boards and/or the community.

Studies have asked participants to appraise the departing superintendent, with the expectancy that defining competencies or areas of incompetence among these superintendents would lead to understanding

the type of leader most likely not to achieve superintendent tenure. Michigan school superintendents who were either dismissed or encouraged to leave were the population studied between 1980-1985 (Roeder, 1987). Board members from these districts were questioned and asked to complete an evaluation/appraisal of the released superintendent. Superintendents were appraised weakest in the area of relationship with the board, and appraised strongest in the area of business and finance. The lack of maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, honesty, and integrity was not chosen as a predominate factor in termination of superintendent tenure. The majority of the dismissed or encouraged to leave superintendents were not evaluated annually in a formal, written manner.

Differences of opinion were found between board chairpersons and departed superintendents in Wyoming (Wheeler, 1988). These groups were questioned about their perceptions of reasons for superintendent turnover during a three year period. Participants were also questioned about the separated superintendent's strengths and weakness. Of 50 items concerning strengths of a superintendent, separated superintendents perceived themselves strong in 49 of the items, whereas board chairpersons perceived superintendent strengths in only 17 of the 50 items. The study found that problems existed in areas of administra-

tive organization and management, public and staff relations, personal and professional characteristics, and board/superintendent relations.

Disharmony between the board and superintendent, with superintendents often citing board interference, has been blamed for superintendent turnover. More than one-half of the Illinois superintendents who changed jobs during 1988-89 (Hudgens, 1991) expressed board interference in administrative functions and other problems with board relations. From a survey of all the 246 new California superintendents in the 1988-89 school year, Giles and Giles (1990) found that 66.5% reported the cause for superintendent turnover as disharmony between the departing superintendent and the board. The authors concluded after follow up study that disharmony often existed between superintendents and boards even when the departing superintendent took a job in a larger district with greater status and responsibility.

School board presidents in rural Oklahoma schools were questioned as to the reasons for superintendent turnover in their districts (Chance & Capps, 1992). They had been selected because their district had witnessed more than three new superintendents in a five year period. School board presidents' perceptions of the reasons for superintendent turnover fell within five categories. The primary reason for turnover was because of financial mismanagement. This reason represented

over half of the total reasons for superintendent turnover. Financial malfeasance on the part of the superintendent was the second main reason. This issue included dishonest actions of the superintendent that put the district in financial difficulties. Communication problems between the superintendent and the board was the third reason. This issue primarily dealt with the superintendent who would not share information with the board, one that would be aloof or inaccessible, or one that would not treat people in a caring manner. Immorality on the part of the superintendent was the fourth reason. The last category was resignation or termination of the superintendent, some due to health, retirement, or death. The authors concluded that "school leaders need not only manifest an appropriate value system but must also possess the astuteness to recognize and respond to community concerns and power structures" (p. 12).

Recently hired superintendents in Washington (Weeks, 1993), who held their first or second year of employment in a school district, were questioned about their perceptions regarding causes that lead to a departure of the previous superintendent. Causes identified were: (a) a lack of communication skills; (b) the belief that a leader who remains in a position too long loses effectiveness; and (c) leadership style is an important factor in superintendent success. These new superintendents

found the departing superintendent, rather than the school board, to blame for much of the conflict surrounding superintendent turnover.

Finally, factors related to superintendent/school board relations were found to influence the superintendent turnover rate in Idaho during the years 1986-1994 (Spiropulos, 1996). The four populations studied were: (a) superintendents of zero turnover districts; (b) long-standing board members; (c) former superintendents of high turnover districts; and (d) highly mobile superintendents. In high turnover districts, reasons for turnover were consistent among former superintendents. Political reasons and/or implications were associated with superintendent job performance and decision making process which in turn affected the superintendent turnover rate.

Politics and Superintendent Turnover. Willard Waller (1965) in his classic work, The Sociology of Teaching, explains the typical life history of the rural superintendent and the vulnerability of the position. It is a story that repeats itself time and time again. The new superintendent enters the community with support from nearly everyone, except in the case of his/her predecessor who has left behind a cadre of well-organized individuals who are in support of the previous superintendent. This support continues until an incident or conflict occurs that pits him or her against an individual or group in the community. Perhaps the su-

perintendent enacts a new policy, enforces a disciplinary action that is unpopular with parents, supports an unpopular teacher, or refuses to support a certain group's program, any of which could cause a conflict to occur. In this role the making of more enemies than friends is unavoidable. At the end of the first year, the majority of the community are still in support of the superintendent. Enemies do exist, but are yet not able to possess the amount of power needed to usurp the superintendent's position. These enemies continue to harass the superintendent throughout the second year on the job. The group becomes increasingly more organized. In the following year the group manages to get one of their members elected to the school board. Waller explains that if the superintendent manages to hang on to the position at the end of the second year, then the third year will find more struggles to maintain the position and so on, until the fifth year. If the superintendent manages to maintain his/her position until this time, chances are that the superintendent will be seen as a local and as part of the group. Overall, Waller sees the school in the small community doomed to frequent changes of superintendents.

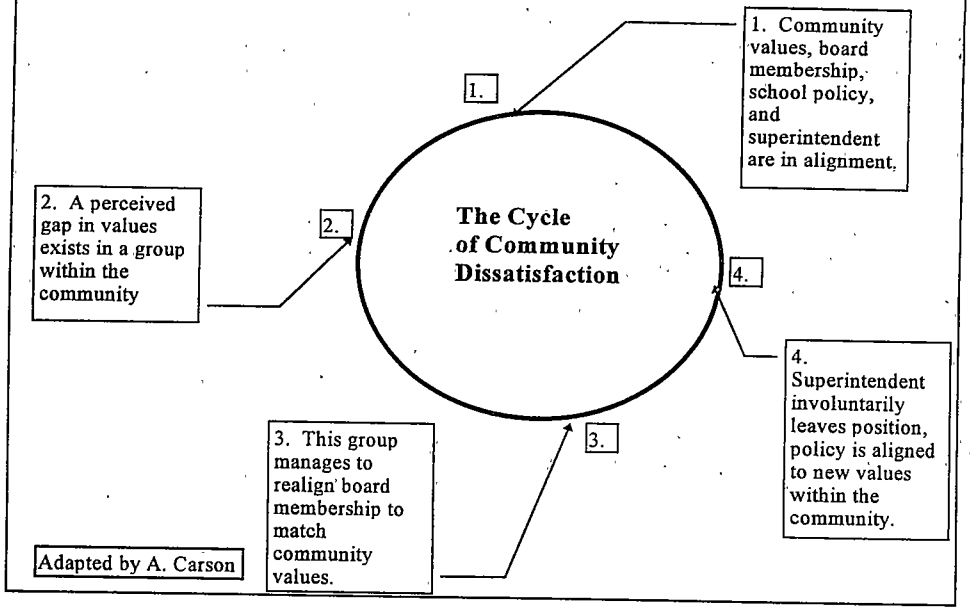
Another perspective of the rural social context and its implications on superintendent longevity is illustrated by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) in an explanation of the sacred and secular society (Vidich & Bensman,

1968). A sacred community is used by sociologists to describe a community that is traditional. Old ways are better than new. Change is avoided. In a secular community, change is embraced and viewed as positive. It is the rural community that is typically viewed as sacred. The dominant political structure of the community is directly linked to the rural school district's government. Iannaccone and Lutz claim that the superintendent in a rural district must believe in conforming to the sacred community values and must avoid confrontations. They contend that the superintendent in a sacred community can never become more than a "respected second echelon power holder" (p. 39), depending on how respected the superintendent becomes by using expert knowledge. Thus, a superintendent could be successful in one setting and not so in another due to his or her perceived expertise.

A theory that is related to Waller's description of the rural community and the sacred versus secular society is Iannaccone and Lutz's theory of community dissatisfaction, or the dissatisfaction theory of democracy (1978). The theory, explained in basic terms, is that there are two opposing groups at work in any community: (a) the political elite who are the school board; and (b) the societal group composed of citizens. When community values are in line with board membership, school policy, and superintendent, the political conditions within a district are stable.

When dissatisfied with their school, the citizen group manages to garner political clout necessary to create an upheaval of the political structure of the school board. This upheaval from within the community creates a counterbalance to government by a few. It does so by "identifying democratic control with episodic adjustment of school district policy to the will or values of the larger community, rather than with any minimum level of continuous competition or correspondence in administrative decisions to client needs" (p. 130). This group then has elected to the school board one or more of its members, who in turn choose a superintendent whose values are congruent with those of the community. When, and if, in time the community again becomes dissatisfied with the school, or when the community perceives an intolerable gap between their values and those of the school, a group forms that resorts to political action. Thus, the cycle continues as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Iannaconne and Lutz--Community Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy



The community dissatisfaction theoretical framework has been used by researchers in attempting to determine a link between political happenings within a school district and the governance of the school, mainly in the area of incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover. Longitudinal studies done by Iannaccone and Lutz and their students have given evidence to suggest that community changed dissatisfaction levels lead to voting behavior which in turn leads to incumbent school board member defeat, followed by involuntary superintendent turnover within two years, and outside succession.

Grady and Bryant (1990) have done research, primarily in rural settings, in the areas of "critical incidents" that occur between board

members and superintendents. Their previous research (1988) sought to determine reasons for superintendent turnover in rural districts by investigating these critical incidents. Critical incidents were defined as experiences that caused tension between superintendents and school boards that ultimately led to superintendent turnover. In their 1990 study of Nebraska superintendents in rural districts critical incidents were grouped into the following categories listed in order of frequency: (a) critical incidents between school board members and their children, relatives, and friends, that included board members' children who had been banned from participation in athletic events; (b) board members' interpretations of their roles; (c) individuals elected to the board whose primary function was to remove the superintendent from the job; (d) no support for the superintendent; (e) board problems within itself; (f) athletic coaches; (g) community; (h) individual board members; (i) employee problem; (j) contract; (k) superintendent; and (l) finance.

In Berger's (1983) research on predicting superintendent turnover, his major findings pertained to what he termed the "political variable", a measure of the relationship the superintendent had with the board, teachers and community. Although in his study the superintendent-teacher relations variable was not a predictor of turnover, the superintendent-board variable was. He predicts that when both the board and

the community have hostile relations toward the superintendent, the probability of turnover increases. Importantly, Berger explains the act of turnover may be nothing more than "a reflection of changes that have occurred in the district or totally unrelated factors", and continues to caution that superintendent turnover "may be more (or less) complex and the process may originate with the superintendent rather than the community or board" (p. 16).

Testing the Dissatisfaction Model

Using the dissatisfaction theory as a basis for investigation, studies have aimed to investigate the theory's ability to predict superintendent turnover. Studies are grouped into those that investigated changes in the school board and its subsequent effect on superintendent turnover, the relationship between incumbent board member defeat and superintendent turnover, and the broader topic of testing the dissatisfaction model's predictive factors holistically and in different settings.

Changes in the School Board and Superintendent Turnover.

A change in the composition of the school board was found to be the most influential internal factor affecting the decision to vacate a superintendency in Indiana (Pruis, 1986). In other research on the variables associated with Illinois superintendent turnover from 1980-1986, Fritz (1988) found that the presence of new

school board members played a key role in superintendent turnover. Loasching (1988) found parallel results when studying the effects of school board instability on superintendent turnover. He found that a significant relationship existed between the number of new school board members and superintendent turnover, and between involuntary school board turnover and superintendent turnover.

Hudgens (1991) studied superintendent perceptions regarding turnover in Illinois in 1988-1989. The sample population was Illinois superintendents who vacated the position during the 1988-1989 school year. One half of the study group expressed board interference in administrative functions and other problems with board relations. Two-thirds saw a majority of their school boards change membership. Loomis (1995) discovered in his study of Oregon superintendents who worked in districts with five-member school boards that the total number of changes on the board dramatically affected superintendent longevity. He also found the superintendent's relationship with the board did not affect superintendent turnover until the political climate in the district became ignited.

Board Incumbent Defeat and Superintendent Turnover. Studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between board incumbent defeat and superinten-

dent turnover. In a study of incumbent school board member replacement and superintendent turnover in selected South Carolina school districts from 1978-1988, Sullivan (1990) found no statistically significant relationship between incumbent defeat and superintendent turnover one year, two years, three years, and four years after the general elections. The selected school districts were those that showed an enrollment increase or decrease of 11.5%. A similar study of superintendent turnover in Alabama from 1984-1994, found that the strongest relationship existed between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover one year after the general elections (Brackett, 1995). The second strongest relationship existed four years after the 1986 general election. However, when taken collectively from 1984-1994, Brackett found no relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover. Kitchens (1994) also found no significant relationship between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover in Louisiana from 1980-1992.

Holistic Tests of the Dissatisfaction Model. Holistic tests of the dissatisfaction model refer to studies that used social, economical, and political indicators to assess local school district politics. Based on research that focused solely on labor conflict occurring in schools during either 1977 or 1978, and studying events that transpired four years be-

fore and after the conflict, Rada and Carlson (1985) developed a modified theory of the dissatisfaction model. Data was collected from school board minutes, newspaper reports that included letters to the editor, and interviews held with school officials. In this study the dissatisfaction model failed to predict superintendent turnover. The authors attributed this failure to the type of conflict chosen to study. In labor conflicts, typically the superintendent is not an active participant, but removed from involvement in the dispute. Thus the superintendent is not viewed as a source of community dissatisfaction.

Rada and Carlson's modified theory of dissatisfaction is based on this concept of identifying the community's source, or focus of attention, of dissatisfaction in their schools. The dynamics of the dissatisfaction model are contingent upon this focus of community dissatisfaction, being either on the school board or the superintendent. The model is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2.

Community Dissatisfaction With Schools is Focused On. . .

	School Board	**Board and Superintendent**	**Superintendent**
Likelihood of:			
Increased rate of school board member turnover	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Shift to arena-like council behavior	HIGH	HIGH	MODERATE
Involuntary superintendent turnover	LOW	HIGH	HIGH

Gerla (1987) drew upon Carlson's (1972) work to investigate Washington school districts in 1986-87 and the conditions that surrounded superintendent selection. The major finding was that the number of districts with dissatisfied boards paralleled the number of new superintendents who received a mandate from the board upon being hired.

A 1986 study (Schoenefeld) compared the predictability rates of superintendent turnover using the Iannaccone and Lutz model (relying on social, economic, and political indicators) and the Lutz modified model (relying on public dissatisfaction using the number of challengers at a school board election) in schools in 27 Oklahoma counties from 1971-1986. The study found lower predictability measures of superintendent turnover from previous studies. The Iannaccone and Lutz model had a predictability rate of 37%, whereas the Lutz model had a rate of 39%.

The study found that the strongest indicator of superintendent turnover was elections involving an incumbent and one or more challengers. The predictive rate of this factor was found to be 47%, which the author noted was still lower than previous findings.

Superintendent turnover was the focus of another related study done in Oklahoma the following year. After analyzing superintendent turnover in two small rural school districts, case study research led Logsdon (1987) to propose why using the Iannaccone and Lutz model to predict turnover was not successful. Small rural school districts in Oklahoma were characterized as relatively open, meaning that homogeneity of political cultures existed in both the community and the school leaders. The political culture found in the state of Oklahoma was traditionalistic, thus inhibiting change. This openness was facilitated by recruitment of like-minded board members and by superintendents (evaluated and hired or re-hired yearly) who attended to community interests. To threaten this relative openness, significant changes would be required which would be a result of a significant number of newcomers from different political cultures. For this reason, the author concluded that using the Iannaccone and Lutz model to predict superintendent turnover would not be successful in Oklahoma.

Quantitative indicators alone could not support previous research done on the Iannaccone and Lutz theory of dissatisfaction according to Chmara (1989). The indicators used previously were (a) average daily membership, (b) assessed valuation of property, (c) ratio of challengers to school board positions, and (d) the number of incumbent board turnovers. However, the researcher did find support for the dissatisfaction theory in his study using a personal interview technique with 12 superintendents who experienced turnover during 1985-87. Support was found when analyzing the complex set of interactions that the superintendents described occurring in their districts.

Superintendent Selection

The time of superintendent selection brings with it an opportunity for the school district to assess the organization's condition, recent performance, and make judgments about its leadership needs for the future (Carlson, 1972). Carlson contends that if the administration is perceived as unsatisfactory, the appointment will go to a career-bound superintendent. If it is perceived as satisfactory a place-bound superintendent will be chosen, one familiar with the system and willing to carry on in the predecessor's footsteps. Carlson further foretells that this newly hired career-bound superintendent will be issued a mandate from the board

when dissatisfaction of past administration pervades the selection process.

In this final section, superintendent selection is discussed from two different, yet overlapping perspectives. The first discussion centers on the conditions surrounding the selection process in the school district. The second contains research regarding the criteria that school boards use in selecting a superintendent, along with a comparison of the perceptions of the importance of those criteria elicited from both superintendents and school board members. In some cases, the size of the school is a category used in both analyses.

Processes Used in Superintendent Selection. Yock, et al. (1990) provided information on conditions that impact superintendent selection. In a nationwide, randomized study of school board members serving in school districts during 1989, they found 81.3% of the school board members would prefer to hire a superintendent from a district similar to theirs. The percentage of board members who would want that person to have prior experience as a superintendent was 70.3%, and 61.2% would want the prospective superintendent to come from within their own state. The study found that the smaller the school district the more important in-state experience became.

A majority of small districts in Kansas and Missouri involved in selecting a new superintendent during the 1984-85 school year were found not to use recommended selection processes found in the literature on the topic (Houck, 1986). The majority of larger districts were found to follow the guidelines by utilizing professional search consultants. Similarly, in another study conducted in Kansas (Hetlinger, 1986) parallel findings emerged. Larger districts tended to be more objective in their selection approach than smaller districts. Consultant assistance, which the larger districts used, contributed to this more objective approach.

Blankenship (1995) found significant differences in the way that smaller districts in Wyoming used information services from the way larger districts did when selecting a superintendent. All the districts involved in a superintendent search during 1989 to 1994 were investigated. Larger districts used information and services classified as external, formal, infrequent, authoritative, and complete. Smaller districts used information classified as frequent, informal, internal, and incomplete. However, his study revealed that larger districts, those with enrollments of 300 or more, accounted for the majority (70%) of superintendent turnover from 1989 to 1994. Blankenship recommended an in-

vestigation into reasons for the differences in turnover and search success ratios among the different sizes of schools in Wyoming.

Criteria Used in Superintendent Selection. Oregon school districts that hired a new superintendent during 1984-85 were mailed questionnaires about their superintendent selection processes (Fenili, 1985). Board members involved in the selection process were asked about the qualities they sought for in their new superintendents, and also whether informal information was important to their selection decision. Superintendents were asked for demographic information as well as specific personal, professional, and managerial skills they felt were important to their selection as a superintendent. The study showed that informal criteria were important to the selection of a superintendent. Board members used both formal and informal characteristics to make their selection decision, whereas superintendents placed more importance on the technical skills of their position. The author concluded that the more informal criteria were included with formal, the better the match between superintendent and school district.

Qualities of leadership and attitudes were found to be most important to school board members when selecting a superintendent in six north central states (Colvard, 1986). This finding was consistent regardless of size or geographic location of the school district.

Field research of school boards discovered the major selection criteria used were candidate experience, ability to relate well with the public, education, leadership ability, and certification (Horkman, 1986). Decisional and interpersonal skills were found to be the most important selection factors in Washington state (Gerla, 1988). However, significant disagreement was found between perceptions of unsuccessful superintendent candidates and three groups: (a) successful superintendent candidates; (b) board members; (c) and professional search consultants. The perceptions were in the area of competencies and skills needed for a successful superintendency in Washington state.

Concerning the ranking of successful superintendent competencies, Haugland (1986) found disagreement between school board members and superintendents in a state-wide survey conducted in South Dakota in 1986. The researcher concluded that this discrepancy may lead to a misunderstanding of district priorities. A similar study on successful superintendent competencies was performed (Cowles, 1991). Board members were asked to identify levels of importance in various professional skill areas in superintendents, superintendents were asked to evaluate their skills, and school board members were asked to rate the skills of their superintendents. When the data were grouped by district size, significant differences were found between the skill area of commu-

nication in small districts, in larger districts the possession of a doctorate, and in middle sized districts the importance of prior superintendent experience. In evaluation of the superintendent, there were significant differences found in a number of skill areas, leading the author to recommend further research of the topic.

Finally, four hundred board members from across Montana were surveyed and asked to judge what variables were most important to superintendent selection (Mattocks, 1987). Two broad based-categories were used: organizational skills and people-centered skills. Board members in both large and small districts judged that organizational skills should be given as the highest priority in superintendent selection. Board members from medium-sized districts judged that people-centered skills should receive the most attention. Board members from smaller districts judged this category as the second most important priority, whereas board members from large districts judged the number of years of superintendent experience as the second most important priority in superintendent selection.

Summary

In this section an extensive literature review was presented to provide background information about superintendent turnover. This literature review discussed topics of superintendent succession patterns,

reasons for turnover, and factors related to superintendent selection. Embedded in this discussion was the thesis that the type of superintendent, career-bound or place-bound, may have an impact on superintendent longevity. Characteristics of the successful and unsuccessful superintendent and how these characteristics affect superintendent tenure was examined. The politics of the superintendency, including impacts of board turnover, community dissatisfaction, type of community, type of school board, and an explanation of critical incidents that have led to superintendent turnover was illustrated. Throughout this review of literature, the small rural school district was a focus of attention.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The quantitative research design has been used primarily to investigate superintendent turnover, as found in the literature review. This study sought to use a different lens to investigate the complex phenomena of superintendent turnover in small rural schools by using a qualitative multiple case study design. The qualitative research design seeks to answer "why" and "how" questions by investigating events in their natural contexts, rather than testing hypotheses or making generalizations in order to predict human behavior. The qualitative design assumes it is impossible to identify all the important aspects related to superintendent turnover in small rural schools prior to collecting data.

The aims of this study were to investigate conditions and reveal patterns surrounding superintendent turnover in selected small, rural K-12 school districts in Montana. Five districts were selected for study that have shown a historical pattern of volatility for superintendents by hav-

ing excessive turnover. Excessive turnover was defined as having a lower tenure rate than the state average of 5.1 years and a lower tenure rate for the Class III population of 4 years.

Theoretical Construct

The literature review described several different theories about why superintendents leave their positions. These theories have been the foundation for research in most of the studies described in the literature review. The guiding theoretical construct used to investigate superintendent turnover in this study was a modified version of one advocated by Miskel and Cosgrove (1985). The modification was made by narrowing the scope from the school administrator to the superintendent. Aspects relating to the school board were included. The framework used to guide research focused on prearrival and arrival conditions, as well as on the effects of turnover on the school district. These turnover effects included changes in the prearrival and arrival conditions that can be attributed to superintendent turnover.

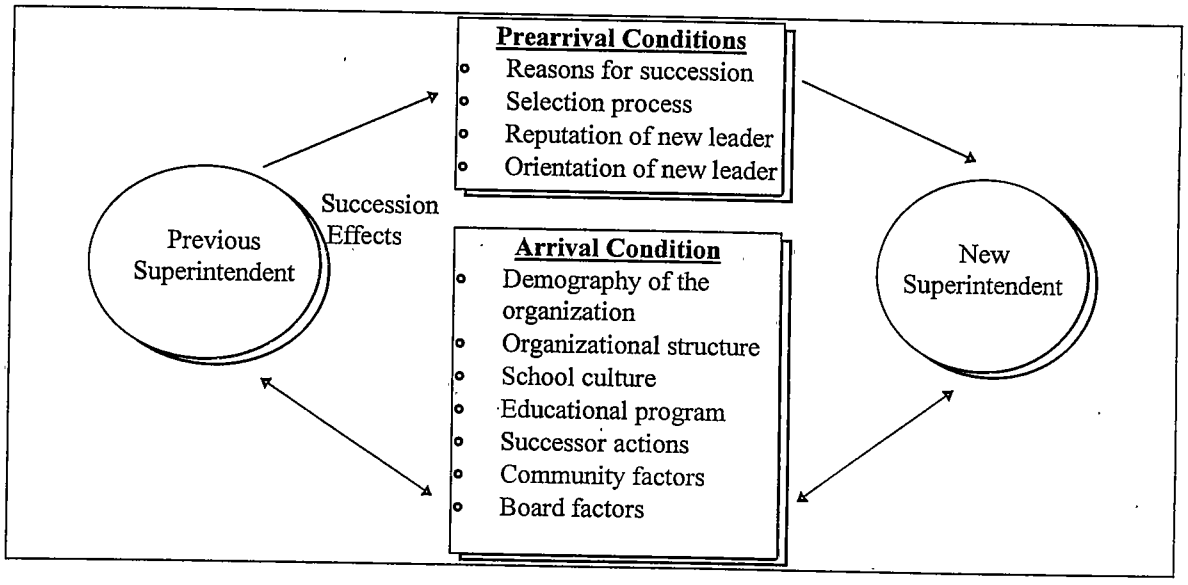
The study sought to find out, using a qualitative research methodology approach of multiple case studies, if prearrival or arrival factors and turnover effects had any influence on the leader's decision to leave the job or not. Prearrival factors investigated were (a) reasons for turn-

over, (b) selection process, (c) reputation of the new leader, and (d) orientation of the new leader. Arrival factors investigated were (a) demography of the organization, (b) organizational structure, (c) school culture, (d) educational programs, (e) successor actions, (f) community factors, and (g) board factors. Turnover effects were investigated using questions that centered on topics of (a) instability, (b) amount of change or mandates given, (c) influences on leadership styles, (d) community effects, and (e) board effects.

This study's goal was to address questions about reasons for superintendent turnover in small rural school districts in Montana. This phenomenon is complex. The theoretical construct chosen was used to accommodate the complexity of the situation.

Figure 3 is a graphic representation of this theoretical construct.

Figure 3. Theoretical Construct



Research Questions

It was assumed that many aspects interacted with the perceptions of the reasons for superintendent turnover in small rural school districts. Major generalizations concerning superintendent turnover and resulting effects can be taken from the literature review that fit into Miskel and Cosgrove's (1985) theoretical construct. While the following research questions represent major conclusions found in the literature review, the qualitative design of the study also provided room for the evolution of unanticipated research questions.

According to Bogdan and Bilkin (1992), theoretical affiliations of qualitative research are in the philosophies of Symbolic Interaction, Ethnomethodology, Phenomenology, and Idealism. The goals of qualitative research are to develop sensitizing concepts, describe multiple realities, grounded theory, and to develop an understanding of complex phenomenon.

Research questions revolved around four topics:

1. Career Paths of Superintendents: (a) How do the career goals, career orientations, and expectation of tenure affect superintendent turnover?

2. Superintendent Selection Processes: (a) How do the selection processes, informants' expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency affect superintendent turnover?

3. Role Perceptions and Expectations: (a) How do informants' expectations of roles, and job competency skill areas affect superintendent turnover?

4. Reasons for Turnover: (a) How do informants' job satisfiers and levels of satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? (b) How do board/superintendent relationships affect superintendent turnover? (c) How does the political climate of the community affect superintendent turnover? (d) How do effects of the previous superintendent affect superintendent turnover? (e) How is the school district's stability affected by superintendent turnover?

Generating Theory

The intentions of these research questions were not to test theory, but to generate theory. Responses these questions produced yielded the data for the study. In the case study approach, the processes of data gathering and data analyzing are concurrent. During these processes, new relationships, concepts and understandings are discovered which leads to generating what Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as "grounded theory". The researcher may have tentative working questions at the

outset of case study research, but understands that these are likely to evolve as the study progresses. Through the process of constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), "grounded theory is derived from data collected and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data" (p.5). Glaser and Strauss explain that when one is only interested in verifying theory, there is no room for discovering novelty, and potentially illuminating perspectives that do emerge and which may change the theory. Instead, these things are suppressed. When generating theory is the aim, the researcher is constantly alert to emergent perspectives that may influence and assist in nurturing emergent theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain that formulating, or generating theory,

> gives a feeling of "ever-developing" to the theory, allows it to become quite rich, complex, and dense, and makes its fit and relevance easy to comprehend. On the other hand, to state a theory in propositional form, except perhaps for a few scattered core propositions, would make it less complex, dense, and rich, and more laborious to read. It would also tend by implication to "freeze" the theory instead of giving the feeling of a need for continued development. (p.32)

Design of the Study

The goals of this study were to investigate conditions and reveal patterns surrounding superintendent turnover in selected small, rural K-12 school districts in Montana. Five small rural school districts with ex-

cessive superintendent turnover were selected for study that have shown a historical pattern of volatility for superintendents. Multiple case study methodology was used to investigate superintendent turnover in these school districts.

Qualitative researchers understand human behavior as a very complex phenomenon. Bogdan and Bilkin (1992) state qualitative researchers, "see the nature for cause and prediction as undermining their ability to grasp the basic interpretive nature of human behavior and the human experience" (p. 48-49). Researchers who use qualitative approaches tend to be interested in the way in which people make sense out of their lives. Bogdan and Bilkin call this approach a phenomological mode of investigating. They describe it as, "an attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular settings" (p. 34). The authors call this attempt to understand "participant perspectives", and explain that qualitative researchers are concerned with accurately capturing this perspective. In educational research, Bogdan and Bilkin cite Psathas (1973) who explained that questions asked of participants focus on what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences, and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994) carefully collected qualitative research that focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events studied in their natural settings gives us a strong handle on "real life". They explain that this confidence is derived from the "local groundedness" of the data, which is collected in close proximity to a specific situation instead of through the mail or over the phone. The influences of the local context are taken into account, which increases the possibility of understanding latent or underlying issues. Qualitative data with an emphasis on people's everyday experiences are well suited for locating the meanings people attach to their perceptions and assumptions.

Case-Study Research Methodology

Merriam (1988) contends that the goal of case study qualitative research is to gain an in-depth understanding through a holistic perspective of a situation and its meaning for those involved. She explains that research conducted in this paradigm "focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p.3). She describes how a case study research design allows a complex phenomenon to be studied systematically. The case study research design, "concentrates on many, if not all, the variables present in a single unit" (p. 7). Case study qualitative re-

search is inductive. It realizes that it is impossible to pre-select all the important variables ahead of time. Merriam explains that the nature of survey research questions are "what" and "how many", as opposed to questions of "how" and "why" found in case study research. Open-ended responses will make room for understanding the world as seen by the participants without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of survey answers or categories (Patton, 1990).

Case study takes place in what Merriam (1988) defines as, "an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (p. 9). It aims to uncover interactions of significant factors characteristic of a certain phenomenon. Yin (1994) explains that the case study research design is well suited for situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context.

Goals of case study research are theory-generating. Merriam cites Goetz and LeCompte (1984) as explaining that in contrast to deductive researchers who, "hope to find data to match a theory, inductive researchers hope to find a theory that explains their data." Theory-building becomes necessary in cases where there is no theory to explain a certain phenomenon, or when existing theory does not sufficiently provide an explanation.

Validity

In a qualitative study, Merriam (1988) explains, "Validity must be assessed in terms of interpreting the investigator's experience, rather than in terms of reality itself, which can never be truly grasped" (p. 167). She explains that if understanding is the goal of a qualitative study, the criteria for trusting the study are different than if discovering a law or testing a hypothesis is the goal.

Good qualitative research should enhance levels of understanding. Findings in qualitative studies should provide what Gilbert Ryle called "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973). Thick descriptions will allow readers to determine potential transferability and appropriateness to their settings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The authors cite Maxwell's (1992) description of different types of understanding that may emerge from a qualitative research which apply to this study: (a) descriptive—what happened in specific situations, (b) interpretive—what it meant to the people involved, and (c) theoretical—concepts and their relationships that can be used to explain actions and meanings.

Internal validity is vital to studies that seek explanatory outcomes. Triangulation is one common method used to achieve internal validity. Triangulation is a process by which the researcher guards against the accusation that the study's findings are a result of one single method, a

single source, or a single researcher's biases. One of the methods Patton (1990) gives that contributes to verification and validation of qualitative analysis is data source triangulation. This method entails checking the consistency of different data sources within the same method. The study compared the perspectives of people from different points of view, and sought to understand when and why there are differences, in order to provide "thick descriptions". Three different population groups from each case, or school district, were interviewed: (a) school board chairpersons, (b) district clerks, and (c) superintendents.

The credibility of the researcher is a factor that affects the validity of a qualitative study. Patton (1990) admonishes that researchers should "strive neither to overestimate nor to underestimate their effects but to take seriously their responsibility to describe and study what those effects are" (p. 474). Researchers must be aware of the extent to which their predisposition or biases may affect data analysis and interpretations.

Two key informants with histories and knowledge of superintendent turnover and the issues behind turnover in small rural schools in Montana were used in helping to increase the researcher's professional knowledge and judgment. These key informants assisted in selection of the cases to be studied, evaluated interview questions and format, and

provided feedback on the study's findings. The key informants were the executive director of the Montana School Boards Association and the executive director of the School Administrators of Montana.

One concern in using the personal interview as a data collection tool is what Kerlinger (1992) describes as the effect of lifting respondents out of their own social contexts, which could make the results of the data invalid (p. 387). The event of the interview is explained as a "special occurrence in the ordinary life of the respondent". In this event the respondent may give answers that may not be real but ones that may be wished for. The type of interactions between the researcher and the respondent during the interview may also be of an "unnatural manner", causing another threat. To control for these concerns, Kerlinger claims the researcher needs to have a skilled manner in the methods of phrasing and asking questions.

The study attempted to manage this concern by including field tests of the interview prior to data collection with individuals in similar roles of those participating in the study. Furthermore, using the personal interview in this study would not be an unusual event, given the researcher's educational background, qualifications, and experiences.

Additional effects to internal validity could have occurred in this study. A study such as this that relies heavily on qualitative data is vul-

nerable to the influence of historical events in the school district. Examples of this concern are extraneous events that could occur at the same time or before conducting the interviews, which could affect the data gathered. Timing of the interview was vital. However, no extraneous events that could have affected the data gathered were found.

Related to historical concerns is that of participant maturation and its effect on internal validity. Maturation is when the participant grows wiser and more mature over time. The study could have been susceptible to this threat when attempting to determine participants' perceptions of reasons for superintendent turnover. These perceptions were gathered after the occurrence of superintendent turnover. It is possible that since the event has transpired and a new superintendent was installed, perceptions could have either been forgotten on one extreme or exaggerated on the other. However, these life experiences could add to the strength of the study's findings. The study gathered multiple perspectives from multiple cases to manage this concern.

Lastly, concerns of instrumentation and its effects on internal validity were minimized due to one person conducting the entire research. A series of field tests were also administered.

Informants

Case study research revolves around the in-depth study of a single event or series of linked cases over a defined period of time. The researcher tries to locate the "story" of a certain aspect of social behavior in a particular setting and the factors that influence the situation (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Informants' "story" isolates themes, topics and key variables.

Multiple case study research that focused on perceptions of particular individuals and groups was used in this study. The study used a sample of five school districts that made up the five cases studied. A combination of two types of sampling methods was used in selecting the five school districts: (a) intensity sampling which involved information-rich cases that manifested the phenomenon of study intensely, but not extremely, and (b) criterion sampling which consisted of a review of all of the cases which met a set of predetermined criteria (Patton, 1990).

Criteria Used in Informant Selection

Criteria used in selection were: (a) The district must have had a district population of less than 1,000 in the most recent census of 1990; (b) The district must have had an economic base that was primarily agricultural; (c) Cases were chosen for their patterns of excessive superin-

tendent turnover judged from 1977 to 1997. Excessive turnover was defined as having both a lower tenure rate than the state average of 5.1 years and a lower tenure rate for the Class III population of 4 years (Carson, 1998). After districts met these three criteria, the key informants recommended five of the school districts that would be suitable for case study.

Description of Informants

Multiple case study research was conducted in small rural K-12 public school districts in Montana. These were chosen after they met a set of predetermined criteria. In each district school board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents were interviewed. Individuals who currently held these positions were interviewed along with individuals who previously held these positions. From each district a minimum of two school board chairpersons, two district clerks, and two past superintendents were planned to be interviewed. In all, seventeen superintendents, fourteen school board chairpersons, and seven district clerks were interviewed.

Schools in small rural districts are governed by a school board composed generally of five members, which hires one superintendent and one district clerk. In many districts this clerk is employed also as the school secretary. The district clerk is not under the supervision of the

superintendent, but accountable only to the school board. The school board appoints one of its members as chairperson at an organizational meeting held in the spring. This person serves as chair until the next organizational meeting the following spring.

School districts that fit the population description, but located on an American Indian reservation or with a student population of 40% or more American Indian enrollment were not included in the study. These schools are faced with a different set of conditions that this study does not address.

Locations of the Study

All school districts, or cases, studied were in rural Montana. These school districts had a total district population of less than 1,000. The economical base of the selected districts were agricultural. Care was taken to select districts that were not in proximity to each other, but occupied different quadrants of the state. Chapter 3 includes descriptions of the locations of the selected school districts used in the study.

Sources of Evidence

Qualitative data was gathered using multiple case studies of five selected K-12 small rural school districts in Montana. School districts, or cases, were selected using a set of predetermined criteria. Data was

obtained using a personal, face to face interview with informants at the school site. Informants included school board chairpersons, school district clerks, and current and past superintendents from each district. It was anticipated that a maximum number of nine participants from each district were to be interviewed. High school students at the five sites volunteered to give a written description of their schools and communities. A preliminary review of the qualitative data was evaluated by the key informants.

Procedure

State-wide averages of length of superintendent tenure, turnover, and mobility patterns in Montana from 1977 to 1997 were discovered in a pilot study conducted in preparation for this research (Carson, 1998). Part of these findings were used to determine criteria for case selection. Criteria used in selection were: (a) The district must have had a district population of less than 1,000 in the most recent census of 1990; (b) The district must have had an economic base that was primarily agricultural; (c) Cases were chosen for their patterns of excessive superintendent turnover judged from 1977 to 1997. Excessive turnover was defined as having both a lower tenure rate than the state average of 5.1 years and a lower tenure rate for the Class III population of 4 years (Carson, 1998);

(d) Finally, after districts met the previously mentioned criteria, the key informants gave advice as to which five districts would be suitable for case study.

The list of districts that met the first three criteria were given to the key informants. When compiling this list, care was given to selecting districts that did not occupy the same geographical location or were not in close proximity to each other. The key informants were asked to make professional judgments based on the information and their knowledge regarding which districts should be included in the study.

Key informants were asked to evaluate interview questions and format. Revisions were made. Following this, the interview protocols were piloted with individuals in similar roles of the informants. Final revisions were then made to the interview protocols.

Individuals from school districts chosen as case study sites were mailed a letter describing the upcoming study. Following this letter, study participants were contacted twice by phone, once to answer any questions and to ask for their participation in the study, and once to schedule an interview. Data collection was scheduled for the spring of 1998, and took place at school sites with participants in their natural settings. One interview was planned with each informant. Upon receiving signed permission from the participant, the interview was tape re-

corded. The list of research questions was taken to the interview to act as a reference for questions and discussions. Field notes were taken during the interview. Following the interview the researcher completed a *Contact Summary Form.* This form acted as a data reduction technique while capturing thoughtful impressions and reflections about the interview (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The guide consisted of four basic questions: (a) main issues or themes that emerged from the interview; (b) a summary of the information gathered on each of the target questions asked. (This section had the major questions, room for information gathered, and an area that indicated the theme of the answer); (c) any other information that emerged as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in the interview; and (d) new or remaining questions to consider in the next interview.

High school students at the five sites volunteered to provide written descriptions of their schools and communities. These were used to describe school districts in Chapter 3.

Instrumentation

Since a multiple case study approach was used, standardization of instruments was needed so that findings could be compared in analysis. An interview protocol was developed that answered the major research

questions. This interview was adapted for use with school board chairpersons, district clerks, and current and past superintendents. The interview used a semi-structured format, which utilized a standardized open-ended approach. Parts of the interview were structured so cases could be compared.

Another reason for using a standardized open-ended approach was to minimize interviewer effects by asking the same question of each participant. However, this format could have reduced the extent to which individual differences and circumstances could be taken into account by not permitting the researcher to pursue topics that came up in an interview, which were unanticipated for when the interview was written (Patton, 1990). Therefore, later in the interview the format changed to an interview protocol approach where probing, or follow up, questions were asked. This type of interview format allowed for exploring certain subjects in greater detail.

Initially, key informants evaluated the interview questions and format. They were questioned as to the validity of the questions, the instrument's ease of use, as well as the questions' abilities to answer the major research questions posed in the study. The interview was tested by piloting it with individuals in similar roles to the study participants. Those piloting the interview were asked to evaluate any unclear wording

and checked for unrecognized biases in the questions. From their input, final revisions were then made to the interview protocols.

Procedures for Collecting and Analyzing Data

Pertinent parts of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher soon after data collection. Prior to collecting and analyzing the data, codes were set up as a starting list using the conceptual framework and research questions. This procedure is termed content analysis. Codes are used in analysis to dissect interview transcriptions and field notes into meaningful parts while still keeping the relations between the parts intact. Codes are labels used to assign meaning to information. These enable the researcher to retrieve and organize data. The researcher can quickly find and cluster information that relates to a particular research question, hypothesis, or theme. A computer program designed for these purposes was used to manage information and assist in coding, retrieving and clustering data. Perceptions of school board chairpersons, district clerks, and past and current superintendents from each case were analyzed using idiosyncratic analysis. This type of analysis consisted of analyzing patterns within each case among the groups of informants. Secondly, cross-case analysis was used between and among perceptions of these cases using nomothetic analysis. Nomothetic analy-

sis involved looking for patterns common to the cases studied. These analyses are included in Chapter 3 of the study along with descriptions of the school districts, or cases, and informants.

Conducting a cross case analysis is one way of enhancing "generalizability" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994). Cross case analysis seeks to build patterns across cases. The strength of the case study approach is that it offers,

> a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure further research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base (Merriam, 1988, p. 32).

What case study qualitative methodology does not do is "generalize" in the quantitative research derived meaning of the word. As Merriam states, "One selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth, not because one wants to know what is generally true of many" (p. 173). Instead of referring to "generalizations", Merriam cites what Cronbach (1975) defines as "working hypotheses". He explains that, "when we give weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion". Stake's (1978) notion of "naturalistic generalization" is when people look for patterns that explain their experiences.

Qualitative researchers have drawn from linguists, philosophers, and authors on social cognition and their use of the term "intersubjectivity" to explain what generalizability means in a qualitative study. The basic question asks, "How can humans create a common understanding so that they can talk about the same thing?" "Intersubjectivity" is about understanding the existence of similar states in others and engaging with them in ways that are informed by that understanding. Thus, findings from qualitative research can be explained as "reader or user generalizable", or as Merriam (1988) illustrates, leaving the extent to which the study's findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations. Readers of the study ask themselves, "What is it in this study that applies to my situation or situations which I have experienced, and what does not?" This is, as Merriam explains, specifically related to what the reader hopes to learn from reading the case study. In this manner, generalizations can be taken as intersubjective.

Interpretation of the analyses follows in this report. According to Patton (1990) interpretation means, "attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation," (p. 423.)

The emphasis here, Patton explains, is on illuminating understanding and extrapolation, instead of on causal determination, prediction, and generalization. At this point it was necessary to check the interpretations made from the data by validity checks, triangulation, re-interviewing if necessary, and re-analysis. Key informants were asked to comment on the findings as they emerged.

Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the study's findings in reference to concepts from the review of literature, the theoretical construct, and research questions. Implications and recommendations for further research conclude Chapter 4.

Limitations

The intent of this study was to provide rich descriptions about conditions surrounding superintendent turnover in small rural K-12 schools in Montana. These descriptions were found by using a case study methodology conducted in five selected school districts that have shown a historical pattern of superintendent turnover. Limitations of the study were:

1. The study was limited to investigating superintendent turnover which occurred from 1977-1997 in five selected small rural K-12 school districts in the state of Montana.

2. The personal interview was the sole type of data collection tool in this study.

3. Three groups of individuals were interviewed at each school district, or case studied: school board chairpersons, district clerks, and past and current superintendents.

4. Schools on Native American Indian Reservations or with more than 40% Native American Indian enrollments were not included in this study.

5. The results of this study are not to be generalized to other schools in the state of Montana, nor are they meant to be globally generalized. The findings of this study are site specific. Findings of qualitative studies have "inter-subjective" meanings to the reader. By definition, intersubjectivity has to do with understanding the existence of similar states in others and engaging with them in ways that are informed by that understanding (Wagner, 1970). In this manner, findings of a qualitative study can be termed as reader or user generalizable.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter Three is organized into four parts. Part one and two consist of an idiosyncratic analysis of the data. Idiosyncratic analysis encompasses analyzing patterns within each case, or school district site, and within each group of informants. Perceptions of past and current superintendents, district clerks, and school board chairpersons from each case, or school district site, are analyzed in part one. In part two perceptions within each of the three groups of informants, school board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents are analyzed.

The third and fourth parts of Chapter Three consist of nomothetic analysis. Nomothetic analysis involves seeking patterns common across the five cases and three groups studied. Part three is a cross-case analysis used across perceptions of the five cases, or school district sites. Part four is analysis across the three groups of informants, or school board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents.

All real names of people and places were omitted and replaced with aliases. Names of all places and most informants used in this research study have been borrowed from names of fictional people and places from novels written in the late 1800s-early 1900s by the English author, Thomas Hardy. Described in biographical information from Dorset County, United Kingdom,

> [Hardy's] characters were drawn from people, real and remembered, and his settings were in locations known to him. He changed the names, not to confuse, but to indicate that though the places he described in magnificent imagery were real, the events were fiction. . . .A single landscape can be powerful or placid, brooding or beautiful according to the season and prevailing weather conditions. Hardy had highly developed powers of observation and a keen sense of the dramatic, so he could conjure up in words the mood and setting for the events in his narrative. (Dorset County, United Kingdom, Internet Site, 1998)

Site Descriptions

Five sites, or school districts, were studied. Aliases used in this report for these sites are Casterbridge, Glaston, Marygreen, Melchester and Sherton. All are farming or ranching communities with school district populations of 294, 320, 390, 522, and 524 as stated in the latest census of 1990. Locations of the districts are: (a) south-western Montana, (b) south-eastern Montana, (c) central Montana, (d) north-central Montana, and (e) north-eastern Montana. All sites are 30 to 50 miles away from a larger Montana community.

Informants described services, organizations and recreational opportunities in their communities. The five sites were described as: (a) Site 1. A grocery store, bar, post office and two wholesale gas stations serve the community. Organizations include four churches, a woman's group, Veteran's group, Lion's Club, and Flying Club. Recreation opportunities include hunting and fishing. High school sporting events draw a big crowd; (b) Site 2. A grocery store, garage, elevator, post office, and two bars provide services to the community. The community has a fire department and three churches. Recreational opportunities include hunting, boating, fishing, skiing, and other winter sports, and sporting events at the school; (c) Site 3. A hardware and grocery store, bar, café, and two garages provide services to the community. Three churches, a senior citizens' center, a community center, and a fire department also serve the community. Recreation opportunities were described as hunting, rodeo entertainment, and sporting events and the high school; (d) Site 4. The community is served by a motel, grocery store, gas station, restaurant, antique store, and sports store. Three churches serve the community. Recreational opportunities include hunting, fishing, and in the winter snow-mobiling. A community swimming pool is also available for recreation. There is an annual Fourth of July celebration in this community; and (e) Site 5. A bar, gas station, auto repair station, grain

elevators, meat cutting service and post office provide services to this community. There is also a teen center, senior citizen center, a 4-H group, fire station, a museum run by the Historical Society, and three churches. The community hosts a Fourth of July celebration annually. Recreational opportunities include bird and deer hunting, and sporting events at the high school.

Idiosyncratic Analyses: Within Each Case

Casterbridge

Description of the Community

Informants described Casterbridge as "close knit". As Claire, school district clerk at Casterbridge, described, "It's very close knit. It's actually kind of like one big family other than there are certain circles of people that are in a group. But pretty much everybody, if one thing goes wrong, everybody is a part of it. There's very few people who don't do a lot in this community. Everybody gets along." A high school student viewed this "big family" in a different way, "Here we have one big group which to an outsider is practically one big happy family—all best friends. On closer inspection you learn that none of these people actually like each other. In fact most of them can't stand each other."

Description of the School

Casterbridge Public School has a typical enrollment of 100 students in grades Kindergarten through twelfth. Typically 30 to 40 of those students are high school students. In the 1997-98 school year, the general fund budget for the school district was $662,466. Student drop out rate is "low to nearly none". Most graduates go to college and some students come back home to help their parents farm or ranch. Racial make up of students is Caucasian. Three Hutterite Colonies are situated in or near the district. In the 1997-98 school year 16 of these students attended Casterbridge school.

Staff included four elementary teachers, and five high school teachers. There was also a K-12 music and art teacher and one special education teacher. Three instructional aides assisted teachers. There was one head custodian and two assistants, two cooks, and five bus drivers. Office staff included one secretary and the district clerk. Base salary for beginning teachers was $19,173 for the 1997-98 school year.

Housing has been provided for the superintendent and teachers. The average superintendent turnover rate in Casterbridge from 1977-1997 was 38%. Superintendents spent an average of 2.33 years on the job. Teacher turnover was described as "high" in Casterbridge. As Zane, school board chairperson, described,

> I hate to say this but our budget gets so tight that our three long-term teachers are actually hurting us now because we have to pay them so much. We like to have the experience, but we hope for the most part that when we hire a first year teacher we get a good one in. We don't always. We did real good this year. We have the best teachers we've had in a long time.

Otto, another school board chairperson, confirmed,

> It's no secret in this school or in any rural school, that this is the training ground for young teachers. Over the last any period of time you want to think about, the large majority of our teachers have been first-year teachers. They come and spend a year or two or three and get some experience, and they begin to look for the next level which is usually a bigger school.

Informants described Casterbridge school as a "good school". The strength of the school most often spoken of was the low ratio of teachers to students. As one high school student wrote,

> I get up nine months out of the year to go to school. I go to the school every day and learn new things. Even though it is a small school, this means a small student to teacher ratio. So there are less students to a teacher, so each student can gain better knowledge of the subject, if she or he has trouble, because the teacher has more time to spend helping each individual student.

Community support of the school was also mentioned often in the description of the school. Informants were proud of the accomplishments their graduates made. The school has worked on improving technology. Lastly, one of the most common descriptors was that the school is the center of the community. Zane illustrated, "The school is the hub

of the community too. It basically holds this whole community together. When the school goes, so will the community I think. I think our goal is to hold on until the dying end."

Informants

Board chairpersons Zane, Otto and Raymond agreed to participate in the study. All made their living from agriculture and had lived in the Casterbridge community all their lives. Their ages were an average of 53 years, ranging from 46 to 62. All had some college education with two of them having two years of college education. They had been involved with hiring an average of four superintendents, ranging from three to six. They had served on the board for an average of ten years, ranging from six and a half to fifteen years. Two interviews were held at the Casterbridge school and one at the informant's home.

School district clerks Claire and Sylvia participated in the study. Both had lived in the Casterbridge community all their lives. Both had one year of college. One was a clerk for 14 years and the other for two years. One clerk had been involved in hiring seven superintendents and the other had been involved in hiring one superintendent. Both clerks stated that they "enjoyed" their job. One took the job because she was asked to apply by the superintendent and the other took it because it was a "good job". One clerk was 50 years old and the other was 26 years

old. Interviews were held at the Casterbridge school and at the town where the previous clerk resided.

Superintendents Lawrence, Helen and Keith agreed to be informants. Two of these superintendents were from larger Montana communities, and one was raised in a rural area. The average age of the superintendents was 54 years old, ranging from 51 to 57 years. They had been involved in education for an average of 22 years, ranging from 14 to 34 years. The average years they spent in the superintendency was four years, ranging from three to six years. One informant's experiences in education was as an elementary teacher, elementary principal and superintendent in one school. One had counseling experience, had been a high school principal, and then superintendent experiences in small to medium sized schools in Montana. Another had been a high school teacher, assistant high school principal, and then superintendent in two large and one small school district in Montana. All had previous experience as a superintendent before taking the job as superintendent in Casterbridge. All expressed different reasons why they had chosen to become superintendents. Interviews were held at the homes of two of the previous superintendents, and one at the Casterbridge school.

A chart of the organizational history of the Casterbridge school district from 1977 to 1997 is included in Appendix C.

Career Paths of Superintendents

How do career goals, career orientations, and expectations of tenure affect superintendent turnover? Superintendents interviewed from Casterbridge gave no patterns of why they had chosen the path to the superintendency. However, when asked if they stayed as long as they expected in Casterbridge, they responded yes. Board chairpersons felt that superintendents moved for career reasons and they were split as to whether the superintendents stayed as long as they expected. Overall, all groups, superintendents, board chairpersons, and clerks, thought the superintendents stayed as long as they expected them to stay.

When questioned about the typical career path of superintendents in Montana, informants most commonly responded that superintendents move from small to big districts, one reason being that bigger districts can offer a higher salary. Also found was the belief that the good superintendent will move on to a bigger district. Board chairperson Raymond explained, "You've got a superintendent who is doing a job and doing it well, they are looking to move up to a different school in a different location, a larger school." Board chairperson Zane confirms, "We know that they are going to move on. They are not going to stay here. They are going to want to go to bigger school districts. You know, you

would hope that they would have that drive in them that they want to succeed and move on."

Superintendent Selection Processes

How do the selection processes, expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency affect superintendent turnover? In describing the selection processes used at Casterbridge all groups described processes used by the Montana School Board's Association (MSBA). MSBA has been used in Casterbridge as consultants in superintendent selection for some years. Informants at Casterbridge depicted the MSBA process as solicitation or recruitment of applicants, screening of applicants, and organization of community/staff involvement in the interview process. Board chairpersons explained that they did reference checks themselves on the applicants. Participants expressed that they were happy with the successfulness of the MSBA searches, and they would not change anything about the process. Board chairperson Otto explained why he has been happy with the MSBA searches,

> It's quite expensive but we were trying to find the best candidate we could with this idea of continuity in mind. They are in the position to know what everybody's doing in the state as far as what superintendent is moving and what's available, which ones you probably should avoid and those types of things. So what it boils down to is we paid for their expertise.

District clerk Claire described the benefits of using MSBA,

> We went through Montana School Boards Association. They had a weekend with a pot luck, and we interviewed two candidates. It was supposed to be two candidates but one didn't show. We figured he came to Casterbridge and saw it and then drove off as fast as he could. And then the next night we had two more candidates. We offered one of the guys the job but he wasn't interested in coming because his wife didn't want to leave. Then we started over and we had a couple come up the next week. They [MSBA] called superintendent Lawrence because we were desperate. He was retired and they called him and told him to stop fishing and come up to Casterbridge.

Although the community and staff were invited to attend the gatherings and the interviews, and even though the candidates sometimes mentioned meeting the staff and students, the board alone made the hiring decision.

General public relation skills were the most common themes among all three groups in describing the ideal superintendent to serve in Casterbridge. These included being "attentive", "diplomatic", "outgoing", "visible", "communicating" and "informing" others. Also of importance was community involvement. Board chairperson Otto portrayed the importance of community involvement in Casterbridge,

> In a small community the superintendent must be willing to be part of the community. I think that's very, very important. If you get a superintendent who is kind of aloof and they don't want to be part of the community then that draws a line between the people's faith or confidence in that individual and him. If you get somebody who really is part of the community, and this community expects that, it makes it much, much easier when there are concerns. It makes it

> much, much easier when the school is asking the community to do something if you have that kind of person as a superintendent.

Ideally, it would be important if the superintendent had a rural background. It is important in Casterbridge that the superintendent can relate to both the staff and students, but still remain boss. Ideal length of stay as superintendent in Casterbridge was an average of six to seven years.

Superintendents most often described Casterbridge as the ideal place to be a superintendent. Superintendent Lawrence described Casterbridge as ideal in this way,

> Probably this is the best job I have ever had. What makes the community ideal is, what happened to me when I first came here last August, I had never been here. And I came here where it's flat and I asked myself what was I doing coming here? There's not even a tree here. Then I had some thoughts about, misconceptions about, why did I drive here? But when I walked into the school and saw how clean it was for an old school, the floors were shiny the walls were not dirty. I walked in and saw five smiling faces, the board members and the clerk, actually there were six. I said there's got to be something good about this place. The people were very, very friendly. And as I went to the interview I thought these people, they have lived here all their lives. They all went to high school here, this is their home, they don't damage it, they take care of it. They put it together. They don't have a lot of money. But there's pride, pride, pride all over this place. Coming here was kind of like coming to a second home. I said to myself, you know, these people would probably run a pretty good school. This school means everything to them. I said I would sign a contract and see what it was like. I told them that I would not be coming back next year, look for somebody else.

Superintendents also desired a "good" staff as being one of the most important things in an ideal superintendency. Superintendent Helen illustrated,

> I would like to have a staff that sees the big picture, that would look at that school district and say, "She's the only administrator we have. We understand that she's not only our principal and the superintendent, she's also the one that has to make the decisions on the boiler, on hot lunch and we'll take that into consideration. We won't put demands on her."

Role Perceptions and Expectations

How do the expectations of roles, and job competency skill areas affect superintendent turnover? Informants were asked to explain why the superintendent was hired, or why the superintendent accepted the job. The most common response was the position could not be filled. This occurred when four superintendents were hired.

The most common response within superintendent responses was that they were not looking for a job when approached about applying for the position. In fact each superintendent interviewed explained they had been recruited to apply for the position, and they were not looking for a superintendency.

Board chairpersons stated that superintendents were hired because of their prior experiences in the job, and because of the fact that

the candidate interviewed well. Also commonly mentioned were "problems" with the pool of applicants to choose from. In illustrating problems with the pool of applicants, school board chairperson Zane explained, "One guy looked like he had been dead for a couple years. Then another guy was so pushy. If you interview a guy that's already pushy what are they going to be like after you hire them?" And board chairperson Raymond voiced, "Unfortunately a lot of times I guess you got it down to two or three candidates and they didn't like any of them but this was the best one of them."

Expectations of the superintendents upon being hired were most commonly described as previous superintendent effects. Expectations of the new superintendent were to compensate for the weaknesses of the previous one. In Casterbridge this included being involved in the community, communicate effectively with all groups, improve the discipline, improve teacher evaluations, unite the staff, and get along with people. Other than to compensate for previous superintendent weaknesses, superintendents most commonly explained that there were not set expectations given to them, other than to "run the school smoothly".

All groups agreed that the board was in consensus about the superintendent's role and job competency skill areas upon being hired. However, a long time clerk said that in five of the seven superintendents

hired, the board was not in consensus about what superintendent to hire.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why superintendents left Casterbridge, and why so many over the last 21 years. Superintendents were asked about general reasons for turnover in small schools. Board chairpersons gave reasons why they ran for the school board.

When asked why a specific superintendent left, the most common response was because of some kind of superintendent "problem". These commonly were because the superintendent did not "like" athletics, was "building retirement" and not doing the job, not involved in the community, had poor discipline, emotional or personal problems, "hard to get along with", stress of the job, or because of the superintendent's unwillingness to change.

Secondly, conflicts of some nature, usually with the board, caused superintendents to leave Casterbridge. Superintendents most commonly referred to problems with the board which caused them to seek a job elsewhere. These included board/superintendent relationship problems most often caused by a change of board membership or problems with the board chairperson.

Informants explained the reasons why there has been a high rate of superintendent turnover in Casterbridge throughout the last 21 years. The most common response was because of superintendent "career moves". This included using superintendent experience at Casterbridge to move up to a bigger school. Informants most commonly referred to this as a "stepping stone" and clarified that superintendents prefer to start in small schools. District clerk Sylvia illustrated what she saw over the years,

> Those types of superintendents were short-term. [Casterbridge] would be like a stepping stone for them because it was a small community. Because of its isolation, the lack of money, the lack of enrollment, [Casterbridge] would usually end up with, rather with the top candidates, we would end up with someone lower on the pole. That person was looking for a place to start and then in two years wanting to move, so that he could go to a bigger school district.

Superintendents referred also to "career moves" as the number one reason for the high rate of superintendent turnover in Casterbridge.

Board chairpersons explained that "conflicts over time" accounted for the most common reasons for high superintendent turnover in Casterbridge. Board chairperson Otto explained, "I guess I would say that more often than not the reason superintendents leave this district is because of some sort of difference of opinion with the board and/or the parents." School board chairperson Zane said, "But it seems like in a

small school district like this after two or three years they generally have a run in with somebody in the public, or school board member. It's tough. You can't keep everybody happy every time."

The next most common reasons for superintendent turnover in Casterbridge was because of the location of the school district and its isolation. This response was not given by superintendents, however. School problems such as low enrollment causing less money in the budget, problems working with some long term staff, and superintendents leaving for "family reasons" were also common reasons given for turnover in Casterbridge.

Board members described reasons for seeking a position on the school board. The most common reasons were because they had "kids in school", they felt "obligated" to run, and because they were dissatisfied with the current superintendent and wanted a new superintendent.

Job Satisfaction. How do job satisfiers and levels of satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? Informants were asked to give a description of how satisfied others were with the superintendent and how satisfied the superintendent was with the job he or she did. Superintendents provided a description of their job as a superintendent. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes.

When questioned about the levels of satisfaction others had with the superintendent's job performance, the most common reply among all groups was that the community's satisfaction was split. They were either satisfied or not satisfied with the superintendent over the years. Community divisions over superintendents affected levels of satisfaction.

Superintendents however, stated that others were generally "satisfied" with the job they did and commonly listed their accomplishments in Casterbridge. Board chairpersons often explained that the first year was good and people were satisfied with the superintendent, until the second year. Along with the second year came dissatisfaction with the superintendent.

When all groups were asked about the levels of satisfaction the superintendents had on the job, the most common response was the superintendents were satisfied with the job they did.

Informants were asked to give a description of the superintendent evaluation process used at Casterbridge and typical contract lengths. Evaluations were done two times a year but were described as "informal", with some informants stating that evaluations were not done at all. A rating scale was used. One-year contracts were generally issued, with two-year contracts viewed negatively by board chairpersons. Board chairs believed two-year contracts limited the amount of flexibility the

board had and limited the incentive for the superintendent to perform well.

Description of Relations. Informants were asked to give a description of the school board. Superintendents were asked to give descriptions of the type of leader others perceived them to be and how they communicated with the school board. Board members gave descriptions of their role and experiences. All groups were asked to give descriptions of the board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/clerk relationships.

In Casterbridge all groups agreed that board turnover was high, with board members serving an average of two terms. The chain of command was described as generally not followed in Casterbridge. Chain of command refers to a procedure used by a community member who had a complaint against the school. Generally board members received those complaints in Casterbridge. District Clerk Claire said,

> They [community members] usually talk to the superintendent first. That's supposed to be the chain but a lot of them will just call one of the board members and tell them how they are feeling. They will call board members because they know them all personally and tell them they are having an issue. I hear about them once in awhile but I tell them to go and talk to [the] superintendent. Some of that stuff I don't feel comfortable trying to give them an answer. I don't feel I want to get involved in it.

Decisions were discussed at board meetings and supported. The primary means that the board used to share information was by the telephone. Other ways to share information were done by board members face to face with each other. There was a dependence on the superintendent for sharing of information. Informants noted that the board was "stable" and "worked well together" for many years until recently when there have been problems among board members.

Superintendents described the type of leader they were. No common patterns were found in these descriptions. When asked about how they communicated with the school board, superintendents said they did so through a newsletter.

Board chairpersons described how they saw their role. These descriptions varied, however all agreed that they were on the board to serve the interests of the students, and that the experience itself of being a board member was positive.

Informants provided a description of the type of relationship that existed between the superintendent, school board and clerk during the superintendent's stay in Casterbridge. The most common description was split between "good relations" between the board and superintendent and relationship "problems" associated with the superintendent. The second most common response was relationship problems with the long-

time clerk. Superintendents believed relationship problems were because of the board, while board chairpersons thought the relationship problems were on account of the superintendent the majority of the time. The long-time clerk noted there were good relationships with all but two superintendents of the seven she worked with.

Political Climate. How has the political climate of the community affected superintendent turnover? Overall, the three groups described the Casterbridge community as being "conservative" and "close knit". Secondly, a concern about taxes existed in Casterbridge. Informants said that the community's involvement in the school and support for the school were "high". The descriptor "outsider superintendent" was used often by superintendents and board chairpersons. Board chairperson Otto illustrated what it takes for a superintendent not to be an outsider in Casterbridge,

> In this community all it takes not to be an outsider is the willingness to participate, to be involved. I'm not saying you have to be involved in everything, just the little things, like ball games. I've always been of the opinion that the superintendent should be at most school functions to make sure things runs smoothly. But particularly at all games. As you know it's the key function during the winter time. There's nothing else to do. From the superintendents' view I know that it's hard to come into a community, not knowing anybody. They've probably done it several times already. It might be the easiest thing to do just to sit back, to go to work, work your hours and then stay home. But I think it's vital.

Patterns within board chairperson descriptions of the political climate of Casterbridge focused on the "high" involvement of the community in the school and how important it was for the superintendent to be "involved" in the community. Within superintendent informants the most common pattern used to describe the Casterbridge community was the perception that the community was conservative and very concerned about taxes. Superintendents also said that they sometimes felt like "outsiders". Superintendent Keith explained problems with being an "outsider",

> Sometimes it's hard not to [move from one superintendency to another] because you are in effect an outsider. You don't know all of the daily operations of the community. You come in and you kind of upset things at times. You have different recommendations, different staffing [ideas], a teacher or custodian replaced. "Well this is an uncle of so and so and you can't do that."

Within district clerks, the most common description used to describe the Casterbridge community was "close knit" and "supportive" of the school.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects the previous superintendent had on the new one hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in Casterbridge. The most common response among all groups was

the current superintendent had to clean up the "messes" of the previous superintendent. Transition problems were noted between the previous and new superintendent some of the time. Board chairperson Raymond explained that, "If someone was disgruntled sometimes they passed on garbage for you that you have to overcome. Superintendents are—everyone of them has their own particular way they want to do something. The first order of business is change, it seems like." Clerk Sylvia elaborated,

> In various occasions when a superintendent left the district it was on negative notes. There was a lot of turmoil in the district. When a new superintendent came they had to correct that or try to heal that, or make it better before they could get on with the community accepting them for what they were. So it was a lengthy process usually for that new superintendent, trying to feel they had a need to correct what the former superintendent had done or not done.

Effects on the School District. When asked to describe the effects of frequent superintendent turnover on the school district of Casterbridge, the primary reason given among all groups was "continuity" and the "changes" the new superintendent would make. Clerk Sylvia described how she perceived that this lack of continuity affected the staff,

> It's [continuity] something they have needed because when you have such a large turnover everything changes. Everything changes. If a person that can meet all the criteria for everyone in the community stayed then you would have routine. Then you would have comfortable feelings. But because of the large turnover that was never established. You

> always had somebody else coming in and changing everything. Everyone was always like the first year sitting back and watching and in the second year is when everything would hit the fan because people didn't like this or didn't like that or wanted this changed. No continuity.

Board chairperson Otto explained further effects of superintendent turnover on the school and the board's role,

> Then you have a change of administration and they want to do something different. So it's very frustrating and it really hinders the educational process I think. Our board made a very concerted effort I think to try and remedy that. But we were not very successful. So maybe it's not reality.

Other issues mentioned were the time it takes to adjust to a new superintendent, especially for the teachers and other staff, and how changing superintendents has caused community divisions. Lastly it takes time for the community to heal after a superintendent leaves, as school board chairperson Zane described,

> I guess they have just kind of learned to expect it. It does affect the community to the point that if one of them leaves under bad circumstances, a board member or two don't like them and they're trying to run them out. It does seem to stir the community up a little bit. I have seen that in two or three of the superintendents, two of them at least anyway. It can take several years to heal from that sometimes.

Within board chairpersons' descriptions, one of the common patterns found was that frequent superintendent turnover has affected "continuity". Also common was the pattern of the changes the new superintendent would make when newly hired, and how difficult these

changes were on the office staff. Within superintendent informants descriptions varied, but a common pattern of superintendent turnover causing "no direction" or "stability" for the school district emerged. District clerk informants commonly spoke of the changes the new superintendent made and how difficult it was for the staff to adjust to the new superintendent. District clerk Claire described her experiences, "It's tough to have the change because when you change superintendents it's just a lot of—everybody has a different policy and then you have to start all over with the policy. It's a lot of work."

Glaston

Description of Community

Informants described the community of Glaston as supportive of the school. As a high school student wrote, "Most of the community comes and supports all the extra-curricular activities such as sports games, concerts and many other activities." Students and informants spoke of how the community is small and close knit. A high school student saw both a positive and negative side of this,

> The culture of the [Glaston] community is everyone gets along. This is because the town is so small and almost everybody sees everybody about everyday. When something goes wrong everybody figures they have to be the first one to tell about it. Gossip is spread all the time and you can't do anything without everybody knowing about it.

Description of the School

Typically about 100 students make up grades Kindergarten through 12th in Glaston Public School. In the 1997-98 school year 28 of those students were in high school. The general fund budget for 1997-98 was $694,700. Informants reported that no students drop out of school, but that some may transfer. The racial makeup of the students is Caucasian. In 1997-98, 25 students attended the Glaston Public School from a Hutterite Colony in the district. Most of the graduates of Glaston school go on to college. Many of the informants expressed pride in what their graduates go on to accomplish. A high school student explained, "I think the students who leave. . .to enter the real world are better prepared for the hard work that lies ahead and they have a good sense of who they are and what they're worth." School board chairpersons and district clerks were proud of the academic strengths of Glaston school. A high school student confirmed this by writing,

> I have learned so much going to school in Glaston. People think that the kids are much smarter in the larger schools. Well! They are wrong. I personally have encountered many kids from larger schools and have asked them what sort of things they do in school. Trust me ours is much harder. In a smaller school a teacher can work hands on with the students which really helps.

Another high school student added, "Because of the good examples of the teachers and community, we have very high goals. The wonderful

education the teachers and parents gives us give us the power to complete these goals."

In the 1997-98 school year Glaston school had five elementary teachers, seven high school teachers, two music teachers, and a part-time special education teacher. Assisting teachers were three aides, two in special education, and one in Title I. There were two custodians, two cooks, and four bus routes. Office staff included one secretary and district clerk. Base salary for teachers was $18,500. Housing has been provided for the superintendent only.

The average superintendent turnover rate in Glaston from 1977-97 was 33%. Superintendents stayed an average of 2.63 years. Teacher turnover was described as being "low", with four of the fifteen staff being new in the 1997-98 school year. Informants explained that the school district wants to hire younger, first year teachers. District clerk Elaine illustrated this by saying, ". . .We have traditionally had a really young staff because we prefer to hire kids right out of college. Give them a step in the door, and then they will move on. And their salaries are really low, which helps us out."

Informants

Long time board chairpersons Lucy and Jerome agreed to be interviewed. Both made their livelihood from farming. One's age was 41 and

the other 50. One board chairperson had lived in the Glaston community all his life, while the other had for 17 years. One was involved in hiring three superintendents, and the other one four. Years spent on the board for one informant had been nine years, and ten years for the other. One board chairperson had a bachelor's degree, while the other one had one year of college. One interview was held at the Glaston school and one was held at the informant's home.

School district clerks Brenda and Elaine agreed to be part of the study. One had lived in the Glaston community all of her life, while the other had lived there for 23 years. One clerk was in her 50s and the other in the 40s. One clerk held a bachelor's degree and CPA. One was a clerk for 15 years and the other for 6 years. One took the job for "supplemental income" and the other moved into the clerk's job after being secretary. One was involved in hiring three superintendents, and the other six superintendents. Both "enjoyed" the job as district clerk. Both interviews took place at the homes of the informants.

Superintendents Ted, Carla and Jack were interviewed. Two of the superintendents were raised in rural areas, one out of state. The average age of superintendents interviewed from Glaston was 51, ranging from 36 to 60. They had been involved in education for an average of 18 years, ranging from 16 to 23 years. One had been a superintendent for 1 year,

another for 3, and the last for 22 years. Two of the superintendent informants were new to the superintendency when hired in Glaston. Prior to being a superintendent, two had been elementary teachers, one of which was also a high school teacher. They had both taken jobs as elementary principals. The other had been a high school teacher and principal. A salary increase was the primary reason to become a superintendent for these informants. One interview was held at the home of the superintendent, another at the school where the superintendent was employed, and one was held at Glaston school.

A chart of organizational history at the Glaston school district from 1977 to 1997 can be found in Appendix C.

Career Paths of Superintendents

Informants were questioned about career goals, career orientations and expectations of tenure with the goal of explaining superintendent turnover. In Glaston, when asked whether or not superintendents stayed as long as informants expected them to, "no" was the most common response among all three groups—board chairpersons, clerks and superintendents. All groups expected superintendents to stay longer. Board chairperson Lucy put it this way, "I guess when you hire them I expect them to be here for three to four years anyway. I really do, so they haven't necessarily lived up to that."

Informants explained what they perceived as the typical career path of superintendents in Montana. Common patterns among all groups were that superintendents start in small schools and work their way to bigger ones. Superintendent Jack explains, "I think when you're a young man you aspire to be in a bigger school than where you are."

Another common theme informants referred to was that there was a group of superintendents who are always on the move. Superintendent Jack spoke of feeling like a "gypsy". Board chairperson Lucy gave her perception, "Now I looked to these last few people that we've hired, that there's a group of people that are going from district to district. These aren't the cream of the crop people. I think that is playing a factor in why our turnover is more than it used to be." And district clerk Elaine explained from her point of view,

> But the ones that are leaving schools, I don't mean to sound so bad but, it's just like they are a bunch of losers. They all have their own little label why they are a loser. But you see this warning sign, STAY AWAY. To me it's just like there's this group of losers out there that are floating from one school to the next. The good ones, they stay where they are at.

Superintendents believed that superintendents seek new jobs because of salary increases and this is accomplished by moving from small schools to larger ones.

District clerks and board chairpersons spoke of how good superintendents would be expected to move on. As board chairperson Jerome explained,

> Either you're going to find an older person who is looking for a job to finish out their tenure as a superintendent or you're going to have to go after a young person who wants to be a superintendent who is eager to do the job, knowing that they're not going to be in the district much over four or five years at the most. But knowing that they'll do a good job. If they're going to be a good superintendent they're going to want to advance. The only way they are going to advance is if they do a good job, and get good recommendations, honest recommendations. If the person doesn't want to get better, they are not going to be a good superintendent.

Superintendent Selection Processes

How do the selection processes, expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency affect superintendent turnover? Common to all groups were that the community and staff attends the interviews, interview questions are "standard", the board calls references, and the current superintendent is involved in the process. Board chairpersons referred to "having problems" with the pool of applicants available but were satisfied overall with the process. In changing the process, one board chairperson noted that they would check for those superintendents who would be commuting to their families and not moving to Glaston, since that has caused problems in the past. One clerk noted

that there have been problems in the past with the current superintendent being involved in screening applicants.

General public relation skills were the most common themes among all three groups in describing the ideal superintendent to serve in Glaston. These descriptions included "know parents", "personable", "approachable", and "visible".

Board chairpersons preferred to hire new superintendents since it was their believe that the first time superintendent would perform better. Superintendents wanted a superintendency where the board was open and willing to discuss issues. District clerks' ideal superintendent would be one who would help the clerk and know the business world, and who would listen to all sides and be "visible".

Among all groups, the ideal length of stay for a superintendent would be an average of four to six years, with district clerks explaining that it would depend on the quality of the superintendent.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

Expectations of roles and job competency skill areas and their effects on superintendent turnover was investigated. There were no common patterns among school board chairpersons, district clerks, or superintendent informants about why particular superintendents were hired or took the superintendent job in Glaston. However, within each

group patterns did emerge. Board chairpersons commonly referred to a "problem" with the pool of applicants for the superintendent vacancy at Glaston. They referred to these problems as "inexperienced applicants", "few applicants", or a "poor quality of applicants". Glaston board chairpersons also referred to desiring to hire superintendents that were new, first-year superintendents. Board chairperson Lucy described,

> I think after Jack we were really looking hard at the first timers again. Overall we've had better luck with the first-time outers. With Mark and Glenn, they were both teachers before and principals before that finally got their paperwork together to be administrators. They were both doing a real good job. And that's where we'd like to look I think.

The board chairpersons described superintendents were hired because they were the "best candidate" among what they had to choose from, they had "good references", and at times it was because of their previous experiences as superintendents.

District clerks explained the most common reason a superintendent was hired was because he had been known in the district, either he had previous experience in the school, knew community members, or was raised in the area.

Superintendents explained the most common reason why they accepted the job as superintendent in Glaston was because of the "good reputation" of the community and school.

The most common expectations of superintendents upon being hired were general. These included doing the "best job" they could to "running the school smoothly". Other common responses were, there were "no expectations" of the superintendent. Expectations of keeping the budget "sound" and to make "no big changes right away" were also common patterns. Board chairperson Lucy explained, "We always come in under budget that's a big expectation. You have to always watch our budget because we don't feel like we have a lot of room in our budget for disasters. We don't watch our dollars, we watch our dimes around here." Long time district clerk Brenda said, "I don't think there was ever any expectation of them but to keep on, and maybe a few little things they wanted different, but no big changes."

Board chairpersons and district clerks said most commonly there were no set expectations of the superintendents when they were hired, but rather general expectations. As board chairperson Jerome illustrated, "The biggest expectation was to do the best job you can. And they knew that. And they wanted to do that."

Superintendents most commonly said there were no expectation upon being hired. Superintendent Carla described the processes. "They have a job description, and that's a written thing. But pretty much you learn as you go. They were very good. You could tell Lucy had broken in

a few superintendents, because she would do a phone call if she had a question about something or if she just wanted to visit."

All groups commonly said the board was in consensus about the superintendents' skills and competency areas upon being hired.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Perceptions were gathered about why specific superintendents left Glaston, why so many superintendents left Glaston over the last 21 years, general reasons for superintendent turnover from the superintendent's point of view, descriptions of the school, and reasons why board chairpersons ran for the position.

General reasons for superintendent turnover were solicited from superintendents. They most commonly referred to "budget problems", meaning under-funding of schools, as the cause of superintendent turnover across the state, although their descriptions varied.

Among all groups, the most common reason given for why a specific superintendent left the Glaston school district was because of a "career move" related to higher salary. The next most common response was that the superintendent was "not wanted" in Glaston any longer. These superintendents were not wanted because they were "building up their retirement" and not performing up to expected levels, or because of other problems with the superintendent. District clerk Elaine portrayed

her perceptions of reasons why five superintendents left the district, "I think those all were 'leave or get fired' pretty much. They just weren't doing the job that the board hired them to do."

When questioned as to why there has been a high rate of superintendent turnover in Glaston over the last 21 years, the most common response among all groups was because the superintendent took a job which offered a higher salary. Respondents interpreted this as "career moves". Another commonly mentioned response was because of the "poor pool" of applicants that were available when superintendents were hired. Board chairperson Lucy illustrated the pool problems which are also related to the salary offered to a superintendent in Glaston,

> It's kind of crude I guess what we get told. We're looking at the bottom of the barrel, not the top, because of our pay scale and everything. I look at those names and I blame the turnover on that. There's a lot of jobs out there for these people who go in and resign and one person we didn't hire back that went onto other jobs and had no problem get another job. It seems like for those two gentlemen, [names omitted] this is the best of what we have. Are we 100 percent happy? We're going to deal with it because this is the best we can do at this point for an applicant. And that's kind of hard.

Board chairpersons and district clerks commonly explained the reason why there has been so much superintendent turnover in Glaston was because of the difficulties of being the only administrator and how

that causes conflicts over time. Board chairperson Lucy depicted the situation,

> It seemed like, they are in a difficult position in a small community being a principal and the superintendent. They do deal with the public an awful lot and so sometimes it seems like by four years maybe there's more problems. It's like you've worn out your welcome or something. You haven't quite made enough decisions against people that they don't really care for you anymore and sometimes it's easier to get someone when they are fresh in and have that person go on to another job.

Superintendents believed the reason why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover in Glaston was because of superintendents leaving for career moves the majority of the time. Superintendent Ted explained why superintendents left Glaston, "Possibly I think they just found a school that was a little better. Maybe the pay was a little better, maybe they had an opportunity to move into a larger situation [school]. It is a stepping stone. I think small schools are stepping stones. I think that has a lot to do with the turnover."

Informants described the Glaston school most frequently in terms of its strengths in academics and "good staff". They also commented on how the low student enrollment has negative effects in athletics and the number of courses offered. Board chairperson Jerome explained his goals regarding the academic program,

> The philosophy that I had was give the kids a good basic education and don't go off on tangents. . .I don't believe that

> agricultural sciences such as welding and things like that are needed. I don't think it's a responsibility of the school district to prepare a student for life after high school. It's the objective of the school district to give him the opportunity to decide after he's out high school which direction he wants to go. He or she. If they want to go to college so much the better. But there are a lot of vo-tech schools that . . . give those students--it's not the responsibilities of a high school. The high school has to give that basic education so they can do it themselves.

Another pattern common to board chairpersons and district clerks was the desire to hire new teachers right out of school. Because of this, they explained that teacher turnover is "high" in Glaston.

Superintendents commonly described the Glaston school as having a "great teaching staff".

Board chairpersons were questioned about why they ran for the school board. They most commonly explained that it was because they had "kids in school". One board chairperson ran because he was dissatisfied with the superintendent and wanted a change of superintendents.

Job Satisfaction. How do job satisfiers and levels of job satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? Informants were asked to give a description of how satisfied others were with the superintendent and how satisfied the superintendent was with the job he/she did. Superinten-

dents provided a description of their job as a superintendent. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes.

Informants most commonly described the community's satisfaction was split. Some were satisfied with the superintendents some of the time and some where not. Informants commonly said staff generally was not satisfied with the superintendents.

Board chairpersons responded that the community was not satisfied generally with the superintendents, and the staff was not satisfied. District clerks responded that the community's satisfaction was split. They were satisfied with the superintendent some of the time and unsatisfied at others. Superintendents' responses varied.

When questioned about the superintendent's level of satisfaction with his or her job performance, the most common response among all groups was the satisfaction levels were split, half were satisfied and half were not.

Board chairpersons felt half of the superintendents were satisfied with the job they did and half were not. District clerks felt that all of the superintendents were satisfied with their job. Two superintendents were satisfied with the job they did while one was not.

A description of the superintendent evaluation process was elicited. There were no common patterns among all three groups. Superin-

tendents described the evaluation as a checklist or rating scale with comments. A district clerk explained that evaluations were done twice a year.

Description of Relations. Superintendents were questioned about the type of leader others perceived them to be and how they communicated with the school board. Board members gave descriptions of the role of a board member. All three groups gave descriptions of the school board in Glaston and of the relationships that existed between the school board and the superintendent.

All three groups described the school board at Glaston as having "low" board member turnover. Decisions were not made prior to the board meeting and decisions were supported once agreed on. Information was shared primarily by the telephone. Board members relied on information from the superintendent. The chain of command, procedure for handling community complaints against the school, were generally not followed. Board member Lucy illustrated the problem,

> I know a pit fall is, a small town trustee will get into us handling things for people. Somebody calls and has a problem with a teacher, they'll call a school board member. But I think once you understand that's not your responsibility and you tell them to contact the teacher or a superintendent, send them somewhere else, your phone kind of quits ringing. There are times where something will come up, and a lot of times its really good information, something that you didn't realize had happened or, a rule that had been broken or

> something you can kind of follow-up on, put a bug in the superintendent's ear and say I heard this happened or you my may want to check on it anyway.

Board chairperson Jerome explained the superintendent's role in handling complaints, ". . .things were running smoothly when I was on the board. I attribute that to the superintendent. Very simple. If you have a very narrow minded superintendent that isn't going to stand up for what's right then you're going to have a lot of problems."

Superintendents varied in their descriptions of the type of leader others perceived them to be.

Board chairpersons commonly described their role as "representing the public". Board chairperson Jerome explained, "The school board member has to have a philosophy of doing what's best for the district, not what's best for your child but what's best for the district. That's very important. You cannot be narrow minded. You have to do what's best for the district."

"Good relations" was the most common response among all groups when asked to give a description of the type of relationships that existed between the board and the superintendent. This relationship was characterized as being "open". Board chairperson Lucy explained one drawback she perceived regarding superintendent/board relations,

> I think there's a real kind of the camaraderie thing where you join to a team. The board and superintendent are kind

> of a team to get the school business done. Sometimes that works out real well and sometimes we get a superintendent that needs to make a decision but is polling the board members and always on the phone. And that's good to call and say we've got this problem, what happened two years ago? That part is good. But sometimes I think it inhibits them to make a decision on their own. They are always kind of wanting some positive feedback.

The next most common response was there were relationship "problems" and these problems were on account of the superintendent. Superintendents commonly viewed the relationship between the school board and them as "positive", while board chairpersons perceived the relationships to be "mostly positive".

Political Climate. How has the political climate of the school district affected superintendent turnover in Glaston? Informants provided a description of the political climate and a description of the community.

Among all three groups the most common description was that the community was supportive of the school. This support consisted of passing mill levies, attendance at school activities, classroom help, and fund raising support. The second pattern of response was that the community was "inter-related". Superintendent Jack felt this way,

> That community consisted of about five families and they were married seventeen different ways together. Almost every individual in that community could point to somebody in that community their spouse was related to or very closely to. So a lot of the days it was like walking through a mine

> field to make the decision that would not upset one faction or the other.

Board chairpersons and district clerks both commonly described their community as "supportive of the school", while there were no distinguishable patterns of responses within the superintendents.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects the previous superintendent had on the new one hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in Glaston.

Among all groups, most commonly described were effects of the previous superintendent on the new superintendent. These included "messes" that the previous superintendent left for the new superintendent to "clean up". Messes were described as "staff problems" or "budget problems". Also commonly referred to was being "compared" to the previous superintendent. Superintendent Ted explained,

> I know the one [superintendent] that was here before me was more of a take charge type person and made a lot of decisions rather than relying on the board to make some of those decisions. I think it was that way, I'm not positive. Everybody has different areas where they have their strengths and weaknesses and probably one of my areas of strengths is probably where my predecessors had weaknesses and vice versa. So that can create problems, not problems, but it may make getting into the job a little different because I know I have to work harder on certain areas than they did. But I do know certain areas I'm stronger than they were, so I probably put more emphasis on those areas.

Within school board chair informants, descriptions of the previous superintendent effects on the new one hired focused on the new superintendent being "compared" to the previous one. No patterns were found within the superintendent informants or district clerks.

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked how superintendent turnover affected the stability of the school district. All three groups perceived the "changes" made by the new superintendent affected the "stability and continuity" of the Glaston school. Board chairperson Jerome illustrated these changes and how these changes affected people in the school district,

> Every superintendent that comes in has different ideas and so you have to adapt. Continuity of the whole school, the way the whole school runs. Everybody has different ways of doing things. You've got to be adaptable. Anymore I think it's more or less that people expect it's going to happen.

District clerk Elaine confirmed this with her perception, "I think the community has a bad perception when we have a turnover. I think parents and even staff may develop a rapport with one person and then they are gone. So there again you loose your continuity."

Within school board chairperson informants the most common description of the effects of superintendent turnover on the Glaston school district focused on the "changes" the new superintendent made and how

these changes were difficult for the staff. No discernible patterns were found within superintendent or district clerk descriptions.

Marygreen

Description of the Community

Informants believed members of the Marygreen community were "supportive" of each other. A high school student wrote this about Marygreen, "[Marygreen] has a very nice community, caring people and a lot of support from them. I can tell this because at every sporting event most of the community comes and supports the [school]."

The school is the "center" of the community. Several informants expressed how this importance has caused divisions in the community, particularly divisions over athletics. Board chairperson Stewart gave this description, "Some people are involved in the sports activities at school, and then there are those who are interested in the more academic part of the school. We have those factions all the time it seems like." Board chairperson Diane explained from her perspective,

> There's two groups of people over here that do their own things together. And then there's another group that lives in this area that do their own things together. There is another group that are the big basketball people. That's their main goal in life is to send their kids to college on a basketball scholarship. It seems to me that everybody emphasizes sports too much. Nobody is too concerned about education.

> The video cameras are there for sports. Education is going to get the kids farther than basketball. Most everybody gets along pretty good. If there's a disaster or something everybody pulls together and helps.

A high school student said of the community's values,

> The community values people that are nice and hard working. A kid seen working out on the farm is a kid the community will value. The community also values a good basketball player, as basketball is the school's main sport and social activity. I can tell this because all people talk about for days after a basketball game is how a certain play went or how much we won by. And old people are always talking about seeing a certain person working out in the field during harvest season.

Description of the School

Student enrollment at Marygreen school in the academic year 1997-98 was 132 in grades Kindergarten through twelfth. High school enrollment is usually about 40 students. The general fund budget for the 1997-98 school year was $807,814. The student drop out rate was described as "low" with 0-5% over the last 17 years. Most graduates go on to get a four year college degree. Some graduates go to a two year vocational school. The racial make up of the students is Caucasian.

Elementary teaching staff consisted of a teacher in each grade level for a total of seven teachers. In high school there were six teachers. Additionally, there was a music teacher. There were no aides for teachers. One full time and one part time custodian served the school, along with

one full time and one part time cook. The school contracted out five bus routes during the 1997-98 school year.

Informants believed a strength of the school was the low student to teacher ratio. Overall, they commonly said that another strength was the "good staff". District clerk Olivia demonstrated with, "I guess I've always felt that because we are so small, that we kind of nurture the kids along. If they need help I would hope that they are going to get it. The teachers for the most part kind of watch out for the kids."

Additionally, informants said that one of their strengths now is technology since that has been an area concentrated on over the last several years.

Programs for students included VICA, basketball, golf and track for boys and girls, football for boys, and volleyball for girls. One student explained the importance of basketball at Marygreen school, "[Marygreen] values basketball so if you don't like basketball don't come here. Because I got in trouble for just joking about it."

There has been a teacher's union in Marygreen. The base salary for teachers was $18,000. Housing has been provided for teachers and also for the superintendent. The average superintendent turnover rate in Marygreen from 1977 to 1998 was 38%. Superintendents stayed an av-

erage of 2.33 years at the Marygreen school. Most of the teacher turnover in the school occurred in the high school.

Informants

School board chairpersons Trevor, Stewart, Diane and Victor agreed to participate in the study. All made their livelihood from farming or ranching. Three of the board chairpersons had lived in the community all their lives, while one had lived in Marygreen for 17 years. The average age of the board chairpersons was 45 years, ranging from 41 to 48 years. One held a bachelor's degree, two held two-year degrees, and one had some college experience. Informants had been involved in hiring four superintendents on average, ranging from two to five superintendents. They had been on the board for an average of 8 years, ranging from 3 to 13 years. Two interviews were held at the Marygreen school and the other two at the homes of the informants.

One school district clerk was interviewed. Olivia had lived in the Marygreen community all her life. She graduated from the Marygreen high school and had been district clerk for 13 years. She had been clerk while six superintendents were hired. Olivia explained that her job is a lot of work and would like to have more support from the school board for the job she does. She said that it is hard to be in the middle, between the board and the superintendent. Olivia described it as sometimes diffi-

cult not to share facts with the board about what the superintendent was or was not doing.

Superintendents Jerry, Jude, Howard and Max agreed to be part of the study. Three of these superintendents were raised in rural areas, one out of state, and one was raised in a metropolitan area out of state. The average age of the superintendent informants was 52 years, ranging from 48 to 56 years. They had been involved in education for an average of 21 years, ranging from 15 to 27 years. Informants held an average of 13 years of superintendent experience, ranging from 7 to 21 years. One of the superintendents held an educational specialist degree. Three informants had been middle school teachers, one a high school teacher. One became a K-12 principal, one a middle school principal, and one a high school principal. One of the superintendent informants was new to the superintendency when hired at Marygreen. All had experiences as superintendents in small schools, with one having experience in a larger Montana school system. The majority of the superintendent informants responded that they sought the superintendency because of an increase in salary and because of the challenge the job provided. One interview was held over the phone with an informant who lived out of state, two were held at the schools where the superintendents were employed and one was held at my home.

A chart of the organizational history of the Marygreen school district from 1977 to 1997 can be found in Appendix C.

Career Paths of Superintendents

Informants were questioned about the career goals, career orientations and expectations of tenure in attempting to explain effects on superintendent turnover. The most common pattern that emerged when all three groups were questioned about whether or not the superintendent had stayed as long as the informant expected was "no". Superintendents responded they had stayed as long as they expected to stay in Marygreen.

The typical career path of superintendents in Montana, from superintendents' perspectives, was that superintendents start out in small schools and then move up to bigger ones. Superintendent Howard described the reason why he decided to become a superintendent and where he sought his first job, "I thought I could do just as good a job as he [the superintendent that Howard was working under] was doing running a school system. And the only place to go is into a small school system. I interviewed at a number of places and Marygreen was the place that offered me the job."

Superintendent Selection Processes

Informants were questioned about superintendent selection processes, expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency.

Common characteristics described in the superintendent selection processes at Marygreen across all groups were that the current superintendent was involved and relied on in the process, the board was involved only, and the interview had been changed in recent years to more of an informal format.

Board chairpersons commonly said the informal interview format was adopted because they found it yielded more honest responses out of superintendent candidates. Board chairperson Stewart illustrated,

> We sat there and thought of things you should ask and then we just asked them. You didn't have the list to go through. It took a little longer but you got that feel for the person more. They opened up more about answering certain questions. First I thought the list of questions really worked well but after I look back on the people we've hired that way, it isn't the answer. It don't take long to figure out that you've answered these questions 20 times in different schools.

Professional search consultants had never been used at Marygreen. Long-time board chairperson Trevor explained,

> I feel pretty good about the deal. A nearby town went through the Montana School Boards Association search and they interviewed two of the candidates we did. Montana School Boards Association searches are all right but in a small school district, I don't know what they charge, but it's

> something that we feel we can do on our own. If they don't do a background check on them, they do just as good a search as we do.

One idea to improve the processes was to visit the community where the superintendent candidate is currently employed and search out opinions from the people of that community.

In describing the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency the most common response among informants was general public relation skills, such as being a "people person" and effectively communicating with groups of people in the school and community. A superintendent's rural background would also be important. A "decisive" superintendent would be valued in Marygreen. This was because of effects of a previous superintendent whom informants viewed as not being decisive. Overall informants believed the ideal length of time to stay as a superintendent in Marygreen was five to six years.

The most common descriptions of the ideal superintendent among board chairpersons and the district clerk had to do with effects of previous superintendents. These included being "decisive", "honest" and "trustworthy", "involved in the community", and being a "leader not a dictator".

The most common description among superintendents of an ideal superintendency was one in which the superintendent was given the freedom to "run the school". Superintendent Jude explained,

> So an ideal community would be a community. . .that would basically let the superintendent run the school. Not that he's going to shut the community members off because that's not the way it works. They basically have faith in the administration that yes, they can run the school and handle the day-to-day problems.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

How do the expectations of roles, and job competency skill areas affect superintendent turnover? The most common pattern among all groups regarding why the superintendent accepted the job at Marygreen or why the superintendent was hired, was because the superintendent "interviewed well". Not all informants felt that way, however. Many said that the candidate did not interview well or superintendents felt that they did not interview as well as they could have.

Board chairpersons hired superintendents because they "interviewed well", because of the superintendent's "budget strengths", or because of the fact that the superintendent was the "best candidate" that they had to choose from at the time.

Superintendents most commonly responded that they "did not care where" they got a superintendency, or explained that they "took the first

job that was offered" to them. Superintendent Jude explained, "I wanted to get out of the school I was in. . . .[Marygreen] came up and I applied all over. I didn't care where I got a job. I only had a few years left anyway. It wasn't especially that I wanted to go to [Marygreen] but it was all right. I didn't mind there."

Superintendent Max remarked, "Nobody else was banging on my door."

Informants were asked to describe the expectations, written or spoken, of the superintendent upon being hired. Most commonly groups expressed that there were "no" expectations upon hiring. The next most common description of expectations depended on the effects of the previous superintendent. Examples of these expectations were "be decisive", "do teacher evaluations, and "be honest".

Along with having no expectations of them, another pattern in superintendents' descriptions was their belief that Marygreen was just looking for someone to "fill the vacancy". Superintendent Jerry described expectations,

> In [Marygreen] it was, we just need to get the school back and running for the community. But that never happened. It was always one side against the other. [Marygreen] really has no aim. They work on conflict. When a conflict comes up they put the fire out and wait for the next conflict. . . . [Marygreen] liked to be in chaos and all they are looking for is another body."

When questioned about whether the board was in consensus with the skill areas of the superintendent upon hiring, the informants were split. Superintendents commonly elaborated by explaining that they were not the first choice of the school board.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were questioned about their perceptions regarding why superintendents left Marygreen, and why so many over the last 21 years. Superintendents were asked about general reasons for turnover in small schools. Board chairpersons gave reasons why they ran for the school board. Informants were asked to give a description of the school at Marygreen.

Superintendents' responses varied concerning general reasons for turnover in small schools. Common patterns within the group described superintendent turnover because of changes in "family values" in the community or because of a philosophical clash with the school district.

Among all groups, the most common reason given for why a specific superintendent left the Marygreen school district was because of some "problem" with the superintendent himself. Examples of this were a "dishonest" superintendent or one that had "personal problems". Another pattern of responses was that the superintendent decided to leave

on his own. Additional patterns were the superintendent left for "career moves", for "family reasons" or because of "staff problems".

Board chairpersons commonly explained the main reason for specific superintendents to leave the district as a problem with the superintendent himself. Superintendents believed that specific superintendents left because of a clash of philosophies with the community and/or board.

When asked why there has been so much superintendent turnover in Marygreen over the last 21 years, the most common response among all groups was because of community pressure. Board chairperson Diane explained, "Mostly it's been something to do with the people in the community, rather than them [superintendents] doing their job." District clerk Olivia gave her perceptions,

> Some of them I believe it probably was community. Maybe some decisions were made that certain groups did not like and so there was always tensions. Kind of one thing led to another. So I think it's been really a mixture, I'd have to say. In some instances I believe the superintendent did not do his job and in some I think he tried and either just didn't fit in with the community. They didn't approve of the choices he made in different areas.

Among all three groups several other patterns emerged for reasons why there has been a high rate of superintendent turnover in Marygreen over the last 21 years. Among all groups patterns found to describe superintendent turnover were because of superintendents using Marygreen as a "stepping stone" in their career path, or because of superintendent

"problems". Other reasons were because of "problems" with the school board or because of the location of Marygreen. Superintendent Jude described one of these board "problems" caused by the high board member turnover in Marygreen and what must be done to correct the problem,

> The. . .thing which they will never do would be to get some board members on there who are good people and who are going to stay there a while. So the board and a superintendent [come] to know each other and form a relationship, rather than what they have is no relationship at all really. It's kind of a confrontational type thing I would say. They don't get to know each other.

Other patterns were conflicts between the superintendent and the community over time, dissatisfaction of the board or the superintendent, housing problems, relationship problems between the superintendent and the board or community, or because of the superintendent's low salary.

School board chairpersons perceived the main reason why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover in Marygreen over the last 21 years was because of either community reasons or superintendent reasons. Board chairperson Stewart gave this example,

> I think in small communities if the superintendent is really good he's going to make a few people upset. If he's a good superintendent he's going to make some people upset because he's not going to change his mind all the time. If everybody is happy with him something must be wrong. I don't know how he could be doing his job because when you have to make decisions like he does in a school some people are not going to be happy.

> I think in smaller schools it's little things that come up more. Little complaints. I think the little things seem to be brought up more than they should be. There are certain things that should never be brought before the school board. But they think it's a major deal. It's more of a personal basis too. Superintendents know everybody on a personal basis in small schools. It's tougher. If something goes on, everybody knows it. If you make a wrong decision it gets compounded and everybody knows it.

Superintendents perceived the main reasons for superintendent turnover in Marygreen over the last 21 years were because of school board "problems" or because of "career moves" of the superintendents. Pressures from the community, problems with the housing provided by the school district or the location of the Marygreen school district were other common reasons given for superintendent turnover.

Informants provided a description of the Marygreen school. The most common description was the low student to teacher ratio given as a strength of the school. The staff was described as being "good". A "good" academic program was commonly described as well as the work the district has made to improve technology.

The most common reasons school board chairpersons gave for running for the school board was because they had "kids in school" at the time.

Job Satisfaction. How do job satisfiers and levels of job satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? Informants were asked to give a de-

scription of how satisfied others were with the superintendent and how satisfied the superintendent was with the job he did. Superintendents provided a description of their job as a superintendent. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes.

The most common pattern in how satisfied others were with the superintendent was the community was "not satisfied", and there were community divisions over the superintendent. Staff satisfaction was perceived as being split. District clerk Olivia explained during her 13 years a clerk,

> Out of the six superintendents that I have worked with I think I have worked with two that were exceptionally good. One I would probably say was fine, there were weaknesses but there were also strengths. And there was one that I don't think he even applied himself to the job. I guess there have been things with each superintendent that have been weaknesses.

Board chairpersons most commonly explained that the community was not satisfied with the superintendents and it caused divisions in the community. Board chairpersons did note specific superintendents the community and staff were satisfied with, but as long-time board chairperson Trevor said, "It's pretty well split. A lot of people liked them, a lot didn't."

Superintendents most commonly referred to their perceptions of the community and staff being satisfied with the job they did in Mary-

green. As superintendent Max explained, "I think especially after last few years they would like to have me back."

Among all three groups the perception was split as to the level of satisfaction the superintendent had on the job. Some believed the superintendent was satisfied and others believed that he was not. Board chairpersons believed that the superintendents were not satisfied, while superintendents were satisfied with the job they did at Marygreen. Superintendent Howard looked back on his experiences at Marygreen,

> I felt, given the circumstances without a lot of training behind me or a lot of experience, for the two years I was there, I felt I had done as good a job as the other people who had been there. Would I do things exactly the same way now? The answer is obvious that I wouldn't. I know a lot more now than what I did then.

The common description of superintendent evaluations among all groups was that the staff evaluated the superintendent. One-year contracts were issued most frequently. Superintendents described the staff input as a negative experience. Superintendent Jude felt,

> They have the teachers write me evaluations, which I just said, you've got to be nuts. I put my foot in my mouth a lot of times. They were very critical, very critical. I didn't even read them. I've got them to this day but I haven't read them. I didn't care because I knew where their comments were coming from. I just blocked that out.

Description of Relations. Informants were asked to give a description of the school board. Superintendents were asked to give descrip-

tions of the type of leader others perceived them to be and how they communicated with the school board. All groups were asked to give descriptions of the board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/district clerk relationships.

All groups commonly described board member turnover as "high" in Marygreen. Board members typically served two terms on the board. Generally, if the community had complaints against the school, the chain of command was not followed. People would go to the board with their problems and not to the superintendent or teacher first. As superintendent Jude explained,

> I've always said superintendents come and go but board members stay. When your neighbor calls you at night, you're going to listen to them. You're going to listen to their gripes and try to solve them for them. Board members cannot solve little gripes like that. They've got to refer it to the administration. They might do that but they sure want to keep their hand in it. It doesn't help. It doesn't solve the problem. When people feel they can go around the superintendent to a board member or to another teacher they will do it.

District clerk Olivia confirmed this,

> I think a lot of people try to follow it. But then again because of our turnover, or just general mistrust of the administration, because of turnover and other things, some people feel they cannot go to the superintendent, so therefore that is bypassed and board members are contacted. I think it's because if you have grown up with this person you probably feel more comfortable discussing with whoever rather than with a superintendent you don't know as well.

Board members explained that they received a lot of calls during the first year they were on the board. Board chairperson Victor explained the type of calls he received as a new board member,

> Not so much complaints but people who want to push their agenda. If you listen to them and don't agree with everything, but tell them yes, we will discuss it, after a while they will realize that they just can't call you up and get something done. Then they kind of quit calling. They get to know where you are coming from and figure you're going to represent them.

All groups said that decisions were discussed but their overall description of how the board made decisions varied. Informants said information was shared among the board by use of the telephone most commonly, but the board depended on the superintendent for information and board members commonly shared information face to face. Overall, informants described the board as being "good".

Board chairpersons commonly described "problems" with the board in recent years, but perceived that the board "worked well together" in earlier times. Current problems were described as a "split board". Superintendents most commonly described the board as "micro-managing". Superintendent Howard explained how he perceived the link between no expectations of him and the board wanting to micro-manage, "There were no expectations, nothing that they wanted done. I think that goes back to what I said awhile ago that they were willing to let the day-

to-day things go to the superintendent but they wanted the long-term control of the school system." Superintendent Max perceived board micro-managing as,

> They were much more involved in the school, but yet after a couple years they were very good about referring things back to me. I thoroughly enjoyed the board at [Marygreen]. The interesting thing about board meetings there, board meetings typically lasted four to five hours. They would get off talking about crops and drought and those kinds of things.

No distinguishable patterns emerged in the superintendents' descriptions of the type of leader that others perceived them to be. They commonly said that they communicated with the school board primarily by telephone or by packets of information sent out before board meetings.

Board members commonly described their experiences as thinking they could "change things" during the first year they were on the board, later realizing things were more complicated than they had thought. Overall they spoke of being a board member as a "good experience", but "frustrating". They agreed that personal agendas of board members were detrimental, and saw their responsibilities as representing the public.

The most common pattern among all three groups of informants was there were "problems" between the superintendent and the board or between the superintendent and the district clerk. Additionally, these problems were described as problems with the superintendent, such as

either not being involved in the community to being too involved, standing by his decisions or changing his mind after making a decision.

More often than not, problems were noted between the district clerk and the superintendent. Board chairperson Trevor gave this insight, "What we've had a lot of trouble with, with our superintendents, it is that they overload the clerk a lot. They don't do a lot of their job. They give it to the clerk. She gets over loaded at work." Superintendent Jude provided his perspective,

> They had a clerk there, she was a very hard worker. But when she got the computer she would hand check everything to make sure the computer didn't make a mistake. She will go through everything, just meticulous, thus wasting a lot of time and tying herself in knots. She was just a very hard worker but—she would call the State Department and ask them questions like that. She drove me crazy with those questions.

Superintendents' perceived overall there were "good" relationships with the board during their stay in Marygreen. They were split in perceptions of their relationship with the district clerk. Some thought it was a "good" relationship and others did not.

The district clerk's perceptions of relationships focused most commonly on superintendents who gave others work to do that should have been done by the superintendents. District clerk Olivia explained,

> I think superintendents should be more responsible for the position they hold. I feel in the community our size when we are paying someone $40,000 or $45,000 that's a lot to us. I

> think they have to feel that responsibility, rather than delegate so many things, knowing they are the person earning the most money.

Political Climate. How has the political climate of the school district affected superintendent turnover in Marygreen? Informants provided a description of the political climate and a description of the community. Among all three groups of board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents, the most common description was how important high school athletics was and the divisions that have been caused in the community over high school athletics. Informants said the school is the center of the community. School board chairperson Trevor illustrated this,

> People take a lot of pride in their school. That's about the only activity in the winter. Everything centers around a school. I think that's part of the reason why we have problems with superintendents. Everybody takes the school as kind of their own personal business. That's where a lot of them get in trouble. Too many people watching. It's such a small area that no matter what he does everybody knows what's going on.

Another related pattern among informants was the superintendent was an "outsider" and the problems associated with this. Board chairperson Victor described the problem,

> In small communities most everybody feels real close to the school. This is our center of activities in the community. That's why sports are so big. That's our social event. So if they get an outside superintendent who comes from Western

> Montana and he has a new idea and they happen not to like it, they make it difficult for him because he is an outsider and this is our school type thing. The community can be tough on a superintendent. But some of these brought it on themselves too.

Superintendents commonly described the political climate of the school district in terms of the importance athletics played. Superintendent Jerry said, "A first grader at [Marygreen] said, 'Do you know that [name omitted] is graduating from basketball this year?' That's all they care about there. If you could throw academics out to this side and make sports the big thing they would be satisfied."

Among all informants, commonly expressed was the problem of a "vocal minority" in the community that would rather complain than run for the school board, and the problems this group has caused both the superintendents and the school board. School board chairperson Stewart depicted this problem,

> It's hard to be superintendent in a small community because of the gossip that gets started. When he does something wrong everybody knows it. I think people dwell on finding out things he did wrong when they don't like them. In small communities it gets compounded. I've told those people that they need to run for the school board but they don't. Their opinion of the school board is terrible. They pass that on to the kids. And then they come to school and they've got this negative deal. There's only about five to ten people that are the constant complainers.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were questioned about their perceptions of effects of the previous superintendent on the new one hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in Marygreen. The two most common explanations of this were the "clean up" the new superintendent had to do, referring to things the previous superintendent left undone, or that there were no effects of the previous superintendent on the new one hired.

Board chairpersons' descriptions varied. Superintendents commonly explained it is best to follow a "weak" superintendent or they felt no effects from the previous superintendent. Superintendent Max explained his experiences, "At [Marygreen] I felt like I was coming into a good situation for me because the previous superintendent had been looked upon as pretty autocratic. I was a breath of fresh air because of my style."

Superintendent Howard gave his perceptions, "Based on my own experience I would say it is easier to follow somebody who has really screwed up. If you could pull it off and make it work your first year, you look like God."

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked how superintendent turnover affected the stability of the Marygreen school district. Among all groups, the most common description was the lack of

"continuity" of leadership or programs caused by superintendent turnover in Marygreen. Related to this, informants perceived that there was "no direction" for the school district because of superintendent turnover. Also commonly expressed was the "adjustment" the staff must make to a new superintendent. Informants commonly said the district clerk had become the stability in the school district because of superintendent turnover. District clerk Olivia explained,

> A superintendent comes in, they are brand new. It takes him or her a year to decide what's actually going on. So during that year you're asked to do certain things so they can catch on to the routine. By the time they sort of know and have some kind of direction we are getting another one. So sometimes added duties happen. And when you are the stability, and secretaries are coming and going, and superintendents are coming and going, you have to be the stable person. A lot of those duties fall to you. They have to be done.

Board chairperson Trevor provided his perceptions about effects of superintendent turnover on Marygreen school,

> It takes its toll because there's no continuity. Every superintendent has his own way of doing things. When you're changing every couple years there's no continuity of what's going on. That's why we are probably fortunate here. We've got a lot of old staff and an old clerk. I'm sure that helps a lot in our continuity when going through all the superintendents.

The most common pattern of effects of superintendent turnover on the Marygreen school within the school board chairperson responses was the power vacuum caused by superintendent turnover. They explained

over the years, the staff, whether it has been teachers or the district clerk, have filled in the void caused by a lack of continuity of leadership from the superintendent. Adding to the description, board chairpersons commonly explained the problems the staff has had in adjusting to new superintendents and the changes that are made by these new superintendents. Board chairperson Diane said,

> I think there's been a lack of continuity. You just get started on a roll with one guy and it changes. It's the same with the teachers too. You get one figured out, what he wants and then it changes. But then there's some that kind of just go with the flow and it don't bother them. Most of them just do their own thing and don't worry about the superintendent. They have been there for 15 or 20 years. They don't need to worry about the superintendent.

Board chairperson Victor explained further,

> Then I think there's no continuity to some of the programs in the school. Some superintendents come up with some good ideas and they just begin implementing them which takes a while to get them implemented. And then you got a new superintendent. It's hard on the teachers to get to know the different superintendents, having to work with another new boss. Same way with all of the help, the secretary, the clerk. And it's hard for the board too. You get another, different personality you are dealing with.

Superintendents commonly described effects of superintendent turnover on Marygreen school by describing the lack of continuity and explaining the staff filled the power vacuum left by a lack of leadership. Superintendent Jude's perceptions were,

> [Marygreen] had four superintendents in five years. . . .That produces a power vacuum. Somebody steps into that. Either the business manager, the clerk, or a teacher that's from the town. [Marygreen] had a number of teachers that were right from that town. They start stepping into that power vacuum and tried to run things. I saw that at Marygreen. There was one lady there that had the whole elementary wrapped up. They would go to her. And a number of them went to the clerk.

Melchester

Description of the Community

Informants commonly described the community's support of the school. A high school student wrote, "I think that this small town of [Melchester] is a very nice town. I like this town because everybody is friendly and hard-working. They are also very contributing to the community and support all of our athletes."

District clerk Charley explained, "It's a good community. It's a small community. Of course you have your times when you have your gossip center." A high school student gave this further description,

> At first glance it looks quiet, peaceful, like something out of the Andy Griffith show. It could be Mayberry or a remake of it. You walk into a store and before you can say your name they already know who you are. Word travels fast in this town, but it usually is the bad things. People around this school and this town are so nosy that they know what you did before you have done it. . . .The people here are friendly and good people. It is up to the person here to make the best of it.

Another high school student explained the values of the community in this way, "Our community is centered around three major things. They are the school, church and the bars. If you drive through town on a Sunday morning most cars are at the churches. If you drive through town that evening you can see half the same vehicles at the local bars."

The community attends the high school sporting events. One high school student explained, "The people in this town really support all the sports teams. The whole town comes out when there is a game being played."

Description of the School

Melchester school had a Kindergarten through twelfth grade enrollment of 112 students in the 1997-98 school year, 38 of those students were in the high school. These enrollment figures are typical. The general fund budget for the 1997-98 school year was $699,722. There has been a low drop out rate of high school students. Most graduates have gone on to college, while the rest have gone on to vocational schools, the military, or to church missions. Racial make up of the students has been primarily Caucasian, with a few Hispanic students. A migrant program was established to meet the tutorial needs of those students.

Elementary staff consisted of three full time teachers and one part time Kindergarten teacher. There were six high school teachers. Both elementary and high school students also received art, music and physical education. There were both high school and elementary school libraries. The high school was equipped with a computer lab. Teachers' base salary in 1997-98 was $17,000. A teachers union was begun in 1990. No housing was available for teachers. Non certified staff included two cooks, two custodians, and one bus driver. Office staff included a secretary and district clerk.

Teacher turnover was described as "low" with seven staff members having 30 to 11 years of tenure in the district. The average superintendent turnover rate from 1977 to 1997 was 38%. Superintendents stayed an average of 2.33 years at Melchester. Housing was provided for the superintendent.

Informants most commonly described the school in terms of its strength of the low student to teacher ratio. A high school student elaborated, "In the school, everyone gets a lot of help from the teachers. Everyone knows everyone and most are willing to help." School district clerk Charley gave her perceptions,

> If I had to have a choice as to where my kids go to school it would be here. It would be in a small district like this. They have a lot of benefits. They get a lot more out of school here than in a bigger school because it's more personal. I think

> they lose a little because of some of the things they don't offer here, but in the long run I think they become better all-around adults.

Board chairperson Darlene explained how important it is to keep students in school,

> People really want to do and help, and I think that's also the strength in the school. If the child is having trouble, people are willing to take the time to help them, and keep them going, and support them in school. Or if they're having troubles disciplining, like in a lot of schools, the first thing they want to do is get rid of them. Here they are worked with more, and encouraged. They figure out something to try and help them stay in school and keep them on track.

Informants

Clive and Darlene, two long-time board members who had been chairpersons, were informants in the study. One had lived in the Melchester community most of his life, and the other had lived in the community for 25 years. One was 47 years old and the other 55. They both held bachelor's degrees. They had both been on the board for 14 years and had been involved in hiring 6 superintendents. One's livelihood was ranching and the other was self-employed. Both interviews took place at the homes of the informants.

School district clerk Charley grew up in the Melchester community. She has been district clerk for 10 years. She has a two year degree from a vocational school and was 40 years old. Since she has been dis-

trict clerk, four superintendents have been hired. She explained the duties of her job are "varied" greatly, and how she "enjoyed" working in a small district. The interview with Charley took place at the Melchester school.

Superintendents Bill, Gabe, Thomas, and Joseph participated in the study. Two were raised in a larger community in Montana and two were raised in rural communities, one out of state. Their average age was 52 years old, ranging from 41 to 58 years of age. They had been involved in education for an average of 22 years, ranging from 13 to 28 years. Informants spent an average of 14 years in the superintendency, ranging from 3 to 22 years. Two were junior high school teachers, and two were high school teachers. One moved to a junior high principalship, while two moved into high school principalship. One skipped the principal position and moved into the superintendency at Melchester. Three had been superintendents in three different schools, and one superintendent's experience was gained entirely at Melchester. Primary reasons given for going into the superintendency were because of the increase in salary and having more control over the school as a superintendent. One interview was held over the phone with an informant who lived out of state, two were held at informants' current places of employment, and one was held at the Melchester school.

A chart of organizational history at the Melchester school from 1977 to 1997 can be found in Appendix C.

Career Paths of Superintendents

Informants were questioned about the career goals, career orientations and expectations of tenure in attempting to explain effects on superintendent turnover in Melchester. Informants were asked whether or not the superintendent stayed as long as they expected them to in Melchester. The most common pattern that emerged when all three groups, superintendents, board chairpersons, and district clerk were interviewed, was "no". Board chairpersons were split, explaining that half of the time they expected the superintendent to stay longer and the rest they did not stay as long as expected. Superintendents replied that they had not stayed as long as they expected to stay in Melchester.

Informants explained their perceptions of the typical career path of a superintendent in Montana as starting in a small school and then moving on to a bigger school. Their perceptions were superintendents could earn a higher salary in a bigger district. Melchester was commonly referred to as a "stepping stone". Board chairperson Clive's perceptions were, "There's no doubt that the little schools are going to get the superintendents who are going out the first time. That's where the majority of them are going to go." Superintendent Gabe's perceptions were, "Maybe

part of what the problem was there at [Melchester], it was used as a stepping stone. Most little districts are, I would suspect. You go there for two or three years and then you bounce your way up the ladder to a bigger school."

Superintendent Selection Processes

During the interviews, informants were asked to give a description of the superintendent selection processes, expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency. Common patterns that emerged among all groups when explaining the superintendent selection processes were the board called references, the board selected the candidates, the community was generally not involved, a dinner was held for the candidates which only the board attended, and "standard" interviewing procedures were used.

Board members commonly noted changes in the superintendent pool of applicants over the years. They explained they have found older applicants, more from out of state, and less applicants now than in earlier years. Superintendents said only the board was involved in the interviewing process and "standard" procedures were used.

Overall, board chairpersons and the district clerk were satisfied with the superintendent selection processes used. Board chairpersons noted that the dinner had been insightful but has taken a lot of time.

Informants described the ideal superintendent or superintendency. Common patterns that emerged among all groups were the ideal superintendent would be "involved in the community", would stay for five to six years, would have a "good" staff which "works together", would let the superintendent "run the school". The ideal superintendent would possess "budget strengths", have "support" from the community, and would "like small schools".

Board chairpersons spoke most often about how important community involvement of the ideal superintendent would be. Board chairperson Darlene illustrated,

> For a small area like this someone who's not afraid to be outside a little bit and go where the community members work. In a community like this, well in any of them, I think the superintendent has to attend the extracurricular activities and be visible. I don't think that's so important in probably the large district where most people don't know his face anyway. In a small district they have to be willing to get out and be with the community.

Superintendents commonly explained the ideal superintendency as one where there was a "good staff" and one where the superintendent was allowed to "run the school". Superintendent Thomas explained the ideal place to be a superintendent was in Melchester because, "The board let you run the school. They said that's what they hired you for. If they questioned you or felt that they disagreed with you, it was always up

front." Superintendent Joseph explained the ideal school board would be one,

> . . .where the board does what they say they're going to do. And what they say they are going to do, should be, "We are going to write policy and you're going to run the school district. We're going to support your decisions and at such a time we think that we have a divergent philosophy we will sit down and talk about the future of our association." That's the way it should be. But that's not my experience, particularly in small schools.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

Informants were questioned about how the expectations of roles, and job competency skill areas affected superintendent turnover in Melchester. The most common pattern among informants' descriptions about why the superintendent accepted the job or was hired, was the superintendent "liked the location" of Melchester. Other patterns were that the superintendents "did not care where" they got a job, or they took the job because of the "good reputation" of the Melchester school.

No patterns were found in the descriptions board chairpersons provided. The district clerk's description was that she did not know why the superintendents were hired or they took the job because of the location of Melchester. Superintendents most commonly described that they "liked the location" and they "didn't care where" they got a job. Superintendent Joseph explained events when he was hired in Melchester, "It

was the first job I was offered. That's what I told my wife. When I told her we were leaving I said I don't care where it is or what it is, the first job I'm offered we will take it."

Informants were asked to describe the expectations, written or spoken, of the superintendent upon being hired. The most common pattern found among all informants was there were "general expectations" of the superintendent upon being hired. These included "running the school smoothly", "do it all", and "maintaining and improving". Board chairperson Clive explained further, "They are general things that we would expect for a school to run smoothly, expect communication, expect all those things and that's a standard. I don't think there was anything set that was different from another school." He went on to explain that those expectations were the same from one superintendent to the next.

Superintendents described along with the board having "general expectations" of them upon being hired, they did not know what the expectations were. Superintendent Thomas gave this description, "I really don't know. I don't know what it was that mattered to them really [concerning his strengths). All they were looking for was someone to administer the school."

Among all groups informants explained that the board was in consensus about what the skill areas of the superintendents were upon being hired.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why specific superintendents left Melchester, and why so many over the last 21 years. Superintendents were asked about general reasons for turnover in small schools. Board chairpersons gave reasons why they ran for the school board.

Superintendents' descriptions varied concerning general reasons for turnover in small schools. No distinguishable patterns emerged from these descriptions.

Among all groups, the most common reason given for why a specific superintendent left the Melchester school district was because of "family reasons". The next most common patterns described specific superintendents leaving for "career moves", or because the superintendent was "not wanted" by the district, or the superintendent "left on his own", or the superintendent chose to leave because of the "stress" of the job. A final pattern of description for reasons why specific superintendents left was because the superintendent was an "outsider". Superintendent Joseph gave this portrayal,

> I knew in a very short time I would never be accepted in [Melchester]. . . .I would have been perfectly happy to retire in [Melchester], but I knew it wasn't going to happen. I figured that out after a very short period of time. If you have a fit and it works then you could stay an indefinite amount of time. But if it doesn't work, you end up like other superintendents who stay less than a year.

Board chairpersons' and superintendents' most common pattern of descriptions about why specific superintendents left Melchester matched. They both perceived that superintendents left primarily for "family reasons". They also agreed that they left for "career moves", moving to a position where they were paid a higher salary. A common pattern found within board chairperson responses was that the board "did not want" the superintendent any longer. The district clerk perceived that the superintendents were not satisfied with the job and decided to leave.

Informants were also asked to give a description of why there has been a high rate of superintendent turnover in Melchester over the last 21 years. Among all groups, no distinguishable patterns emerged. Board chairperson descriptions of turnover varied also. Patterns within the superintendents' descriptions were superintendents left because of a "board problem" or because they were using Melchester as a "stepping stone", leaving because of career moves. Superintendent Gabe described two reasons for the high superintendent turnover rate in Melchester,

> As a stepping stone and there is too much nit picking from board members. It's the ax they have to grind and they run

> [for the school board]. And the little picky stuff that may or may not be true. When they accuse somebody it's something. It hurts whether it's true or not. Probably the biggest reason is because it is a stepping stone.

Board chairpersons were asked to give a description of why they ran for the school board. A pattern common to both informants was they ran because they were "interested in education". Board chairperson Clive explained further,

> I guess I'm interested in the school, and I wanted to support the school. I think you need good people on the school board. It's like my wife says, she don't want me to run again, but if somebody isn't going to run that I feel is going to really work at it and do a decent job, I'll rerun. It's not something I want to lose. I think it's too important. Education is important.

Job Satisfaction. How do job satisfiers and levels of job satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? Informants were asked to give a description of how satisfied others were with the superintendent and how satisfied the superintendent was with the job he did. Superintendents provided a description of their job as a superintendent. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes.

The most common pattern among all groups and within each group was the community was "satisfied" with the superintendent. When asked about the superintendent's own level of satisfaction with the job he did, among all groups the most common pattern was that he was

"satisfied". Within the superintendent informants, most superintendents were "satisfied" with the job they did and listed their accomplishments.

Superintendent Bill said, "I'm satisfied with what I came to do and I'll make the statement generally that when I come into a community I'm here to help make a good school even better. I feel that we've done that. I think we've made some inroads." Two superintendents were not satisfied with an aspect of their job performance at Melchester. Superintendents commonly described that the job of a small school superintendent is "enjoyable".

Informants were asked to give a description of the superintendent evaluation process used at Melchester. Most commonly all groups explained that either no evaluations were done, or that they were done once a year. One-year contracts had been issued the majority of the time.

Description of Relations. Informants were asked to give a description of the school board. Superintendents were asked to give descriptions of the type of leader others perceived them to be and how they communicated with the school board. Board members gave descriptions of their role and experiences. All groups were asked to give descriptions of the board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/district clerk relationships.

Informants commonly described board turnover in Melchester as "low". Decisions were described as "united", and were discussed and decided at board meetings. Information was shared among the board primarily by telephone or information the superintendent shared with the board. Informants were split in their description of whether or not the chain of command policy was followed at Melchester. Chain of command refers to the protocol community members followed if they had a complaint against the school. Half of the informants perceived the policy was followed while the other half did not. Board chairperson Darlene explained, "There are people that are afraid of reprisal for their children so they won't come forward with a complaint. They might bring it to a board member or the superintendent but they won't confront the teacher. So it's hard then to follow that chain of command if they are afraid."

Informants described overall the board "worked well together" and expressed that the board was concerned about taxes and how the money was spent at the school. Superintendent Joseph described,

> They could squeeze a penny until it screamed. . . .Very concerned about taxes. When I put the first budget together, I had some very specific instructions—cut it by ten percent. They didn't tell me how, they didn't tell me why, and they didn't make any suggestions. They just said cut it by ten percent. Those were my instructions.

Informants were asked to give a description of the type of relationships that existed between the superintendent and the board, and between the superintendent and the district clerk. The common description among all groups was that there were "good" relations between the superintendent and the board and district clerk. The school board and district clerk commonly described "good" relationships. Superintendents most commonly described "good" relationships overall, but two superintendents noted "problems" in their relationships with the school board.

Superintendents described the type of leader others perceived them to be. These descriptions varied overall, but two common patterns emerged. Superintendents thought that others viewed them as having skill in working with the budget and overall others viewed them as being "effective leaders". Superintendents varied in their descriptions of how they typically communicated with the school board. Board members varied in their description of roles and experiences.

Political Climate. How has the political climate of the school district affected superintendent turnover in Melchester? Informants provided a description of the political climate and a description of the community. The most common description among all three groups of board chairpersons, district clerk, and superintendents, was concerning community divisions. Informants were split about whether or not divisions

existed in the community. Another common pattern was the community strongly supported the school. Superintendent Bill explained,

> I think in this community they pretty much agree. Our mill levy was passed 100 and some for and 40 against. Last year it was again the same thing. We didn't have as many voters last year but the levy carried very easily. And so, I think there's good support that way in the community. As far as divisions I don't see that.

Within board chairperson responses, the most common pattern was the description of the community "supporting" the school. Superintendents were split over whether or not there were any divisions in the community.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects the previous superintendent had on the new one hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in Melchester. The most common pattern found in the informants' responses was the "clean up" the new superintendent sometimes had to do when newly hired. These were described as "messes" that the previous superintendent left for the new one to "clean up".

Another pattern was the differences in the superintendents' strengths and weaknesses. Superintendent Thomas portrayed the con-

nection between "cleaning up messes" and the strengths and weaknesses from one superintendent to the next, "In [Melchester] I had no problems going in there. But when I had to go back to [Melchester] after superintendent [name omitted] left in the middle of the year all of the finances that I had set up from the previous three years I had to re-do. It was hard on the school system."

Within the board chair responses was the pattern of the superintendent differences and their effects on the new superintendent. Board chair Clive explained effects of the previous superintendent on the new one hired, "There's always the carryover, because each superintendent has their way of doing things. So that's a change to the staff and sometimes they like it and sometimes they don't. It is a change in how our relationship is, like mine as a board chair, my relationship with them."

Within superintendent informants, descriptions reflected the same as those patterns found among all three groups.

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked to describe how frequent superintendent turnover affected the stability of the Melchester school district. Among all groups, the most common description was the change of superintendent was difficult. This included the changes made by the new superintendent. Related was the pattern of the difficulty in "adjusting" to the new superintendent. Respondents

commonly described how the changes were difficult for the staff. District clerk Charley described,

> I think it's hard on the staff. Each one of them [superintendents] has their own individuality and ideas on things, so you always have change somewhat when a new one comes in as to how they want to handle little things, like keys. One will say you can keep your keys, and one will say no, you can't keep your keys. One will say the supplies for the office will be kept here or the teacher supplies will be kept here. Sometimes they will keep them in their rooms, and then somebody would come and no, you have to keep them in the office so we know what is coming and going. Just little things like that. I think it's really hard on the district itself as far as staff goes because you are changing so much with just different personalities. . . .A lot of nervous teachers as to what is going to be changed. Curriculum is a big thing. You really see a big difference in the people [superintendents] as to how they think the curriculum needs to be. I have heard that since I've been here the teachers will say, "Well we just get this done and someone new will come in and they will want us to redo it all over again. We are re-doing curriculum all the time. We never get done with the curriculum."

Superintendents most commonly described the adjustments that must be made to the new superintendent were difficult, but also perceived that there were no effects on the Melchester school because of superintendent turnover. Superintendent Joseph elaborated,

> I think a lot of the staff goes on. It's a continual adjustment. . . .There were people that still didn't know what they thought of me by the time I had resigned. You have constant adjustments where they adjust to one superintendent and then they adjusted to me, and then to the superintendent that followed me. I see a lot of adjustment going on.

Superintendent Gabe explained why he perceived there were no effects of superintendent turnover on the Melchester school, "I don't think that it was a problem at the time. They didn't even have a philosophy or a direction that they were looking at. That's what it is when the school board members are not interested in education."

Sherton

Description of the Community

The school is important to the Sherton community. Board chairperson Oliver illustrated this, "The school is the community. The whole community pretty much centers around the school activities." A high school student explained the community value of work ethic, "Because everyone grows up around farms and ranches, everyone learns the importance of hard work. That work ethic follows over into other aspects of life, such as school and sports activities."

School district clerk Claudia described her perception of the community's support of the school. She explained the community will support the school if it is related to athletics,

> I think if it is something athletic, we are a real athletically based school, but the perception I see, they really do feel that the people up here that work up here, we have it's so easy. We make so much money but yet we don't do enough. The perception is the teachers get three months off in the summer.

A high school student wrote about her perceptions of the community's support for the school,

> The school is another very important thing to our community. It is the hub of almost all social activity. The whole community attends almost all basketball games, home and away. They give tremendous support both financially and emotionally.

Description of the School

Average enrollment in the Sherton school is 120 students in grades Kindergarten through twelfth. Typically 40 to 50 of those students are in high school. In the 1997-98 school year, the general fund budget was $617,115.

Student drop out rate was described as "low". Most students go on to a four year post secondary school. Racial make up of the students has been primarily Caucasian. Extra-curricular programs for high school students included basketball, track, co-op football, volleyball, a business group, and an agricultural group.

The base salary for teachers in Sherton in the 1997-98 school year was $19,300. In that year there were three full time and one part time elementary teachers and six full time high school teachers. Students in grades Kindergarten through twelfth were served by a full time art teacher, music teacher, and physical education teacher. There was also

a counselor, special education teacher and librarian. Non certified staff included one full time and one part time custodian, one full time and one part time cook, and four bus drivers. Office staff included one secretary and one district clerk. No instructional aides served in the classrooms. A teacher's union was organized in the 1997-98 school year. Teacher turnover was described as "low" with turnover primarily occurring in the elementary. No housing was available for teachers, but housing was provided for the superintendent. Average superintendent turnover in Sherton from 1977 to 1997 was 24%, with superintendents staying an average of 3.5 years.

Informants most commonly described the school at Sherton as a "good school" with a "good staff". The staff was described as "dedicated" and "stable". However, two long-term board chairpersons explained the board always had the priority of hiring new teachers right out of school. Board chairperson Patrick explained, "We would rather have the young, take a chance with the first year teacher who had some enthusiasm, rather than have somebody who would just be putting in their time to get done." Board chairperson Oliver explained further,

> We have always had the philosophy of hiring young teachers. They tend to stay two or three years and then move on, unless they marry into the community. So you get old teachers who are entrenched and married into the community or you get young teachers and then they move on. Because we like to attract the younger teachers we are number one on the

> pay scale of base except for all of the Indian schools. We have always traditionally been that. For so long funding was not a major problem. But we don't pay as much on the other end. That tends to make those teachers cranky. But they are married and they are still making the largest paycheck in the community.

Informants also described the strengths of the school were technology, the academic program, and the quality of the school facility.

Informants

Board chairpersons Oliver, Glenda and Patrick agreed to participate in the study. All three had lived in Sherton all of their lives, and made their livelihood from ranching. Their average age was 47 years, ranging from 42 to 51 years of age. Two had high school diplomas, and one held a bachelor's degree. Two had been involved in hiring four superintendents, and one chairperson had been involved in hiring one superintendent. They spent an average of 11 years on the board, ranging from 6 to 18 years. One of the interviews was held at the bar in Sherton, and the other two were held at homes of the informants.

District clerk Claudia agreed to be part of the study. Claudia had been district clerk for six years and prior to that had been employed as the full time secretary at the school for six years. She attended college for a few years and was in her 30's. She lived in the Sherton community all of her life except when attending college. Claudia graduated from

high school in Sherton. The interview with Claudia took place at the Sherton school. Claudia explained that she "loved" her job and felt fortunate to have it.

Superintendents Luke, Ian and Jerry participated in the study. All of these superintendents were raised in rural communities, two out of state. Their average age was 42 years, ranging from 35 to 51 years of age. One of the superintendents held an educational specialist degree. They had been involved in education for an average of 16 years, ranging from 12 to 21 years. In those years they had spent an average of six years as a superintendent, ranging from 4 to 10 years in that capacity. Two had been middle school teachers, one a high school teacher. One had been a K-12th grade principal, and two had been high school principals. One of the superintendent informants was new to the superintendency when hired in Sherton. The common pattern found for why they went into the superintendency was because of a higher salary. One of the interviews took place at the Sherton school, one took place at the school where the superintendent was currently employed, and one took place at the researcher's home. Superintendent Jerry served as superintendent in the Sherton and Marygreen schools.

A chart of organizational history at the Sherton school from 1977 to 1997 is provided in Appendix C.

Career Paths of Superintendents

Informants were questioned about the career goals, career orientations and expectations of tenure in attempting to explain effects on superintendent turnover in Sherton. Informants were asked whether or not the superintendent stayed as long as expected in Sherton. The most common description among all three groups was split between "yes" and "no".

Board chairpersons thought the superintendents did stay as long as expected, while the district clerk did not. Board chairperson Oliver gave this description, "You always know when they are looking. Especially if they are young, first-time superintendent they are always, in a year or two years, always going to be looking for another school, better pay."

Superintendents said that they did not stay as long as expected, and that they could have stayed longer as superintendent in Sherton. Superintendent Jerry reflected about his experiences in Sherton, "I will be smart the next time. I will not leave a school where I am welcomed like I did in Sherton."

The only group to give a description of the typical career path of superintendents in Montana was the board chairpersons. The common pattern within this group was the perception that the "good", first-time

superintendent will move up to a "better" job. Board chairperson Patrick's perceptions were,

> I always feel that if they [superintendents] don't have a desire to improve they are not going to do you a good job. If they come here. . .and think that they are going to stay in [Sherton] forever, they probably aren't a good superintendent. Because, why would they want to stay in [Sherton], Montana, when there are other places to go? It's possible that they would like the small school. But most people with ambition would want to move on, would have the desire to go up. I think they would have a desire to better themselves.

Superintendent Selection Processes

During the interviews, informants were asked to give a description of the superintendent selection processes, expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency. Common patterns that emerged among all groups when explaining the superintendent selection processes were that only the board was involved, the board took the candidates to dinner, and the board visited the community where the candidate was currently employed.

Board chairpersons described part of the selection process was to visit the community where the candidate was currently employed. Board chairperson Glenda explained this experience,

> We then narrowed it down to two people and we visited their school. . . . We did not tell them we were coming. We just showed up at the school. Neither of them [the candidates] were superintendents. We talked to people in the town, we went down to the cafe, and asked about the man and how he

> got along in the community and that sort of thing. That was the deciding factor between the two men. . .the trip to visit. We came back then after we had been to both places and again public meetings. We related the kinds of things that we had learned about the men. That happened after the interview.

Board chairpersons also explained how important it was to find out the reasons why the superintendent candidate left the last district he was in. Board chairperson Oliver explained this, his perceptions of the pool of superintendent candidates available each year, and how the board has tried to attract superintendents,

> The question is why is he leaving this town? It's usually because the whys are the same reason why the one just left your community. It's just a musical chairperson thing. Every three years they blow the whistle and the Class C superintendents change jobs. Most of them don't go up, they just go sideways. A Class C school like this usually has two different types of candidates. They are either a first-time superintendent who was principal at some small school or just got their provisional certificate and is stepping into being a superintendent. Then you've got the old ones who are ready to retire. And there's a lot of them who want to come back out of retirement. They want to double dip. And then you've got the professional journeyman superintendent who likes to travel from small school to small school. We always tried to offer a higher salary than other small schools, just like we do for teacher salary. The house we provide for the superintendent is a major draw.

Superintendents commonly described the selection process at Sherton as involving the board. Another pattern of selection description from the superintendents leaving Sherton was they recruited another superintendent to take the position. Superintendent Luke explained

what happened when the Sherton school board was looking for a superintendent to replace him, "I sort of picked the guy to replace me because I know him. They weren't having much luck so I got on the phone and called this guy."

District clerk Claudia said she attended all of the interviews with the superintendent candidates. She said the Montana School Boards Association was used a few times as superintendent selection consultants, though no other informant mentioned using it.

No patterns could be found among board chairpersons and district clerk regarding the success of the selection processes used or changes they would make to the processes.

Informants described the ideal superintendent or superintendency. The most common pattern that emerged among all groups was the ideal superintendent would have general public relations skills. These were described as being a "people person", "personable", able to "communicate" and "visible". Being involved in the community was another common pattern among informants. District clerk Claudia described a picture of this involvement and the link to being visible in the community, "Being visible in the community is a very strong thing. You need to buy things locally, eat out once in awhile. Buy your tires here.

Go to the annual firemen pancake event. Make sure you attend the events at the school."

Informants' most common pattern regarding the ideal length of time for a superintendent to stay in Sherton was described as four to seven years.

Board chairpersons commonly described general public relation skills would be important in choosing the ideal superintendent, but also the ideal superintendent would be "honest" and know "law". Board chairpersons also commonly said the ideal superintendent would bring his own children to boost school enrollment, and thus funding for the school. Board chairpersons described the ideal length of time for a superintendent to stay in Sherton as being seven to eight years.

Superintendents described the ideal superintendency as one where there was another administrator to assist them and one where there was a "good board". Superintendent Luke described what a "good board" meant to him, ". . .a board that empowers you to do the job that's in policy and lets you do it and stops micro-managing." They described the ideal length of time for a superintendent in a district to stay as being from three to five years.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

Informants were questioned about how the expectations of roles, and job competency skill areas affected superintendent turnover in Sherton. The most common pattern among informants' descriptions about why the superintendent accepted the job or was hired was related to the "problems" with the pool of applicants for the job. One superintendent explained that he was not the board's first choice of candidates. Board chairpersons explained problems with the pool of applicants as being "low", or "poor". They referred to having to hire superintendents late in the year. Among all groups another common pattern was superintendents' "budget strengths" were important reasons why they were selected.

No common patterns could be found in the superintendents' descriptions of why they accepted the superintendent job at Sherton.

Informants were asked to describe the expectations, written or spoken, of the superintendent upon being hired. Previous superintendent effects were described most commonly among all informants. These included compensating for the previous superintendent weaknesses in areas of "staff trust", "staff evaluations", and "student discipline". "Budget" was another area of expectations where common descriptions were found.

Among all groups informants explained the board was in consensus about what the skill areas of the superintendents were upon being hired.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why specific superintendents left Sherton, and why there was a high rate of superintendent turnover over the last 21 years. Superintendents were asked about general reasons for turnover in small schools. Board chairpersons gave reasons why they ran for the school board.

The only distinguishable pattern found within superintendent informants about the general reasons for superintendent turnover was "board problems". Superintendent Luke explains, "I think a lot of it depends on what kind of board you have. More superintendents leave for disgruntled boards and poor clerks than anything else. If you go to administrators' meetings the two things they will talk about will be the clerks and the boards."

Among all groups, the most common reason given for why a specific superintendent left the Sherton school district was because of a specific problem with the superintendent himself. These problems were described as "discipline problems", "not visible", "problems with teachers", or "personal problems". Secondly, informants commonly described

"problems" with the board. These were described as relationship problems between the board and the superintendent or as problems caused by board turnover. Board chairperson Oliver described,

> That is the major problem with the school district, the transition of the boards. The superintendent rarely works for the same board that hired them, very rarely. The superintendent is always struggling to adapt to changing political environments in the school. Every year you get an election where you get two new board members. And then you get board members who resign. I have probably appointed seven different board members. You've always got that transition.

The third group of patterns found among all informants describing why specific superintendents have left Sherton were because of "career moves", moving to a better paying position, or superintendent "family reasons".

Board chairperson responses commonly fell in the same pattern as those found among all groups. The two most common reasons given within superintendent descriptions were superintendents left for a position where there was another administrator to share the work load and because of "family reasons". The district clerk most commonly described "board problems" and "problems with coaching" as reasons why specific superintendents left Sherton.

Informants were also asked to give a description of why there has been a high rate of superintendent turnover in Sherton over the last 21

years. "Community reasons" was the most common reason for superintendent turnover in Sherton over the last 21 years. Board chairperson Glenda illustrated this, "I think it's the attitude of some of the community that it's 'my' school. You can't please everybody and there are certain people you can never please. It wouldn't matter what you did."

Board chairperson Patrick explained further,

> I think probably in [Sherton] a lot of them leave because of problems within the community. I think they just got to the point where it wasn't worth it. In a little community if you have some faction that is just totally against you, it can make it so miserable you are going to finally decide there's got to be a better place. I think that happens. Quite often there's been a faction within the community that just puts enough heat on either the superintendent or the school board that they finally decided the guy needs to go. He decides he needs to go or the board decides he needs to go.

Other patterns that emerged were superintendents left because of "board reasons" or "career moves". Problems with athletics, the undesirable location of Sherton, and conflicts over time were also common descriptions among all informants. Board chairperson Oliver provided his perceptions on the superintendent's position and conflicts,

> My personal saying is that if superintendents, preachers and basketball coaches are here for longer than three years they have outstayed their welcome. It's like any other job like that, they create conflict with somebody. People's memories are long. They don't ever forget. And it kind of builds. After three or four years you've got this increasing curve of people who essentially don't like the superintendent for whatever reason. Something he did a couple years ago. And it never goes away. You can never bring that curve back down. And

after awhile, the old ladies of the community, they run them out.

Patterns within board chairperson responses for reasons for superintendent turnover in Sherton over the last 21 years were the same as the reasons found among all groups. Superintendents most commonly described "board problems" or "career moves" as reasons for the high rate of turnover in Sherton. Superintendent Luke described his experiences, "The board got into a big power struggle among themselves. It had nothing to do with me. So when they were going to prove this, it was two to two. So then at that point I decided it was time to get out."

Board chairpersons described reasons why they ran for the board. Common descriptions were because they had kids in school or because they wanted to change something about the school.

Job Satisfaction. How do job satisfiers and levels of job satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? Informants were asked to give a description of how satisfied others were with the superintendent and how satisfied the superintendent was with the job he did. Superintendents provided a description of their job as a superintendent. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes used at Sherton.

When all informants' descriptions were grouped together, the most common pattern that emerged was overall, others were "not satisfied"

with the superintendent at Sherton. Additionally, informants commonly described that the staff was "not satisfied" with the superintendent.

Board chairpersons commonly described the community as not satisfied with the superintendents and also described how in the first year of the superintendent's experience the community was satisfied, but this satisfaction changed in the next year. Board chairperson Oliver explained the community's satisfaction, "It's always the honeymoon the first year. They [the community]think they [the superintendents] are great. Then toward the end of the second year they [superintendents] are horrible people. That takes place gradually every day."

Superintendents most frequently thought others were satisfied with the job they did at Sherton. They also commonly described the staff as satisfied. In fact, none of the superintendents described the community, staff or board as not satisfied with the job they did as superintendent. Superintendents commonly described their accomplishments at Sherton when describing the levels of satisfaction others had with their job performance.

District clerk Claudia said neither the community nor staff have ever been completely satisfied with the superintendent. She explained the community is never satisfied, "They can't stand the fact that the su-

perintendent gets the nice house. He doesn't have to pay property taxes. They think he gets everything given to him."

Informants described what they perceived as the superintendent's own level of satisfaction with the job of superintendent at Sherton. All groups most commonly said the superintendent was satisfied with his job performance. Superintendent Luke described, "I don't think anybody can ever say that I didn't do what I was supposed to do. I drive bus and do other things that I don't even charge them for. I do it to help out. . . . I feel good about what I do. I will miss the [Sherton] community, no doubt about that."

Superintendents' descriptions of their job as superintendent all varied. No pattern was found.

Informants were asked to give a description of the superintendent evaluation process used at Sherton. Common descriptions were the board typically evaluated superintendents three times a year using an evaluation form, staff also evaluated, and typically one-year contracts were offered. Superintendent Ian described his experiences with the staff evaluating him,

> The staff evaluated me there [at Sherton]. It was a written form with number system. I didn't have a problem with it. From what I've read they say not to, but I didn't have a problem with it. I felt comfortable with what the staff said. Some things were true, some things I missed. It wasn't very negative, it was areas I needed to work on.

Description of Relations. Informants were asked to give a description of the school board. Superintendents were asked to give descriptions of the type of leader others perceived them to be and how they communicated with the school board. Board members gave descriptions of their role and experiences. All groups were asked to give descriptions of the board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/district clerk relationships.

Among all groups, informants most commonly described board turnover in Sherton as "high". Board decisions were described as "supported" and made "at board meetings". Information was described as being shared among board members primarily through the telephone and information the superintendent shared with the board. Informants were split in their description of whether or not the chain of command policy was followed at Sherton. Chain of command referred to the protocol community members followed if they had a complaint against the school. Half of the informants perceived the policy was followed while the other half did not. Informants were also split in their references to overall descriptions of the school board. Half described the school board as "good" while the other half perceived there were "board problems".

Patterns of board descriptions found within board chairperson informants reflected the same patterns found when all three groups were

analyzed. One additional pattern was found when informants described how information was shared among the board. Board chairpersons said the information that was shared "depended on the superintendent". Board chairperson Oliver said, "It's really important that the superintendent, that's one of his main functions, dissemination of information. There's packets." Board chairperson Glenda gave this further description,

> Our superintendents were very good at giving us information before a meeting, getting us a packet in the mail before the meeting. It would have the agenda and he would have notes for each item of the agenda as to what it was about. So we did have time. . .if we didn't understand something to talk with the superintendent or to talk with one of the other board members. We did have that good information that was real important.

One pattern found in board descriptions from superintendent informants was that the chain of command was followed in Sherton. Superintendents commonly said the board was "good" in Sherton and let the superintendent "run the school".

Superintendents' descriptions on how they communicated with the board were mainly through written means, using newsletters or packets sent out before board meetings. Superintendents' descriptions of the type of leader others perceived them to be while in Sherton varied. Two patterns did emerge: Others knew they possessed strengths in working with the budget and were "honest". Superintendent Luke said,

> The one trait I think I'm most noted for is honest[y]. I don't do things behind people or hide things from people. My clerk has told me that sometimes that has hurt me more. Like if I am going to be gone [I'll] tell people where I'm going. For those that think I'm good and those who had questions, they have more respect for me than when I first started out.

"Good" was the most common description used among all groups when asked to describe the type of relationships that existed between the superintendent and the board, and between the superintendent and the district clerk. Superintendent Jerry gave this description,

> It was a good relationship. I had a really superb relationship the first two years I was there. And I had a pretty good relationship even after two new people came on the board. But they [new board members] were wholly uneducated as to how a board should run. "We had an ax to grind and this is why we got on the board."

Superintendent Luke described the relationship between himself and the district clerk,

> I think I have one of the top clerks in the state. In the first place I was a superintendent I had one of the worst. Ever. I had to be the bad guy and get her fired. But [Claudia] is not only talented but she's such a people person and down-to-earth person. You talk to some of these superintendents and they will just cringe when you mention the clerk.

Patterns within board chairperson descriptions of relations were relations were "good", but also at times they were "not so good". Board chairperson Patrick explained his perceptions of the type of relationships between the superintendent and the board over the years he was on the board as, "Sometimes it was good and sometimes it was stormy, basically

with each of them. I can't think of one of them that at one time didn't have kind of a stormy relationship with the board over something."

Superintendents said most commonly relationships were "good" between the board and them and also between the district clerk and them.

Political Climate. How has the political climate of the school district affected superintendent turnover in Sherton? Informants provided a description of the political climate and a description of the community. The most common description among all three groups of board chairpersons, district clerk, and superintendent, was the community was often split over issues concerning the school. Board chairperson Glenda said, "There are often sides chosen and it's almost always over something going on at the school. It seems to be." District clerk Claudia gave her perceptions, "This community gets more stirred up over coaching than instructional things. We'll have a full house at the board meeting when it's an extracurricular thing, but when we are hiring teachers there's no one."

Another pattern found among all informants was the community at Sherton was very concerned about taxes and how the money is spent at the school.

Board chairpersons commonly described the community as "supporting" the school. They also described the school was the "center" of the community.

Superintendents commonly said athletics caused problems in the community. Superintendent Luke explained,

> The biggest political thing, I guess, is basketball. It really split this community up. It was all over playing time. It had nothing to do with whether or not the coach was doing his job. It has torn this community up for the last three years. I was caught right in the middle of it. Somebody is always feeling that somebody is getting something because of who they are. It will be that way forever.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects the previous superintendent had on the new one hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in Sherton. The most common pattern found in the informants' responses was effects of the previous superintendent's weaknesses on the new one hired. These included dealing with budget problems, teacher/superintendent relationships, student discipline, and teacher evaluations. Board chairperson Patrick explained, "You [the school board] might have been looking for somebody [a superintendent] to be better in the areas the other one was weak in."

Within board chairperson and district clerk descriptions of effects of one superintendent on the next one hired, no discernible patterns

emerged. Within superintendent informants, the most common pattern was compensating for the weaknesses of the previous superintendent. Superintendent Jerry believed, "I have some real feelings about the reasons why some of the [my] superintendencies have gone sour. It's because of the people before me and not because of myself. I really believe that."

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked to describe how frequent superintendent turnover affected the stability of the Sherton school district. Among all groups, the most common description was the "changes" made by the new superintendent and how these were most difficult on the staff. District clerk Claudia explained,

> I think the school has to be affected because every time a superintendent leaves you have some of the staff that really liked them and some who didn't. I think there's a healing time of strong emotions. Change is hard. Every superintendent has different ideas. That's one of the questions we ask when we interview them. Are you going to come into the school and change everything, or do it gradually? They all say gradually but sometimes it isn't. I don't think it's good for the school.

Superintendent Ian described his experiences,

> The staff itself would always be saying, "Who are we going to be getting?" Staff morale drops obviously until they can finally trust the superintendent. Until you can establish yourself with some issues that do come across your desk right away and establish a trusting relationship I think the staff morale certainly isn't too good. That's probably the biggest thing, the uncertainty from the staff. . . .For example if I

> brought in a new idea and they used it for two years, it may be a good idea, but the next superintendent may throw it out.

Board chairpersons also commonly described this negative effect on the staff with superintendent turnover. Another pattern they described was that there were no effects of superintendent turnover on the school district's stability. Board chairperson Patrick explained, "I don't think that it has changed a whole lot of where the district is going. I don't think that has been a big factor."

Board chairperson Oliver described,

> Change is a lot of times good. I don't think it has really affected the community. The kids still get educated. Usually you have a high enough percentage of older staff so you've got the continuity there. It's not really that big of a thing for a community to change superintendents.

No clear patterns emerged within the group of superintendent informants or within the district clerk's description regarding effects of superintendent turnover on the school district's stability at Sherton.

Idiosyncratic Analyses: Within Each Group

School Board Chairpersons

Description of Informants

All but three school board chairperson informants had lived in their communities all of their lives. The other informants married into communities. Farming or ranching was the livelihood of all informants except one.

The average age of school board chairperson informant was 48 years old, ranging from 41 to 62 years of age. Ten informants were male and four were female. Most of the informants had some college experience. Half of those had one to two years of college experience while half held a bachelor's degree. Only three informants' education ended with a high school diploma.

School board chairperson served an average of 10 years on the board, ranging from 3 to 18 years. They had been involved with hiring an average of four superintendents, ranging from one to six superintendents hired.

All interviews with school board chairpersons were held face-to-face at either the homes of the informants, at the school district site, or at a local business. All board chairs contacted agreed to be part of the

study. Interviews were held with 14 board chairpersons. One participant did not show for a scheduled interview and was not included in the study. Interviews lasted typically one and a half hours to two hours each.

Table 1 lists the names of cases, or school district sites, and the pseudonyms of school board chairperson informants interviewed.

Table 1. School Board Chairperson Informants

Case or School District Site	**Name of Informant**
Casterbridge	Zane, Otto, and Raymond
Glaston	Lucy and Jerome
Marygreen	Stewart, Trevor, Diane, and Victor
Melchester	Clive and Darlene
Sherton	Oliver, Glenda, and Patrick

Career Paths of Superintendents

Board chairperson informants were questioned whether or not superintendents stayed as long as expected in their districts. Responses were split. Half said superintendents had stayed as long as expected while half said superintendents had not stayed as long as expected. Of those who described superintendents as not staying as long as expected, informants said these superintendents left because of "career moves", moving to a better paying superintendent position. Another common pattern within this group of informants was that superintendent turnover was "expected to happen". Board chairperson Zane from Caster-

bridge explained, "I'm beginning to get used to this two to three year thing. Like with [Helen] I thought that she would probably be here a lot longer, that maybe she would be here for five or ten years. I was hoping that." Board chairperson Raymond, also from Casterbridge, said, "I guess I got used to it about halfway through [his years on the school board] that maybe they [superintendents] wouldn't generally stay so long."

Board chairpersons were asked to describe their perceptions of typical career paths superintendents followed in Montana. They said most commonly superintendents "start in small schools" and use them as a "stepping stone". School board chairperson Otto from Casterbridge described, "Usually you are getting somebody [a superintendent] who is starting out here and wants to work their way up, which means they are only going to be here for a period of time and are going to get some experience." Board chairperson Darlene from Melchester said, "It's [Melchester school] small. They [superintendents] think they can handle it when they're coming out for their first position. So they are just using it as a stepping stone."

Another common pattern that emerged was "good superintendents would move up" to a better paying job. School board chairperson Jerome from Glaston said, "I think the good ones you can only expect to be here

a short period of time before they want to go on and advance themselves." Clive, school board chairperson from Melchester said, "There's no doubt that if you get one [superintendent] in there and they are fairly good it's a stepping stone. They're going on to the next bigger school. That's all they're going to do. I think we need to face the facts, that most people go into the superintendency because of the money."

Superintendent Selection Processes

Board chairperson informants were asked to give a description of superintendent selection processes, and expectations of the ideal superintendent.

The most commonly described practice in four of the five districts was that school board members called references themselves. In three of the five districts boards relied on the current superintendent's involvement in the selection processes. Other common patterns found were that the school board alone was involved in the selection processes, Montana School Boards Association was used as a search consultant, or consultants were never used. Two districts described using a dinner with the candidate and the board as part of the selection processes. Two districts described difficulties in obtaining "honest recommendations". School board chairpersons indicated that three to five candidates were interviewed most typically.

School board chairpersons were asked to describe how successful were the selection processes and any changes they would make to improve the processes. They most commonly indicated that they were "satisfied" with processes they had used to select a superintendent and would make no changes in the processes.

School board chairpersons described their perceptions of the ideal superintendent to serve in their districts. Most common patterns found within these descriptions were the importance of a rural background of the superintendent as well as the "involvement" of superintendents in their communities. Board chairperson Lucy from Glaston described the importance of a rural background of a superintendent,

> I think that it's really important to get somebody that is familiar with a small community. . . .They come with the best of intentions and I don't think they always last very long if they aren't somewhat familiar with being from a rural area. And it's a lot easier for them to visit with people, kind of bond with people in the community too, if they're more familiar with how you talk to a rancher, or the small-business man like the grocery store person downtown that struggles.

An example of the importance of community involvement of the ideal superintendent was described by school board chairperson Clive from Melchester,

> But I think he [the ideal superintendent] likes to participate, and likes the community. He's a member of the community. He is probably going to join the fire department or something like that. If you [superintendent] don't want to go to the sporting events—because that's our community affair—most

> of these small communities pull together on those kinds of things. But if you're an outsider and stand away from that, pretty soon you're isolated.

School board chairpersons commonly described general public relation skills that would be important for the ideal superintendent to possess. These included "budget strengths", know the "law", be "honest" and "decisive". Another common pattern within this description was that prior experience as a superintendent would be important. Board chairs said it would be important that the ideal superintendent could "relate to the kids" and also the staff, but "be the boss". The ideal length of time for superintendents to stay in specific districts was 7 years, ranging from 3 to 12 years, according to school board chairpersons. The least common pattern found in board chairpersons' descriptions was the ideal superintendent would be one who would bring his or her own children to the district to boost student enrollment, which would then increase the school funding level.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

School board chairpersons were asked to describe their expectations of roles and superintendent job competency areas upon hiring. They were also asked to describe reasons why superintendents were hired or reasons why superintendents accepted jobs in their districts.

When describing why a specific superintendent was hired in their districts, board chairpersons most commonly described "problems" with the pool of superintendent applicants. In describing this they spoke of how difficult it was to "fill the position", and how they chose the "best candidate" for the job. School board chairperson Jerome from Glaston described difficulties in finding superintendents,

> Nobody wanted to be a superintendent. Those that were superintendents weren't going anywhere. With [a specific superintendent], like I told the board when we went through the applications I said, "This applicant wouldn't even have surfaced [in previous years]." We were between a rock and a hard spot there. We got down to where we needed a superintendent. We didn't know if we should reopen, or hire what we had. We should have reopened the position. Out of those three or four applicants some were not even qualified. So what do you do?

Another common pattern found was the candidate hired "interviewed well" and had "good references". Most spoke of hiring a superintendent because they were a "new" inexperienced superintendent as being positive, while others described a superintendent was hired because of the experience he or she brought to the position.

School board chairpersons were asked to describe expectations, either written or spoken, of superintendents upon being hired in their districts. Their most commonly described expectations were "general". Examples of general expectations were "do the best job they can", "run the school smoothly", "work hard", "keep the staff happy" but "be the

boss", and "expectations were the same" from one superintendent to the next. Long-time board chairperson Raymond from Casterbridge described expectations of superintendents throughout the years he was a board member, "In general to try to operate the school and educate the kids was the biggest thing. At different times, I don't recall, but there would be different things that we would feel, some program, that needed to be specifically addressed. But in the end you needed a superintendent, I guess."

Board chairperson Lucy explained expectations of superintendents hired in Glaston, "The expectations, just bring in their [superintendent's] education and what little experience that they have, if any, and work really hard, be forthright and honest."

School board chairpersons also commonly described superintendent expectations of being "involved in the community", be "honest", or possess "budget strengths". The least common pattern found in school board chairpersons' descriptions was there were "no" expectations of the superintendent upon being hired.

Lastly, school board chairpersons were asked about the levels of consensus among the school board regarding skill areas of superintendents upon being hired. Informants explained most commonly the board

was in consensus about the skill areas. School board chairpersons thought they understood where the new superintendent's strengths were.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why specific superintendents left their school districts, and why so many over the last 21 years. Informants were asked to give descriptions of their school districts in attempting to explain conditions surrounding superintendent turnover. School board chairpersons were also asked to give reasons why they ran for the school board.

Board chairpersons most commonly described reasons for specific superintendents leaving their districts as "career moves", moving to another superintendency in a bigger school where there was a higher salary. Board chairperson Glenda's descriptions of why a specific superintendent left Sherton was typical, "He [the superintendent] was very ambitious too. We knew he wasn't going to stay because we knew he was [going] on to a bigger school." Lucy, board chairperson from Glaston, described a situation with a specific superintendent in her school district, "He [the superintendent] took this job for work experience. This was the first time he's been a superintendent. . . .It's kind of the way the world turns it seems like."

Another common pattern found in board chairpersons' descriptions of why specific superintendents left referred to the school board "not wanting the superintendent back". Some of these reasons were explained as "problems" with the superintendent. Often mentioned was the superintendent "building retirement" and not doing the job. Other patterns found in board chairperson descriptions were specific superintendents left because of "family reasons", superintendents "resigned", or left because of "board problems". Another pattern was that superintendents left because of the "job itself", meaning the large amount of work being the only administrator.

School board chairpersons gave their perceptions of why there has been a high rate of superintendent turnover in their districts over the last 21 years. The most common pattern found in informants' descriptions were "conflicts over time" and "problems" with the superintendents themselves. Board chairperson Otto from Casterbridge illustrated the problem, "And I guess if you want me to be perfectly honest, it seems inevitable to me that sooner or later there develops a difference. I don't know whether it's personalities or a difference of ideas between the administrator and some members of the community, maybe all members of the community."

Board chairperson Patrick from Sherton explained, "Eventually in small communities there's just too much, people get to know you too well and the pressure is just too great. You are just intertwined too much between work and play so to speak. They see that you didn't mow your lawn enough."

"Problems" with superintendents were described as "personal" problems, superintendents who "didn't follow up on things", "not accepted well", and superintendents who had problems "working with the board".

Board chairpersons commonly explained other reasons for high rates of superintendent turnover in their districts. These included the "job itself" meaning the large amount of work in the small school for one administrator, "career moves" meaning moving to a bigger school where a higher salary was offered, and "community problems".

The least common descriptions informants used to explain reasons for the high rate of superintendent turnover in their districts were "conflicts" with the board, undesirable location of the district, late timing of superintendent hiring, "problems" with the pool of applicants, "problems" with being rural, and the "low" salary offered to superintendents.

Board chairpersons provided a description of their schools. The most common pattern found in these descriptions were references to the high rate of teacher turnover in their districts, or "problems" with teachers. Board chairperson Zane from Casterbridge explained, "Our staff is usually first year teachers. We do have three of them that have been here for quite a few years. Our teacher turnover is quite high. Teachers come and spend two to three years to get a history built up and then they move on." Patrick, school board chairperson from Sherton described how they attracted teachers in his school district,

> [Sherton] had a notorious reputation for teacher turnover, so obviously somebody that had been teaching for three or four years would look at that and say they would not come to [Sherton]. A first year teacher was glad to get a job. The only other people that would look at [Sherton] for teaching jobs were those people who had been teaching and probably shouldn't be teaching.

Informants also commonly spoke of low student to teacher ratios as a strength of their schools. Other strengths commonly described were "strong staff", academics, and "technology". Informants described an area where the board had concentrated to improve most commonly as the number of "course offerings" and increasing the budget. They were proud of their graduates' achievements and "good" school. They commonly described their schools as the "center" of their communities.

Board chairpersons described reasons why they ran for the school board. They most commonly explained they did so because they had "kids in school" at the time. The second pattern found within this group was they ran "to change things" at the school. Board chairperson Jerome from Glaston portrayed his reasons for wanting to run for the school board,

> I wanted to run for the board because I thought I could help the school. I was very dissatisfied with the superintendent that was currently on the board and didn't like the direction that the school was going. It was time for a change. It was going in the wrong direction. Discipline was poor. The staff was not supportive of the superintendent. The superintendent was retiring. I mean he was just putting in years. Rather lax.

Board chairpersons also described they ran for the school board because they felt "obligated", "interested in education" or because they wanted to get a bus route to their homes.

Job Satisfaction. Informants were asked to give descriptions of how satisfied others were with superintendents and how satisfied superintendents were with their job performances. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes and how long contracts were typically issued to superintendents in their school districts.

Board chairperson informants were split in their description of the levels of satisfaction others had with superintendents. They explained

half of the time the community and staff were satisfied and the other half of the time they were not satisfied with superintendents. Long-time board chairperson Raymond from Casterbridge said, "Through the years sometimes they [people in the community] are happy, they vary. They form different clicks on different things in a small community that way. They are never consistent. A lot of them, if nothing bad is happening they are happy. There's always a vocal minority. It creates a lot of troubles sometimes."

Board chairperson Patrick said the community's levels of satisfaction with superintendents throughout the years at Sherton,

> Some [community members] are [satisfied] and some aren't. I could go down the list [of superintendents] and say that some of the community members would have been really satisfied with each one and some would have thought he was the worst guy in the world. It may have been the year. Initially the first year is good, the second year they might start to find problems and by the time the third year has rolled around you have found major problems. At least somebody thinks it's major problems.

Board chairpersons commonly described "community divisions" over particular superintendents. Board chairperson Victor described one example of this in the Marygreen community,

> It doesn't take very much sometimes for a community to get upset. With [a specific superintendent] the community was either black or white. You were either over here and you liked him or you were over here you despised him. And he caused it. That's not typical for this community. That's the worst I have ever seen it. It's never been polarized as much

> as he did it. And about the same thing happened with [a following superintendent].

Lastly, school board chairpersons explained how the first year the superintendent was on the job "things were good", but then got worse over time. Victor, board chairperson from Marygreen explained further, "They [superintendents] all started out good but then things started to go downhill."

Board chairperson informants perceived the majority of superintendents themselves were satisfied with their job performances at specific school districts.

Informants described superintendent evaluation processes used in their districts and length of contracts issued to superintendents. Most commonly school board chairpersons described that evaluations had been done either once or twice a year, or not done at all. Staff evaluated superintendents in two districts. Long-time board chairperson Oliver from Sherton described staff evaluations of superintendents and superintendents' reactions,

> The other thing that we have always done that pisses the superintendent off is we allow the staff to do an anonymous evaluation of the superintendent once a year, to blow off steam. You can tell exactly which teacher is saying what. They never signed them. But they [teachers] have a lot of fun, and we have a lot of fun reading them. We always take it with a grain salt. It gives them access to the board and it seems to be a healthy thing. Superintendents always resent it. They feel like they are being stabbed in the back. They

> [superintendents] hear things like, "I think all the superintendent does is sit around the office and eat candy bars." That really makes them cranky.

Board chairpersons commonly explained one-year contracts had been issued to superintendents. Two districts said two-year contracts had been issued, but rarely. Otto, board chairperson from Casterbridge explained,

> This district will never do it again [issue two-year contracts]. It really limits your flexibility. . . .But if you get somebody [a superintendent] assigned to a multiple year contract it really limits your flexibility because you've always got that contract to hold over their head at evaluation. People have to have incentives to perform.

Description of Relations. Informants were asked to give a description of their school boards. Board chairpersons gave descriptions of their role and experiences. Lastly, informants were asked to give descriptions of the board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/clerk relationships.

Board chairpersons were split in their descriptions of board member turnover in their districts. Board turnover was described as either high or low, with board members serving an average of two terms. Informants commonly explained the chain of command, procedures used by community members who had complaints against the school, was not followed the majority of the time. Board decisions were described as

made at board meetings, discussed and supported. Information shared among boards most commonly was described as dependent on what superintendents shared with boards or shared over the telephone by one board member to another.

Board chairpersons commonly described "problems" among themselves. Long-time board chairperson Zane from Casterbridge described his experiences,

> I have worked on all kinds of school boards. When I first got on the board there were three of us that were pretty young, pretty green. We had [Raymond] who had a lot of years in. I thought within a few years we had a pretty experienced board. The board didn't change for three years. The board worked together well and was experienced. And then when [Raymond] went off he took 15 years of experience with him. It seemed like everybody worked together pretty well for the first five or six years I was on the board. And then the last two years we had a couple new board members get on and basically they hurt the board. So I guess I would have to say that I have also worked on a disruptive board.

Board chairperson Oliver from Sherton described his experiences with different types of boards and problems they caused,

> I have [worked on] all different kinds. When I first got on the board I got on with a couple guys who were really common sense. Ran a good school. . . .We've had some characters come in, I mean you get board members who have solely one ax. They want to fire this person and do that and so they come and they go. There's never the same board. It always changes by one person. And then dynamics always change gradually. You might have a real conservative board and then might wake up three years later and you have a real liberal board. Or you might have two members on who really create a lot of discord in the community. People get on the

> board and think they need to manage the school. That always creates more discord in a district. They are always telling the teachers what they should be doing or the administrator what he should be doing.

Other patterns found in school board chairperson descriptions were school boards "worked well together", and the success of the school board was related to the quality of the superintendent. Board chairperson Victor from Marygreen described how the board worked together when he was a new member, and how the school board had operated more recently,

> I think we all got along well. We never agreed totally, but we agreed to disagree. We all dealt with each other fairly well. We farm in the community and have business together. What came to the board meeting stayed there. And when we left the board meeting we left everything behind. I think that's why we got along well. . . .[Now] the makeup of the board is a little bit different. [Trevor] is the only one that has been on there for a long time. The rest of them are pretty new. They have gone through some pretty tough times with the superintendent. I feel for them. The superintendent gives you a lot of direction. These guys [school board members]come in and are new and they need some direction. If you have a good superintendent it makes the board's job a lot easier. But if you have to kind of run the school and they are giving you a bad time, and not doing things that should be done, the school board can't run the school.

Board chairpersons described the type of relationships between themselves and superintendents, and between the superintendent and district clerks. The major pattern in their descriptions noted "problems" with specific superintendents. These problems ranged from superinten-

dents who did not get along with a certain group in the community or with the staff, were not "visible" or "involved" in the community, did not do their job, or had "personal" problems.

The second most common pattern within board chairpersons' descriptions was overall relations were "good" between school boards and specific superintendents. Victor, board chair from Marygreen explained, "I think all in all. . .the superintendents felt comfortable with the board even though there was a little conflict here or there." And board chairperson Raymond gave his perceptions, "I liked practically all of them [superintendents] myself, and could work with almost all of them. But you had to find a way to work with them. Some of them have their own personal problems, some got a chance to move on and move up, some got cross ways with some of the board members."

More often than not board members noted problems between superintendents and district clerks. Zane, board chair from Casterbridge said, "It seemed like [the clerk] always had a little bit of problems with them [the superintendents]. She could work with them, she would make it work but she did have things that would bother her."

Board chairpersons gave descriptions of their roles and experiences as board members. They were most commonly split in their description, describing it as either "positive" or "frustrating". The second

most common patterns were they believed they must do "what's right for the district" and not "micro-manage", or get too involved in the day-to-day operations of the school district.

Board chairperson Patrick from Sherton described, "The [school board member's] role is to work for the district, but yet I think school board members have a tendency to work for themselves." Stewart, board chairperson from Marygreen explained, "I would think the role of the board member would be to try to make decisions that would benefit the majority of the people, not just certain factions. You shouldn't have a personal agenda, really. He [the board member] should do what the majority of the people want done."

Board chairperson Clive from Melchester described negative effects of micro-managing board members, "You better stay out of the daily business. That's what we hire a superintendent for is to carry out those policies. I've been in one school where the board almost become the superintendent and that don't work." Board chairperson Glenda from Sherton explained as a board member,

> You don't run the school when you become a school board member. You do not run the daily workings of the school. You have to make sure that your superintendent is doing it. That is his job and you have to let him do it. If he is not doing his job then you talk to him about it and ask for improvement. Let him know.

Informants commonly said that they thought they "could change things" as new board members, but later found things were more complicated than previously thought. Board chairperson Stewart said, "After you've been on the board awhile there's a lot of things, it wakes you up. It isn't that easy. You think you can go up there, and things you want to get done, but you can't change them overnight. It just doesn't happen." Zane, board chairperson from Casterbridge explained, "The first thing you think you can do when you get on the board is change things. I think you find out a lot of things are unchangeable. Things at the state level, the federal level you can't change."

The least common pattern of descriptions found were board chairpersons who viewed their responsibilities as "watching the budget" and "setting policy".

Political Climate. Informants gave descriptions of their communities and political climates of their districts. Board chairpersons most commonly described their community as "supporting the school" primarily through passing mill levies.

Informants commonly described how the school was the "center" of their communities. Board chairperson Clive explained the school's role in Melchester,

> [The] school, in this area, and in most little towns. . .is the gathering place. It's the activities for the town. The basketball games. There's people that's been going to basketball games, they still go, that went when I was in high school. And they still go to every basketball game. So you have a good support that way.

Glenda, board chairperson from Sherton said, "The school is the center of the town and everyone kind of takes what happens there pretty personally."

Board chairperson informants described athletics as the most important thing to their communities and how this has caused "divisions". Board chairperson Diane described divisions in Marygreen, "Probably the biggest fights in the community have been over basketball coaches, which is typical of small towns. When things are going good everybody's happy. Of course it's completely the other way around otherwise."

Another common pattern was the "fishbowl" description used to explain life in small communities. Board chairperson Trevor from Marygreen gave this description,

> If you drive into town and you live around here everybody probably knows why you drove into town. Anybody who comes into town it doesn't take long for them to find out who he is and what he did. A lot of the problems with a lot of the superintendents is they're not used to being under that kind of microscope.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects previous superintendents had on new

ones hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in their school districts. The most common pattern found in board chairperson descriptions were the negative effects of previous superintendents on new superintendents. These negative effects were described as having to "clean up previous superintendent messes", being "compared" to previous superintendents, compensating for weaknesses of the previous superintendent, and having to cope with the different styles of superintendents. Jerome, board chairperson from Glaston described superintendent effects,

> When [one specific new superintendent] was hired, he had a lot of expectations to look up to. He did a good job. He definitely wasn't [the previous superintendent], but he still did a good job though [the previous superintendent's] name came up in discussion. Which it shouldn't have. There are definite effects. Then when you get a superintendent like [a different new superintendent], there's a lot of work to do for the next one. Because there's a mess there.

Zane, board chairperson from Casterbridge explained, "The one [superintendent] we just hired usually is mad at the last one for leaving a mess that he has to clean up. They never finish something that they leave for the next guy to do." Board chairperson Lucy from Glaston said, "I think there's always following in the footsteps thing where you [new superintendent] were compared with how it was done the year before, how that person [previous superintendent] reacted to something before."

Darlene, board chairperson at Melchester described effects of the

previous superintendent on the new one hired,

> Some of them [superintendents] have let the discipline get out of control or the teachers get out of control or the non-certified. Not that she doesn't do a good job, but for a while the cook thought she was in charge. I don't think we've had a real good maintenance staff. And then the same thing, they [maintenance staff] feel they are in charge, proprietary attitude a lot of times when you're taking care something or doing something. We've had some [superintendents] that were just letting them build that attitude, but also got a lot of work done. That made it hard on the next guy [superintendent] that came. . . .One [superintendent] makes a mess and somebody [the next superintendent] has to come in and straighten it out. That makes a lot of problems.

The least common pattern described by board chairpersons was "no effects" of previous superintendents on new superintendents hired in their districts.

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked to describe how frequent superintendent turnover had affected their school districts. School board chairpersons most commonly described negative effects on the staff caused by frequent superintendent turnover. These negative effects were "adjustments" the staff had to make to the new superintendent, staff who "filled the power vacuum" left vacant by the lack of leadership, and descriptions of difficulties superintendent turnover caused on the office staff. Board chairperson Stewart from Marygreen related his experiences,

> I think it [superintendent turnover] kind of hurts your goals of the school. If you have a plan over a ten or eight year period and you want to get things done, it just gets started with one superintendent. . .and somebody else comes along and they don't think that's a priority. I think that's what goes back on the staff too. They get kind of a line of direction for a year or two and then a new superintendent comes along and says, "We don't want to push this." There you are again. . . .The staff flounders. The teachers themselves got no direction anymore. They don't know who to turn to anymore if every two years they change superintendents. You've got no direction anymore. Unless you're really motivated it's pretty tough to hold together. They don't have any idea where [they are] going to go from year-to-year. That's what we're running into now. I hope it changes. It does have an effect on the staff. They get discouraged.

Other commonly described patterns were "changes" new superintendents make and the effects of frequent superintendent turnover on "continuity". Continuity of leadership and programs were described. Raymond, board chairperson from Casterbridge, said,

> I think you lose some continuity in your programs, that's probably the biggest thing. Say this fellow [superintendent] really wants to improve your math program, and the next one comes in and they're not interested in math, but English is their forte. Forget the math program. That continuity is probably one of your major losses.

Board chairperson Jerome from Glaston described the lack of continuity caused by frequent superintendent turnover, "The continuity isn't there. You don't know what to expect from one year to the next. I think it's hard on the staff, especially the staff. Continuity is the biggest thing."

School District Clerks

Description of Informants

Most school district clerk informants had lived in their communities all of their lives. One informant married into a community studied in this project. Informants had been district clerk for an average of 9 years, ranging from 2 to 15 years. The average age of district clerk informants was 40 years, ranging from 26 to 56 years of age. Most said they had been school secretary and moved into the district clerk position. Two held high school diplomas, two bachelor's degrees, one had a two-year vocational degree, and two had some college experience. An average of four superintendents were hired while informants were in the position of district clerk, ranging from one to seven superintendents hired.

All interviews were held face-to-face with district clerks at homes of the informants, at school district sites, and one at a relative's residence. Interviews were held with seven school district clerks. One district clerk did not respond to contacts to be interviewed and was not included in the study. Interviews typically were one and half to two hours in length. Table 2 lists the cases, or school district sites and the names of the clerks interviewed.

Table 2. School District Clerk Informants

Case or School District Site	Name of Informant
Casterbridge	Sylvia and Claire
Glaston	Elaine and Brenda
Marygreen	Olivia
Melchester	Charley
Sherton	Claudia

District clerks described their job most commonly as "enjoyable" but "lots of work". They commonly expressed "problems" working for both the superintendent and the school board. District clerks described how they had "complained" to the board about the superintendent at times. One clerk said, "[At times] I was very torn because you work with the superintendent. You don't want any problems on a daily basis. It's stressful enough. You don't need to add to the situation. But at the same time if you really think something is wrong I have gone to the board." Another clerk explained,

> Most of our board I grew up with and have known forever. I wouldn't want to say that I'm a tattletale but, if they [superintendents] are doing something really wrong I've told the board. I don't set out to go get them fired or anything like that, but I try to tell the superintendent first then if that doesn't work, I go to the board, or tell one or two of them. I guess that's kind of bad. But it's bad for school not to. I try to help them [superintendents], I don't try to undermine them. Like when there's a hundred dollars missing, I say "Call the board." My allegiance is to the school. I work for the board, so my allegiance with the board is more than with the superintendent.

Other patterns in describing the job of district clerk were at times it was "good not to work for the superintendent", job responsibilities were varied, having a part-time secretary was "helpful", and more "involvement" and "support" from the school board would have helped them in their jobs. A clerk explained her wishes,

> The board never asks the people who really know what's going on. They never come to them, that's the problem. If they [school board] think that something is wrong to go in and say to somebody, "Do you think we are having a problem?" Or just call and say, "Could I meet with you somewhere and let's talk about this?" They didn't do that. . . .I think they get on the school boards and they decide they are the boss, and they think they known it all and they don't need any outside information. They can't know. They are there once a month. I think school boards are a problem. . . .As far as really asking anything of the people that were there, even the teachers. The board needs to be a little more involved if they're going to make some decisions.

Career Paths of Superintendents

School district clerk informants were questioned whether or not superintendents stayed as long as expected in their districts. Responses were split. Half thought the superintendent had stayed as long as expected while half thought the superintendent had not stayed as long as expected. Another common pattern within this group was superintendent turnover was "expected to happen".

School district clerks were asked to describe their perceptions of the typical career paths that superintendents follow in Montana. They

most commonly described superintendents start in small schools and then want to move to a better paying position. Clerk Charley from Melchester explained, "I really think the superintendents out there, that is what they are looking for, go to a bigger community, make more money. In a way you can't blame them." District clerk Elaine from Glaston perceived, "I've never seen anybody [superintendents] that wanted to be in the small school. All they look at us is. . .we're just a place to get experience and then move on. . . .Most of them like money more than they like small schools."

Another common pattern that emerged, related to the previous pattern, was "good superintendents would move up" to a better paying job. Claire, district clerk from Casterbridge, explained,

> [Casterbridge] is a small place and if you are a career minded person at all your goal would be to move up to a bigger school district. Anybody who comes in here and they are career minded and they have dreams to be in a huge school district, they are wanting to move up career wise. [Casterbridge] is just a stepping stone on the way up.

Superintendent Selection Processes

School district clerk informants were asked to give descriptions of superintendent selection processes, and expectations of the ideal superintendent.

The majority of district clerks in the five school districts studied said that they attended superintendent interviews, and most got to give some kind of input. District clerk input was limited to being asked by the school board if they could work with a specific candidate or the inclusion of a specific question in the interview related to school finances. They said three to six candidates were typically interviewed, and school boards typically called references on candidates. In two districts the community was described as "invited" to the interviews, but district clerks explained community members rarely showed. In three districts school staff attended interviews. Two districts had a dinner with superintendent candidates and school boards as part of the interview process. Two districts felt their location hurt them in attracting candidates. District clerks in two districts described using the Montana School Boards Association as search consultants.

Most district clerks said that they were "satisfied" with superintendent selection processes. Regarding changes that should be made to improve the selection process, responses varied. These varied responses included, "take more time", more community involvement, each school board member should call each reference listed on the candidate's application, the school board should visit the candidate's community where he or she is currently employed, and there were "problems" with having

the current superintendent involved in the search for his or her replacement.

District clerks were asked to give a description of the ideal superintendent to serve in their districts. They most commonly said this ideal superintendent would have general public relation skills, such as "being visible" and "involved" in the community. Elaine, district clerk from Glaston described the community's ideal superintendent as, ". . .somebody that's visible, personable, one that will listen to [community members'] agendas. The public wants a person who's real approachable." District clerk Charley from Melchester said,

> I think in a community like this, being at the public dinners, community dinners, things like that, visiting, having the presence at the games. Just all in all being a part of the community I think is very important here. I think that people here need to know that [superintendents] are a part of the community as well as superintendent of the school.

They said"budget strengths" would be important, as well as a superintendent who would "know the job". This ideal superintendent would be "decisive", would "help the clerk", and "listen to all sides". Several clerks described one of the superintendents as "ideal". They commonly described a superintendent's background, meaning where he or she was raised, as not being important.

District clerks believed the ideal average length of time superintendents should spend in their districts was five years, ranging from three to

ten years. District clerks said this length of time would depend on the "quality" of the superintendent and how the superintendent "fit" in the community. District clerk Claire described the ideal length of time for a superintendent to stay in Casterbridge, "Probably if we get used to somebody and we like him, as long as the person would want to stay." District clerk Olivia from Marygreen explained, "I would like to see someone at this point in time stay forever. If they could fit into the community and have the qualities I've mentioned, I really would. The longer the better."

Role Perceptions and Expectations

School district clerks were asked to describe their expectations of superintendent roles and job competency areas upon hiring. They were also asked to describe reasons why a superintendent was hired or reasons why the superintendent accepted the job in the school district.

School district clerks most commonly indicated that they did not know why a superintendent was selected or described no criteria was used for superintendent selection in their districts.

Secondly school district clerks explained the candidate had been known previously in the school district. This included superintendent candidates who had worked previously in the district, was from the area, or had relatives or friends in the area. Others spoke of the fact the cho-

sen candidate had "interviewed well". Sylvia, clerk from Casterbridge described many of the superintendents, ". . .had the right answers to all the questions. A lot of them had good personalities. A lot of them interviewed well. That's it."

Lastly, district clerks commonly spoke of the difficulty in finding a qualified superintendent from the pool available. Claudia, clerk from Sherton explained, "I remember thinking that some of these guys you wouldn't even want. Some of these guys are horrible."

School district clerks described expectations, either written or spoken, of a specific superintendent when hired in their districts. They most commonly said superintendents were hired to compensate for the weaknesses of the previous superintendent. These descriptions included "cleaning up" after the previous superintendent's "messes", "budget strengths", "improve student discipline", or "unite the staff". Claire described expectations of a new superintendent in Casterbridge, "One of the big ones from the staff was staff unity. [The previous superintendent] had divided the staff. [The previous superintendent] and certain ones [staff] had never spoke. Maybe a little bit more discipline in the school."

District clerks commonly said there were "no" expectations of the new superintendent or those expectations were "general". General expectations were described as "do it all" or "run the school smoothly".

Clerk Elaine from Glaston described what she believed the school board should do,

> They need to sit down and need to say, "We expect you to run our transportation program, you are in charge of the bus drivers, and you need to have a meeting with them, and keep them informed. We expect that you will have weekly staff meetings with your teachers and keep in touch with them. We expect you to take action." I think that's one thing, tell them [superintendents] how much independent action they can expect, how much supervised action.

Lastly, school district clerks were asked about levels of consensus regarding skill areas of superintendents upon being hired. District clerks explained most commonly the school board was in consensus about skill areas. District clerks thought school board chairpersons understood where the new superintendent's strengths were.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why specific superintendents left their school districts, and why so many over the last 21 years. District clerks were also asked to give descriptions of their school districts in attempting to explain conditions surrounding superintendent turnover.

School district clerks most commonly described "problems" with the superintendent as the primary reason specific superintendents left their districts. Examples of these superintendent "problems" were

"dishonesty", "building retirement", "hard to get along with", not "visible", and "resigned when people started asking questions".

Another pattern within district clerk descriptions about why specific superintendents left their districts were "career moves", "board problems", "coaching conflicts", "family reasons", the superintendent "resigned", or was offered no contract. Brenda described why two superintendents left Glaston, "They were really younger and it [Glaston] was a starting place for them. They've since moved on to bigger districts."

School district clerks gave their perceptions why there has been such a high rate of superintendent turnover in their districts. District clerks most commonly described "career moves" as the primary reason for the high rate of superintendent turnover in their districts. Sylvia explained her perceptions of superintendents who had career aspirations,

> Those types of superintendents were short-term. [Casterbridge] would be like a stepping stone for them because it was a small community. Because of its isolation, the lack of money, the lack of enrollment [Casterbridge] would usually end up with, rather with the top candidates, we would end up with someone lower on the pole. That person was looking for a place to start and then in two years wanting to move. So that he could go to a bigger school district.

District clerks also commonly described the undesirable location of their school district as a reason for the high rate of superintendent turn-

over. "Community", "housing", and "pool of applicants" problems were also commonly described. Lastly district clerks explained the "job itself" was a reason for the high rate of superintendent turnover, meaning the large amount of work for one administrator to do in a small school district.

District clerks provided descriptions of their schools. They most commonly referred to the strengths of their schools. These strengths were the academic program, "good" staff, low student to teacher ratio, a "good school", "good" school facility, and "technology". Informants commonly described the problems attracting teachers along with how their school districts preferred to hire first-year teachers because it saved their districts money.

Job Satisfaction. Informants were asked to give a description of how satisfied others were with superintendents and how satisfied superintendents were with their job performances. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes.

School district clerks commonly explained more times than not, the community was satisfied with superintendents. They perceived school staff was split in their levels of satisfaction with superintendents. District clerks themselves were split in their levels of satisfaction with superintendents in their districts.

School district clerk informants perceived the majority of superintendents were satisfied with their job performances at their school districts.

Informants described superintendent evaluation processes used in their districts. They most commonly described evaluations had been done twice a year and this consisted of a rating scale.

Description of Relations. Informants were asked to give descriptions of the school board. District clerks were also asked to give descriptions of the board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/clerk relationships.

District clerks were split in their descriptions of board member turnover in their districts. Board turnover was described as either high or low. Informants commonly explained the chain of command, procedures used by community members who had complaints against the school, was not followed the majority of the time. District clerks varied in their descriptions of how school boards made decisions. Patterns within informants' descriptions of how the school board shared information with each other either information was shared from the superintendent, or board members used the telephone to talk among themselves.

District clerks were split in their board descriptions of how well school boards worked together. Half perceived school boards did "work well together" while half explained there had been "board problems".

A second pattern found in district clerk descriptions was the belief school boards should involve others more in their decision-making processes. Olivia from Marygreen explained,

> To me the most important thing from a board standpoint is that they should get a little bit better idea of what actually goes on in the school. My board will admittedly say we just didn't know. I think they have to become more aware and conscientious. They are assuming everything is going along fine and everyone is afraid to call them. Things are falling apart. And then pretty soon when everything comes to a head it's almost too late to remedy the situation. If they were more involved and more aware, talk to people who are actually employees of the school. Sometimes they say, if you have a gripe you will say bad things about that person. Well that might be true but if you hear it ten times, there must be some validity to what people are saying.

District clerks described types of relationships between the school board and superintendents and between themselves and superintendents. Informants were split in their perceptions of types of relationships between school boards and clerks. Half of them described "good" relationships while the other half described relationship "problems" between the two. Most often district clerks explained there were "problems" between themselves and superintendents. Olivia explained her experiences in Marygreen,

> Maybe as a community you'd have to get more aware too and make sure that person is doing their job, rather than just assume they're superintendents and are doing what they need to do. Because that isn't the case in a lot of the superintendents I have worked under. I think it's education on everyone's part. I don't think just because you have the title "superintendent" they are necessarily going to always do what should be done. I think people who actually do the job should get the credit for it.

Political Climate. Informants gave descriptions of their communities and political climates of their districts. District clerks most commonly described their community as "supporting the school" and as "close knit". Claire described the Casterbridge community, "No matter where you go everybody talks like they haven't seen you forever and people have always got their arm around you and hugging you and talking to you. It's so much fun when you know everybody." And clerk Brenda described the Glaston community, "It's a good community. They support the kids really well. They are interested in school in a small town. It's a close knit community. They really care about the kids."

They commonly described how the school was the "center" of their communities. Charley described the importance of the school in the Melchester community, "Anybody that you would talk to in the community would tell you that if we lost the school we would lose the community." Olivia described the school in Marygreen, "We are such a small community and the school is the center of everything. Anything that

goes on here, although I don't like the scrutiny of it sometimes, is well supported."

School district clerk informants indicated that athletics was the most important thing to their communities and how this has caused "divisions". Olivia also described what was most important to the Marygreen community and how it has caused divisions, "Athletics and who's going to coach them, coaching styles, [have caused divisions] more so than anything academically."

Another common pattern found within school district clerks' descriptions of their communities was their communities were concerned about taxes.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects previous superintendents had on new ones hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in their school districts. The most common pattern found in school district clerk descriptions were the negative effects of previous superintendents on new superintendents. These negative effects were described as having to "clean up previous superintendent messes", and compensating for either the strengths or weaknesses of the previous superintendent.

Olivia described what she had experienced in Marygreen, "There is some unfinished business left for the person coming in to try to sort

through what has been done and what hasn't been done. That has happened to certain degrees." Claudia described her perceptions at Sherton, "I think it has a lot to do with the new guy [superintendent], how well the last guy left—what conditions he left for the new guy."

The least common pattern found in district clerk descriptions was there were "no" effects of the previous superintendent on the new superintendent hired in their districts.

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked to describe how frequent superintendent turnover had affected their school districts. School district clerks most commonly described superintendent turnover had caused "changes" which had been difficult. These most commonly were referred to as the "changes" made by new superintendents. Claire, clerk from Casterbridge, explained,

> [Superintendents] are so diverse in their personalities and any time you get somebody new that comes in to be your boss they all have their own ways of doing things. Then everything changes again. I think it's tough on the kids. I think it's tough on staff. Because every time you change a boss it's just all new rules to learn.

Secondly, district clerks described problems in adjusting to new superintendents. Claire described effects of superintendent turnover,

> There was a lot of work because with [the new superintendent] coming in he didn't know anything about how we had done things. We had to start all over with, like here is the manual we use. We had to go down a line with everything

> we had done. It takes lots of time and it takes them about one year to figure out the district. The longer they could be here and get to know the community the better. The kids get used to somebody.

The last group of patterns found in district clerks' descriptions of effects of superintendent turnover on their districts were effects on "continuity", "divisions" of communities and staff caused by superintendent turnover, and how it took time to "heal" after superintendent turnover. Claudia, district clerk from Sherton, said, "It seems like every time a superintendent leaves it's been over bad situations. The community has been torn. For instance with [a specific superintendent], you either have people that love him or hate him."

Superintendents

Description of Informants

Over half of the superintendent informants were raised in rural areas either in Montana or out of state. The average age of superintendents interviewed was 51 years, ranging from 35 to 60 years of age. The average length informants spent in education was 19 years, ranging from 12 to 34 years. The average time spent as a superintendent was 10 years, ranging from 1 to 22 years. All superintendent informants held master's degrees, two held educational specialist's degrees, and none held doctorates. Each superintendent was the only administrator in spe-

cific districts studied, employed in the dual role of superintendent and principal.

Interviews with superintendents took place either at the school district site or at a different site where the informant was employed. One interview took place at the researcher's home. Three superintendents were initially contacted from each site. Two interviews were held over the telephone with superintendent informants who lived out of state. In those instances where a telephone interview was held, an additional face-to-face interview was held with a superintendent informant from the same site. Interviews were held with 16 superintendents, one of whom had served in two of the five districts. One superintendent who lived out of state declined to give enough time for the interview and was not included in the study.

Interviews lasted typically from one and a half hours to two hours. Table 3 lists the cases, or school district sites, and the pseudonyms of the superintendents interviewed.

Table 3. Superintendent Informants

Case or School District Site	**Name of Informant**
Casterbridge	Lawrence, Helen, and Keith
Glaston	Ted, Carla, and Jack
Marygreen	Jerry *, Jude, Howard, and Max
Melchester	Bill, Thomas, Gabe, and Joseph
Sherton	Luke, Ian, and Jerry *
	* *Superintendent Jerry served in both districts*

Career Paths of Superintendents

Career paths superintendent informants followed were (a) two from elementary teachers to elementary school principals, (b) five from junior high teachers to junior high principals, and (c) seven from high school teachers to high school principals. Seven informants had been coaches. Eight had previous superintendent experience in other small schools.

Five informants followed the assumed "typical" career path of superintendents, described by informants in this study, from a small school superintendency to a middle-sized school and then on to a larger school superintendency. Ten of the informants did not follow this career path. These informants followed one of two paths: (a) five went from a small school superintendency to a medium or large school superintendency and then back to a small school superintendency; (b) and five superintendents had stayed in small schools.

Superintendent informants commonly described an increase in salary as the motivating factor in deciding to move into the superintendency. Other common patterns were a move into the superintendency for the "challenge" the job provided, or because they thought they could "do a better job" than the superintendent under whom they were working. Informants commonly said that they "liked" being a small school superintendent.

Superintendent informants' descriptions of whether or not they stayed in the district as long as they expected, was split. Half responded that they had stayed as long as they expected, while the other half responded that they had not stayed as long as they expected. Many commonly added that they "could have" stayed longer, but chose to leave, or reflecting on their experiences "would have" stayed longer in the superintendency at a specific school district.

Superintendent informants commonly described the typical career path of superintendents in Montana as starting in small schools and moving on to larger ones, typically because of a salary increase in larger schools and administrative assistance.

Superintendent Selection Processes

Superintendent informants were asked to give descriptions of the superintendent selection processes, and expectations of the ideal superintendency. Superintendents most commonly described "standard" interview procedures were used at the district sites. "Standard" interview procedures meant the school board alone was involved in the selection process. Superintendent informants indicated that typically three to five candidates were interviewed at the time that they were interviewed. They also stated that the staff was involved in the process at times. This

meant the staff attended the interview or the superintendent had the opportunity to speak to the staff during the interview process.

Superintendent informants described the ideal superintendency. They most commonly described "support" from the board as being important. "Support" from the staff and community was also seen as being important. They commonly described the ideal superintendency as one where "everyone worked together". "Open communication" and a "small school" were described as ideal. A superintendency where there was another administrator to help share the load was commonly mentioned. Superintendent informants indicated that an ideal superintendency would be one where the board "let the superintendent run the school". The ideal average length of time to spend in a district as superintendent was described as five years, ranging from three to ten years.

Lastly, superintendent informants described a specific school district studied as being the ideal place in which to be a superintendent. This was the least common pattern found in superintendent informants' descriptions of the ideal superintendency.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

Superintendents were asked to describe their expectations of roles and job competency areas upon hiring. They were also asked to describe reasons why they were hired or reasons why they accepted the job in a

specific school district, referring to Casterbridge, Glaston, Marygreen, Melchester, or Sherton.

Superintendents gave descriptions of why they were hired or why they accepted the job in specific districts. The most common description given for why they accepted a specific superintendency was they "didn't care where" they got a job, or they accepted the job because they "liked the location" of the school district. Superintendent Howard explained why he took the job at Marygreen,

> I wanted out of the town I was principal in. The superintendent that was there had put me in a position where he was telling teachers one thing and telling me something else. I wanted out. Plus I want to start as a superintendent. It was time for me to get out. Like I said, I had interviewed in two or three different places and that [Marygreen] was the one who offered me the job. It didn't make a lot of difference where I went. I knew I was going to stay two or three years wherever I went and then move on to another one.

Superintendent Gabe explained the situation when he was hired in Melchester, "It [the superintendency] was the only one that was offered to me. I liked the looks of the area. It's a pretty area. It was a small school to start out with. I grew up in a small town and I like small areas as far as living there without being under everybody's thumb."

Related to this was the explanation superintendents commonly gave for not "looking for a job" when they were approached about a va-

cancy in a specific district. Superintendent Helen from Casterbridge related her story,

> You have to realize I volunteered to go to [Casterbridge]. I had no plans of going to [Casterbridge]. When I left the other school I had one year left on my contract and I told them that I needed to finish my doctorate degree, they had one year left to hire another person. I didn't leave them in the lurch. I took one year off to work on my degree. The science fair was on here and I was helping at it and these women, parents, were milling around and so I got to talking to them. One of the parents said, "Well what do you do?" And I told her that I'm a superintendent. . . .She said "We desperately need a superintendent in [Casterbridge].". . .She said "We can't get anybody to come to [Casterbridge]." . . . I told her I was working on my doctorate. She said, "I don't know what we're going to do. We only have 100 kids and we can't get anybody [to be superintendent]." Why did I go to [Casterbridge?] It was a fluke. I didn't have any plans. I felt sorry for the people.

The least common pattern found was superintendents commonly described they took the job in a specific district because of a positive aspect of the district. Several positive aspects that were commonly cited were: (a) the "good reputation" of the district; (b) the school was a "good facility"; or (c) the community was "good".

Superintendent informants explained expectations of them, either written or spoken, from the board upon being hired. The most common pattern of description was that there were "no expectations" of them upon being hired. Superintendent Jude from Marygreen stated, "They let me do most of the talking and they just had some general questions [at

the interview]. There was no written expectations. Their expectations were very basic and very informal. 'We want the school to run well, and we want the kids to do their work.' "

Superintendents also described expectations of them as being related to the weaknesses of the previous superintendent. These superintendents described compensating for the weaknesses of the previous superintendent in the areas of "building trust", "communication", "doing teacher evaluations", or "getting along with people". Superintendent informants also stated that expectations of them were "general", such as "run the school", or "maintaining and improving" the existing program.

Lastly superintendent informants indicated that when they were hired the school district was "looking for a body" to fill the position. Superintendent Helen's perceptions from Casterbridge were, "I think from my perspective they were just so glad to have somebody in that position. I really and truly feel that they were fearful that they were not going to have a superintendent. That's really a fear because who's going to run the district?"

Lastly, superintendents were asked about the levels of consensus among the school board members regarding their skills upon being hired. Superintendents explained that generally the board was in consensus

about their skill areas. Superintendents perceived school board chairpersons understood where their areas of strength were.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why specific superintendents left specific school districts, and why so many over the last 21 years. Superintendents were asked to give their perceptions of general reasons for turnover in small schools. Informants also gave descriptions of specific school districts in attempting to explain conditions surrounding superintendent turnover.

Superintendents most commonly described either "community problems", "board problems", or problems with the job itself as being the general reasons for superintendent turnover in small schools. Superintendent Lawrence from Casterbridge related his experiences and perceptions,

> Some small schools can really be a bitch if you want my opinion. Some areas have a lot of problems and they involve dysfunctional families, drug problems and divorce. And here you don't have the dysfunctional families. But if you have a lot of kid problems, and parents are on your case and they are sue happy I think that can drive the superintendent nuts. And here everything doesn't live and die around sports. But in some places if you don't play my son or my daughter and don't win the state championship. I've always said if you had a successful basketball team and a good Christmas program, you're the best superintendent in the world in some places, and that's all it has got to be. You can be the dumbest guy in the world on the job but boy, if your

> team wins, you have an outstanding Christmas program, then you can do everything right.

Superintendent Jude from Marygreen explained problems caused by the school board, "It's a process of getting to know them [school board]. That's one of the big problems. You get to know them and then the next year two of them are off the board. That's one of the biggest frustrations I think an administrator has. Changeover of the board."

Secondly superintendent informants described "money" problems, meaning the school's budget was not adequate, a "philosophy clash" with the school board or community, increased "regulation problems", or "career moves" as being the general reasons for superintendent turnover in small schools.

Superintendents were asked to describe reasons why they decided to leave specific school districts. The most common reason given was "family reasons". These were described as reasons within the superintendent's own family. The second most common pattern given for reasons for leaving a specific superintendency was because of "career moves", meaning moving to a better paying superintendent position in a larger school. Superintendent Joseph explained why he left the superintendency at Melchester,

> I just knew that there was no future in [Melchester] for me. . . .I figured I might have had two or maybe three years left anyway. And then I received a 50% increase in pay that I

> couldn't walk away from. . . .It was a better move for my career. That's what it was, it was a career move. I knew it was a step up, a larger district.

The least common patterns found in superintendent informants' descriptions of reasons for leaving a specific superintendency were because of "community" reasons, or a "philosophy clash" with either the community or school board. Informants commonly stated that they "could have stayed longer" in the position if they wanted to.

Superintendents gave their perceptions of why there has been a high rate of superintendent turnover in specific districts. The most common reason given were because of "career moves", specifically explaining that the district was a "stepping stone" on the career path of the superintendent. Superintendent Howard from Marygreen related his perceptions,

> Part of it is the fact that it's [Marygreen] a place were young administrators start out. . . . .A lot of us work our way up from smaller schools to bigger schools. There aren't that many openings in the bigger schools. So most of us have to come up through the small schools. To an extent that's why [Marygreen] and a lot of the other small schools have a lot of turnover, because people like myself used that as a training ground. It may not be fair to that system. . . .I think there's an awful lot of people who come in early in their careers and they use that [small schools] to get some experience with the idea that they're going to move on to bigger and better things.

Informants commonly described "board problems" as another reason for the high rate of superintendent turnover in specific districts over

time. Superintendent Jack's opinion of a reason for the high rate of superintendent turnover in Glaston was related to the school board, "I don't think that they [superintendents] could serve five masters." Superintendent Jerry related problems with the school board at Marygreen, "At the interview one thing that was discussed was that I was looking for a long-term place. They [school board] assured me that it would be five years before I would have to leave. What a bunch of lies. The board chair was at the school every single day."

Least common patterns found in informants' descriptions of reasons for the high rate of superintendent turnover in specific districts were location of the school district, the job itself, community "problems", "family reasons", "housing problems", and the "low" salary of the job.

Superintendent informants provided descriptions of specific schools. The most common pattern found within these descriptions were positive aspects about specific schools. Examples of these were the "good facility", "friendly people", "good place", "sense of family", and "good teachers". Informants commonly used the phrases "good staff" and few "discipline problems" when describing specific schools.

Job Satisfaction. How do job satisfiers and levels of satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? Informants were asked to give a description of how satisfied others were with the superintendent and how

satisfied the superintendent was with the job he or she did. Superintendents provided a description of their job as a superintendent. Informants also described superintendent evaluation processes and how long contracts had been issued to them.

Superintendents most frequently explained that others were satisfied or moderately satisfied with their performances in specific districts. "Others" included school board, staff, and community. Superintendents commonly listed reasons why these groups were satisfied with the job they did in specific districts. Superintendent Luke from Sherton explained the others' satisfaction with his job performance, "I think they know that there is discipline up here. It was really laxed. I have managed the budget real well. I have always been pleasant. I think that the things that I get the most controversy [over] at times is that I don't coddle to some people's wants and needs." Superintendent Jude explained why he perceived the school board was satisfied with the job he did, "It was a hard place to work, as all small towns are. And [Marygreen] was probably a little bit more so than others. I got a contract back twice. That's the way you gauge success."

Superintendent informants most frequently said they were satisfied with the job they did at specific school districts and listed their accom-

plishments at those districts. Superintendents commonly explained that they "loved the job" as superintendent in specific districts.

Informants described superintendent evaluation processes used in specific districts and length of contracts issued to superintendents. Superintendents most frequently described evaluations as being a checklist or rating scale, or evaluations were not done, or they did not remember the evaluation process. In two districts where staff evaluated superintendents, most informants expressed dissatisfaction with the process. Others described evaluation processes as "not helpful". Most commonly informants explained they were given one-year contracts in specific districts.

Superintendents were asked to give a description of the job of a small school superintendent. Most often, informants described negative aspects about the job. These descriptions included being "alone", dealing with athletic "complaints", "compromising values", "lots of work", and "missing contact with the kids". Another pattern within superintendent informant descriptions was the "fishbowl" aspect of the job of small school superintendent. This referred to everyone knowing the superintendents' business and personal affairs in a small community. They commonly described the large amount of work associated with the job of superintendent in a small school, and the importance of community in-

volvement. Superintendent Keith from Casterbridge explained the work load of a small school superintendent, "People don't realize what goes in to running these districts. And in a small district it doesn't matter how many kids, you still have the same requirements."

The least common pattern found was superintendents "enjoyed" their jobs in small schools. Superintendent Bill from Melchester described how he enjoyed the job as a small school superintendent, the importance of being involved in the community, and the importance of athletics,

> I really enjoy the small school districts. It's more hands-on because you are the only administrator so you get direct contact with students which I enjoy. You're heavily involved with the staff, and the community. I think that for superintendents to be successful in small communities it's people skills. You've got to come and get involved. People have got to see you. I attend all the extracurricular activities. So people see you are visible. I think that's important. People who hesitate to come into the school and talk to me about anything will come up to me in a ball game. While we're standing there watching a ball game they'll visit with me and express any concerns they have. Where as they wouldn't walk into the school and express their concerns. I know some superintendents who come into a small school system and they don't like athletics so they don't go. It doesn't work in a small community. Athletics is a big thing in the small communities. It's the center of activities for the small community. I think just being visible, having some people skills will help a person be successful as a superintendent in a small school.

Description of Relations. Superintendents were asked to give a description of the school board. Informants were asked to give descriptions of the type of leader others perceived them to be and how they communicated with the school board. Lastly, informants were asked to give descriptions of the board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/clerk relationships.

Superintendent informants most commonly were split in their descriptions of board turnover in specific districts. Some described high board member turnover, while the others described low board member turnover. Informants commonly explained that the chain of command, procedures used by community members who had complaints against the schools, was not followed the majority of the time. Superintendents explained that board decisions were made at board meetings most of the time, and that boards were united in their decisions. Patterns found to describe how school board members shared information among themselves were most frequently described as using the telephone and by face-to-face meetings between board members.

Overall, superintendent informants described school boards from specific districts as "micro-managers". Micro-managing was explained as school boards that did not let the superintendent "run the school" but

were too involved in the day-to-day operations of the school district. Superintendent Keith described the board at Casterbridge,

> I told them that they hired me to run the school so let me do it. I didn't want them to micro-manage. [The board chairperson] was always in about once a week checking things out anyway. If they would come in and tell me, "I think you should do this or I think you to do that", I would get in their face and tell them, "Hey, you are doing my job. You hired me. Let me do my job. If you don't like it, fire me and find somebody else."

Least common patterns found were superintendent informants who described boards as "good", letting the superintendent "run the school", concerned about taxes, "supportive", "excellent at first", and school boards that "hire teachers".

Superintendent informants provided descriptions of the type of leaders others perceived them to be. Most often in these descriptions were that others perceived superintendents to be "honest", and possess "budget strengths". The next most common set of patterns were that others perceived informants to be a "board's superintendent", "laid back", and "consistent". Least common patterns found were superintendent informants who said they believed others perceived them to be ones who "change slowly", "get involved in everything", "involve others", have a "sense of humor", are "fair", a "listener", a "good manager", "effective", "organized" and "good with teachers".

Superintendents described how they communicated with school boards from specific districts. Most common in their descriptions were communicating by "packets" of information sent out before board meetings, or by use of the telephone. Informants also indicated that they used face-to-face meetings with board members, gave board members only as much information as they requested, or communicated through the board chairperson.

Superintendents described the type of relationships that existed between themselves and the school board and district clerks from specific districts. Most common to their descriptions was their relationships with boards and clerks were mostly "positive". Superintendent Max described his relationship with the board at Marygreen, "It was excellent. I played poker with them, had a regular poker night. I had never really been one to socialize very much with board members. . . .But I felt like we really had a good relationship. They felt comfortable calling me when they heard something."

Superintendent Carla from Glaston described the relationship between herself and the school board,

> I think I had a great relationship with the school board. We'd call each other, if I had an issue that came up and I thought, oh, no, they're going to get called on this one, I made sure I called and let them know. So that if they did get called they could refer it back to me. They had already heard it from me first.

Another common pattern referred to "problems" in their relationships with school boards and clerks. Superintendent Keith from Casterbridge related his experiences,

> I said I was a strong disciplinarian and they [school board] said they wanted that. But when it came down to the nuts and bolts they wouldn't back that. It's like one big family. They were all related and they knew each other for generations. So when a kid gets in trouble and you want to come down hard, the board hems and haws and says they can't do that.

Another superintendent related experiences with the district clerk,

> I did depend on her [the district clerk] a lot. I did ask her at times what's the history of this, what's the background? At times [the district clerk] withheld information from me, and that hurt. When she would withhold the information and then when we got to the board meeting the information would come out. I never ever said anything to her but it's an idea of. . ."You looked good on that one because you hung onto the information." She may not have been comfortable with me. She stayed the [first] year that I was there, and I think she stayed long enough to see what kind of the superintendent I would be. . . .When I said to the board members that [the district clerk] would like to leave, a couple of the board members said that [she] had been threatening them to leave for years. "Let her go."

Political Climate. Superintendents provided descriptions of specific communities and the political climate of these districts. The pattern found most common in their descriptions was that communities were divided. Superintendent Howard explained his perceptions of the Marygreen community,

> In [Marygreen] it was that clannishness, closed society against the outsiders. If you are from the outside you are not going to fit in. While there is not the politics there, there's more of this social agenda. If you're not part of that, you don't fit. The ironic part of it is in [Marygreen], they have two cemeteries—one for Catholics and one for Protestants. They will not be buried together. It's unreal.

These divisions were often times explained as being related to athletics at the school.

Informants commonly stated that specific communities were concerned about taxes, inter-related, and conservative. Other patterns found were that superintendents described themselves as "outsiders", community members would not run for the school board, or the school district had a "bad reputation".

Superintendents commonly described school boards of specific districts as having "problems". These were described as board chairpersons who "ran the district", board members with "agendas", "hidden politics" at board meetings, or board members with an "ax to grind".

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects previous superintendents had on new ones hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in specific school districts. Most often informants described negative effects of previous superintendents. These included "cleaning up messes" left by previous superintendents, being "compared" to previous superinten-

dents, and compensating for the weaknesses of previous superintendents. Superintendent Gabe from Melchester described effects of following different types of superintendents,

> The previous superintendent is going to affect your job no matter if they were doing an excellent job or a mediocre job. If they did an excellent job then you have to live up to it. You can't do that because everybody is different. If they did a mediocre job then you have to try to pull it all together and wrinkle some feathers in a lot of cases.

Superintendent Jerry described conditions when he was newly hired at Marygreen,

> [The previous superintendent] came in and pitted factions in [Marygreen] against each other and worked himself through the middle. He had had staff members that have been in [Marygreen] for years and years ready to quit. It was really a cleanup. You had to get in there and get the trust of the faculty. The board members that trusted him got booted by the community. The other board members didn't trust the administrator because of what they had gone through with [the previous superintendent]. It was a big mixing bowl.

Superintendent informants more often than not explained that it was "good to follow a weak" superintendent. Superintendent Jack from Glaston said,

> If they didn't like their former superintendent. . . .The [Glaston] school district had what the community perceived as a real nut as a superintendent. The guy that followed him in could walk on water. Anything he did was right. And the other side of the coin was, if you followed a good superintendent who's been there for years, then hardly anything you do is right.

Least common patterns found in superintendent informants' descriptions were how it was "good to follow a strong superintendent", or there were "no effects" of previous superintendents.

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked to describe how frequent superintendent turnover had affected specific school districts. The most common pattern superintendents described was the negative effects of superintendent turnover on the staff. The descriptions included how superintendent turnover affected staff "morale" and "trust". They also stated that superintendent turnover was "difficult" for staff, and staff developed "negative attitudes" because of superintendent turnover. Superintendent Helen from Casterbridge described her perceptions of these staff effects,

> I see teachers with this type of an attitude, "Here comes another one [superintendent]. We've been through how many so far? I wonder what this one is going to do. Has he or she got new ideas that are going to turn the district upside down? We will wait this one out because this one is only going to be here for awhile. Things will go on just the same." It's a negative attitude when you see that continual turnover. It's the idea that teachers say, "We will be running the school. We never can keep anybody else here to run it." It gives them a sense of "Why do we even have a superintendent? Why do you have to pay those big salaries to superintendents? We are the ones that keep this place going."

Thomas, superintendent from Melchester explained,

> I think people get used to working with people. You get used to the way that things are going. In a small school district

> you have to have teamwork and you get to be part of a team. And then part of that team is gone. Sometimes people [superintendents] can come in and fill that void. Other times they come in and cause problems. The other thing is, it's change. And change affects people.

Superintendent Bill from Melchester further described effects of superintendent turnover on the staff,

> I actually think that maybe it's harder on the staff. Some of superintendents manage from the top-down. They want control of everything. They want their finger in everything. So a staff adjusts to that and the new superintendent comes in and has a different management style. Maybe this individual likes to delegate and not be involved in everything and will delegate authority and responsibility to others. . . .It can create problems if my management style is opposite of the person that I followed. People will have a tendency to operate under the old superintendent's management style and then you may have to confront people and say, "That's not how we are going to do things now". And so sometimes superintendents get crossways with their staff just because of their differences in management styles.

Superintendent informants also commonly said superintendent turnover affected "continuity". This included continuity of leadership and programs. Another common pattern found within informants' descriptions was that there were "no effects" on the school's stability caused from superintendent turnover. Superintendent Lawrence related how he perceived superintendent turnover affected the Casterbridge school district,

> I know traditionally that this has been a pretty good school whether the superintendent has made it a good school or not, I think this community would back these people. They

> are hard-working farmers and whether you have a good superintendent or not, the kids are going to work hard. Maybe it doesn't mean that much in a small school.

Superintendent Max from Marygreen did not think superintendent turnover had any effects in small schools if the following conditions were present,

> If you have a good teaching staff then they will survive. They will hold the school together through all the superintendent changes. If you have a good teaching staff and a good board. And a good clerk too. That's extremely important. A good clerk and a good maintenance supervisor are probably the two most important people in the district.

Two remaining patterns were found within superintendent informant's descriptions of effects of turnover on specific schools' stability. One was that the school was affected by the "changes the new superintendent made". Superintendent Jerry who served in Marygreen and Sherton described effects of superintendent turnover on staff and programs,

> I think you have to work extra hard to get the faculty to trust you. To trust what you are doing. Because they have been used to seeing so many folks [superintendents] come riding into town and riding out. It takes you a couple years to get that relationship built up. When there's no longevity from the chair that I sit in [superintendency], faculties have told me it changes from year to year—my priorities might be technology and the [next] guy that comes in might think that a computer ought to be a typewriter.

The final pattern found in superintendents' descriptions was staff filling the "power vacuum" left empty by superintendent turnover. Su-

perintendent Helen from Casterbridge perceived superintendent turnover, "Takes the leadership away from the board and the superintendent and gives it to the teachers." Howard, superintendent from Marygreen, described effects of superintendent turnover on school districts,

> I think it's degrading to a school in a sense that there's not a lot of consistency. People tend rather than look to the superintendent as a source of authority, it tends to reside in other sources, usually the clerk. They are the ones who have been there the longest. They are the ones who understand the budget and processes more. They have probably out lasted a lot of board members. . . . Another thing is you don't see a lot of new programs that are carried over because everybody that comes on [superintendents] has a little bit different idea. It takes you [as superintendent] a year to get your feet grounded and find out what's going on in the system. If you're only there two years, it only gives you about a year to do something. A year isn't long enough. . . .[In] small districts that have a lot of turnover you see a basic education but there's not a lot beyond that.

Nomothetic Analyses

Part three of this chapter consists of analysis of major patterns found across the five sites, or school districts studied. Part four is an analysis of major patterns found across three groups of informants: (a) school board chairpersons; (b) school district clerks; (c) superintendents.

Nomothetic Analysis Across Five Sites, or School Districts

Career Paths of Superintendents

Informants were questioned about the career goals, career orientations and expectations of tenure in attempting to explain effects on superintendent turnover in the five school districts studied. Informants were asked whether or not the superintendent stayed as long as expected in these five school districts. "No" was the most common pattern found in answering whether the superintendent had stayed as long as expected in the five school districts. One district was split, while one district said the superintendents had stayed as long as expected.

The most common pattern found among the five districts when typical career paths of superintendents were described, was superintendents start their careers in small schools, and "good" superintendents move up to larger schools where higher salaries are offered.

Superintendent Selection Processes

Informants were asked to give descriptions of superintendent selection processes, expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency.

Across all five school districts, superintendent selection processes were commonly described as being controlled by school boards. School

boards called references themselves, chose candidates, and conducted interviews without input from others. Common to two school districts was a reliance on current superintendents in the selection process. Two school districts used a dinner with each candidate as part of selection processes.

The most common pattern found across school districts in describing the ideal superintendent was the importance of general public relation skills. These skills were described most commonly as being able to communicate and inform others, being visible in the community and school, being a "people person", and "personable".

Another common characteristic used to describe the ideal superintendent was the importance of this superintendent being involved in the community. Two districts believed a rural background would be important for an ideal superintendent to possess. The ideal length of time for superintendents to stay in a school district was five to six years.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

Informants were questioned about how expectations of roles, and job competency skill areas affected superintendent turnover in the five school districts studied.

The most common pattern found across all five school districts about why superintendents accepted the job or were hired, was related to

the "problems" with the pool of applicants for the job. Either the position could not be filled or the quality of available applicants was perceived to be "poor", meaning "inexperienced applicants", or "few" applicants. This "problem" with the pool of applicants was often blamed on the timing of the selection process since they took place late in the school year, after many superintendents had already found jobs.

Expectations of superintendents upon being hired were described most commonly as either "general" or dependent on the weaknesses of the previous superintendent. "General" expectations were described most frequently as "running the school smoothly". Compensating for weaknesses of previous superintendents was described most frequently as having to do with teachers. These were described as improving or completing teacher evaluations, uniting the staff, and building staff trust. Secondly, compensating for previous superintendent weaknesses was described most frequently as improving student discipline and getting along with people. Two of the five school districts explained budget strengths was the major expectation of new superintendents.

Across all five school districts, informants explained most often that school boards were in consensus about what the skill areas of superintendents were upon being hired.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why specific superintendents left school districts, and why there was a high rate of superintendent turnover over the last 21 years in their school districts.

In describing why specific superintendents left school districts, the most common reason given was superintendents were not wanted in districts because of problems with superintendents themselves. These were described most often as "personal problems" or superintendents who had taken jobs only to "build their retirement" and were not performing up to expected levels. Two other common descriptions of problems with superintendents referred to those who had poor discipline with students, and those who were not visible or involved in communities.

Informants were asked to describe why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover in their districts over the last 21 years. Across all districts, the most common description for this high rate of turnover was blamed on superintendents leaving for career moves. These were described as moving to better paying superintendencies in larger schools. Small schools were commonly described as "stepping stones" in superintendents' career moves.

The undesirable location of school districts was a common pattern found in three of the five school districts. Two districts described community pressures or school board problems as reasons for high rates of superintendent turnover.

Job Satisfaction. Informants were asked to give descriptions of how satisfied others were with superintendents and how satisfied superintendents were with their job performances. Descriptions of superintendent evaluation processes and contract lengths were also given.

Across all districts, informants said most frequently that either communities were split, meaning some were satisfied and some were not satisfied, or overall were not satisfied with superintendents who served in their districts. Two of the five districts described school staff as not satisfied with superintendents.

Three of the five districts perceived superintendents were satisfied with their job performances, while two districts perceived some superintendents were satisfied and some were not satisfied.

The most common pattern found in descriptions of superintendent evaluation processes was evaluations consisted of rating scales filled out by school board members. One-year contracts for superintendents were issued most often. Two of the five school districts included teacher evaluations of superintendents in superintendent evaluation processes.

Description of Relations. Informants were asked to give descriptions of school boards. School board member turnover was described as high in three of the five school districts, low in the remaining two districts. The chain of command, a procedure used by community members who had complaints against schools, was described most often as not being followed. School board decisions were described as being made at board meetings, discussed, and supported by board members. Information was described most frequently as being shared among board members over the telephone, and dependent upon what superintendents shared with school board members. Two of the five school districts described their school boards as "working well together".

All groups were asked to give descriptions of board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/district clerk relationships. Three of the five districts said overall, relationships were "good" between all three groups. One district was split, noting both good relationships and relationship problems. Two districts described relationship problems between district clerks and superintendents.

Political Climate. Informants were asked to describe the political climate of their school districts and how this affected superintendent turnover in the five school districts studied. Two common patterns

emerged across all school districts. One was the descriptions of community support for the school. This was explained most often as the community passing mill levies for the school and involvement in high school athletic events. The other pattern was the descriptions of community divisions caused over events at schools.

Two districts described their communities as being very concerned about taxes and how money was spent at schools. Two districts described how superintendents were commonly perceived as "outsiders" in their school districts.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects previous superintendents had on new ones hired and how these could have affected superintendent turnover in the five school districts studied. The most common pattern found across all five school districts was the descriptions of new superintendents who had to "clean up messes" of previous superintendents. Most often these "messes" were related to weaknesses of previous superintendents.

Effects on the School District. Informants were asked to describe how frequent superintendent turnover affected school stability in the five school districts studied. Most often, informants described how superintendent turnover caused "changes" which were difficult. "Changes" were

described most commonly as changes to procedures and programs. Most often these changes were characterized as difficult on school staff.

Two additional common patterns emerged. One was effects on "continuity". This was described most frequently as affecting continuity of programs and leadership. The second pattern was "adjusting" to new superintendents. This was described most often as adjusting to different leadership styles and priorities of new superintendents. Again, these adjustments were described as being most difficult on school staff.

Nomothetic Analysis Across Three Groups: School Board Chairpersons, District Clerks, and Superintendents

Career Paths of Superintendents

Groups of informants were questioned about career goals, career orientations and expectations of tenure in attempting to explain effects on superintendent turnover in the three groups of informants studied. Groups were split in their descriptions of whether or not superintendents stayed as long as expected to in specific school districts. Board chairpersons and district clerks described over time superintendent turnover became an expected pattern in their school districts.

The "typical" career path of superintendents in Montana as given by informants, was described as starting in small schools and working to larger schools. An increase in salary and additional administrative as-

sistance in larger schools were reasons for this move. Small schools were often described as "stepping stones" in superintendents' career paths. School board chairpersons and district clerks explained "good" superintendents would leave their districts and be expected to move up to "better jobs".

Superintendent Selection Processes

Groups of informants were asked to give descriptions of superintendent selection processes, expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency.

Groups stated that school boards called references of superintendent applicants and were mainly involved in selection processes. School staff was involved at times and present at superintendent interviews. Board chairpersons and district clerks described using a dinner with candidates as part of superintendent selection processes. Typically three to five candidates were interviewed at specific districts.

School board chairpersons and district clerks were satisfied with superintendent selection processes used in their districts. Superintendent informants were not asked specifically about their satisfaction with the selection processes used, but were rather asked to describe the process.

School board chairpersons and district clerks stated that general public relation skills would be important for the ideal superintendent to possess. These general public relation skills were described as being decisive, being involved in the community, and possessing budget skills. The ideal length of time for superintendents to stay in specific districts was six years across all three groups. District clerks referred to a specific superintendent as being ideal. Superintendents referred to a specific district as being ideal. Informants offered no descriptions of this "ideal".

Role Perceptions and Expectations

Groups of informants were questioned about how expectations of roles and job competency skill areas affected superintendent turnover in the five school districts studied. The major pattern found across all groups was associated with the pool of superintendent applicants.

Board chairpersons and district clerks described problems with the pool of applicants. Positions could not be filled, the best candidate of those available was chosen, few superintendents applied for jobs, or informants felt a poor quality of applicants applied for superintendencies in their districts. Superintendents stated that they took the first job offered to them and did not care where they got a job when giving descriptions of why they accepted jobs at the specific school districts studied.

Across all three groups, expectations upon hiring were described as general or no expectations at all. General expectations were described most often as "running the school smoothly".

District clerks and superintendents stated that expectations were related to previous superintendent weaknesses. Expectations were to compensate for these weaknesses and were commonly related to the school staff, usually indicating building trust within the staff.

Across all three groups, informants agreed that school boards were in consensus about the skill areas of superintendents when they were hired.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover

Groups of informants were asked to give descriptions of their perceptions about why specific superintendents left school districts, and why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover over the last 21 years in specific school districts studied.

Major patterns found across the three groups for reasons why specific superintendents left specific school districts were because of "career moves" of superintendents, or because of "family reasons". "Family reasons" referred to superintendents who left because of reasons related to their spouses or families. "Career moves" referred to superintendents

who left specific school districts to take jobs in larger school districts that paid higher salaries.

School board chairpersons and district clerks identified specific superintendents who resigned, while these particular superintendents stated that they "could have stayed longer" if they chose to in specific school districts.

School board chairpersons and district clerks explained specific superintendents left because of problems with superintendents themselves. This was identified most commonly as superintendents who were at the end of their careers and were "building retirement". Informants perceived that these superintendents did not do their jobs.

Groups of informants were questioned about why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover in specific school districts. Superintendent "career moves", problems with the job itself, and undesirable locations of school districts were the most common responses found across the three groups of informants. Typically, "problems with the job" of being a superintendent in a small school was defined as having a large number of responsibilities associated with being the only administrator of a school district. Often times the phrase "wearing many hats" was used to describe this large number of superintendent responsibilities.

School board chairpersons and district clerks said that problems with the pool of superintendent applicants could explain the high rate of superintendent turnover in their school districts. These problems were commonly described as few applicants and a poor quality of applicants. Informants said the timing of selection processes, usually late in the school year, affected both the number and quality of applicants.

District clerks and superintendents described housing problems as a reason for high rates of superintendent turnover in specific districts. This referred to the poor quality of housing provided by school districts and made available to superintendents.

Groups of informants provided descriptions of specific schools studied. Most common across all groups was that specific schools were described as "good". They were "good" places, or "good" schools with "good" facilities and friendly people. These schools had "good" teachers and non-certified staff.

School board chairpersons and district clerks described academics and the low student to teacher ratio as strengths of their schools. They also commonly described the preference to hire first-year teachers because of the enthusiasm they brought to the job and the lower salary the school districts had to pay them. Teacher turnover was described as

high in their school districts because of the preference of hiring first-year teachers.

Job Satisfaction. Groups of informants were asked to give descriptions of how satisfied others were with superintendents and how satisfied superintendents were with their job performances. Descriptions of superintendent evaluation processes and contract lengths were also given.

Across all three groups, perceptions were split as to others' levels of satisfaction with superintendents in specific school districts studied. School board chairpersons and district clerks perceived school staff as being satisfied with some of the superintendents and unsatisfied with other superintendents. District clerks and superintendents perceived the community was satisfied most of the time with superintendents in specific school districts studied.

All three groups of informants perceived the majority of superintendents were satisfied with their job performances in the specific school districts studied.

Superintendent evaluations were commonly described as being done two times a year or not done at all. Typically these evaluations consisted of a rating scale filled out by school board members. School board chairpersons and superintendents reported staff evaluated super-

intendents in two of the school districts studied. One-year contracts were typically issued to superintendents.

Description of Relations. Groups of informants were asked to give descriptions of school boards, and descriptions of board/superintendent relationships and superintendent/district clerk relationships.

Across all three groups school board member turnover was described as split, some reported high member turnover while others reported low member turnover. Chain of command, meaning procedures community members used if they had complaints against schools, was not followed in the specific school district studied. Decisions were commonly described as being made at board meetings, and once these decisions were made they were typically supported by all school board members. Information shared among school board members was most often described as being shared by use of the telephone. Information was also described as dependent on information shared from the superintendent, or by school board members face to face with each other.

Overall the three groups were split in their perceptions of how well school boards worked together. They reported school boards worked well together at times and at other times had problems among themselves. Superintendents believed "good" boards were ones who let superintendents "run the school" and did not micromanage, while school boards

described the success of the school board depended on the type of superintendent they had.

Groups of informants were split in their descriptions of relations between school board chairpersons and superintendents, and between district clerks and superintendents. They either described relationship "problems" or "good" relations between school board chairpersons and superintendents, and between school district clerks and superintendents.

Political Climate. Groups of informants were asked to describe the political climate of specific school districts studied and how this affected superintendent turnover in the five school districts studied. Across all three groups the most common description was the importance of high school athletics to the communities studied and how often this had caused divisions in communities.

School board chairpersons and district clerks described schools as centers of their communities. District clerks and superintendents described communities as being concerned about taxes and how tax money was spent at the specific school districts studied.

Previous Superintendent Effects. Groups of informants were asked to describe their perceptions of effects previous superintendents had on new ones hired and how these could have affected superintendent turn-

over in the five school districts studied. The most common pattern found across all three groups was the negative effect on new superintendents having to "clean up messes" left by previous superintendents. Related to this was the description of new superintendents having to compensate for weaknesses of previous superintendents. The least common pattern found across all groups was there were no effects of previous superintendents on new superintendents hired.

School board chairpersons and superintendents described being compared to the previous superintendent as a negative effect of one superintendent on the next one hired.

Effects on the School District. Groups of informants were asked to describe how frequent superintendent turnover affected school stability in the five school districts studied. Three related major patterns emerged. One was negative effects of frequent superintendent turnover on school staff, including the adjustments staff must make to new superintendents, and effects on staff morale, trust, and attitude. Secondly, changes made by new superintendents were difficult. Related to this, continuity of leadership and of school programs was described as affected by frequent superintendent turnover. New superintendents were commonly described as coming into schools with their own ideas on how

things ought to run and then making changes to procedures and programs that had been set up by previous superintendents.

School board chairpersons and superintendents described a negative effect of frequent superintendent turnover as a lack of leadership left in the school, often referring to this as a "power vacuum". They said school staff often stepped into this "power vacuum".

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The first part of Chapter 4 consists of a summary of the study. Aims of the study, the theoretical construct used, major questions the study attempted to answer, and basic design and procedures are summarized. The second part is a discussion of the rural community in connection to the study's findings. Following this is a discussion of the rural school and findings from the study, associated with major concepts from the review of literature. A discussion about superintendents in rural communities and links to findings and previous research is then presented. Implications are provided for aspiring superintendents, graduate schools of educational administration, and rural school boards. Recommendations for further research conclude the chapter.

Summary of the Study

The aims of this study were to investigate conditions and reveal patterns that surrounded superintendent turnover in selected small, rural K-12 school districts in Montana. Five small rural school districts with excessive superintendent turnover were selected for study. Each showed a historical pattern of volatility for superintendents.

The literature review described several different theories about why superintendents leave their positions. These theories have been the foundation for research in most of the studies described in the literature review. The guiding theoretical construct used to investigate superintendent turnover in this study was a modified version of one advocated by Miskel and Cosgrove (1985). The modification was made by narrowing the scope from the school administrator to the superintendent. Aspects relating to the school board were included. The framework used to guide research was focused on prearrival and arrival conditions, as well as on the effects of turnover on the school district. These turnover effects included changes in the prearrival and arrival conditions that could be attributed to superintendent turnover.

The study sought to discover, using a qualitative research methodology approach of multiple case studies, if prearrival or arrival factors and superintendent turnover effects had any influence on the leader's

decision to leave the job or not. Prearrival factors investigated were (a) reasons for turnover, (b) selection process, (c) reputation of the new leader, and (d) orientation of the new leader. Arrival factors investigated were (a) demography of the organization, (b) organizational structure, (c) school culture, (d) educational programs, (e) successor actions, (f) community factors, and (g) board factors. Turnover effects were investigated using questions that centered on topics of (a) instability, (b) amount of change or mandates given, (c) influences on leadership styles, (d) community effects, and (e) board effects.

This study's goal was to address questions about reasons for superintendent turnover in small rural school districts in Montana. This phenomenon was believed to be complex. The theoretical construct chosen was used to accommodate the complexity of the situation.

It was speculated that many aspects interact with the perceptions of the reasons for superintendent turnover in small rural school districts. Major generalizations concerning superintendent turnover and resulting effects could be taken from the literature review, which fit into Miskel and Cosgrove's (1985) theoretical construct. While the following research questions represented major conclusions in the literature review, the qualitative design of the study also provided room for the evolving of unanticipated research questions.

Research questions revolved around four topics:

1. Career Paths of Superintendents: (a) How do the career goals, career orientations, and expectation of tenure affect superintendent turnover?

2. Superintendent Selection Processes: (a) How do the selection processes, informants' expectations of the ideal superintendent and the ideal superintendency affect superintendent turnover?

3. Role Perceptions and Expectations: (a) How do informants' expectations of roles, and job competency skill areas affect superintendent turnover?

4. Reasons for Turnover: (a) How do job satisfiers and levels of satisfaction affect superintendent turnover? (b) How do board/ superintendent relationships affect superintendent turnover? (c) How does the political climate of the community affect superintendent turnover? (d) How do the effects of the previous superintendent affect superintendent turnover? (e) How is the school district's stability affected by superintendent turnover?

Multiple case study methodology was used to investigate superintendent turnover in five small, rural school districts in Montana. Three different population groups from each case, or school district, were interviewed: (a) school board chairpersons, (b) district clerks, and (c) super-

intendents. Two key informants with histories and knowledge of superintendent turnover and the issues behind turnover in small rural schools in Montana were used in helping to increase the researcher's professional knowledge and judgment. These key informants assisted in selection of the cases that were studied, evaluated interview questions and format, and provided feedback on the study's findings. The key informants were the executive director of the Montana School Boards Association and the executive director of the School Administrators of Montana. Field tests of the interview prior to data collection were done with individuals in roles similar to those who participated in the study. Based on results of the field tests and input from the key informants, changes were made to the interview protocols. Appendix B contains samples of interview protocols. Additionally, high school students at the five sites volunteered to give written descriptions of their schools and communities. These writings were used in the description of each community found in Chapter 3.

Criteria used in selection were: (a) The district must have had a district population of less than 1,000 in the most recent census of 1990; (b) The district must have had an economic base that was primarily agricultural; (c) Cases were chosen for their patterns of excessive superintendent turnover calculated from 1977 to 1997. Excessive turnover was

defined as having both a lower tenure rate than the state average of 5.1 years and a lower tenure rate for the Class III population of 4 years (Carson, 1998); (d) After districts met the previously mentioned criteria, the key informants recommended five school districts suitable for case study. Care was taken to select districts that were not in proximity to each other, but occupied different quadrants of the state.

In each district, school board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents were interviewed. Individuals who held those positions at the current time were interviewed along with individuals who previously held the positions. A maximum of two past superintendents, district clerks and school board chairpersons were interviewed from each district. In all 38 interviews were held with: (a) 14 board chairpersons, (b) 7 district clerks, and (c) 17 superintendents.

Data was obtained using a personal, face to face interview with informants at community sites or current places of residence. Interviews lasted typically from one and a half to two hours each. In two instances, telephone interviews were held since informants resided out of state. In those cases, an additional informant was selected for a face-to-face interview. In both cases, informants were superintendents. Two informants, a previous superintendent and previous district clerk, declined to participate fully in the research. One informant, a school board chairper-

son, did not show up for the scheduled interview. These three individuals were not included in the study and were replaced by other informants.

One interview was scheduled with each informant during the months of April through June, 1998. Informants were initially contacted by letter (Appendix B). This letter was followed up by two telephone conversations. Upon receiving signed permission from the participant, the interview was tape recorded. All informants gave permission to tape record. Field notes were taken during the interview. Pertinent parts of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher soon after data collection. Prior to collecting and analyzing the data, codes were set up as a starting list using the conceptual framework and research questions. During analysis this list of codes was expanded.

Content analysis was used to analyze the interviews. Codes were used in analysis to dissect interview transcriptions and field notes into meaningful parts while still keeping the relations between the parts intact. Codes were labels used to assign meaning to information, which enabled the researcher to retrieve and organize data. Information was clustered that related to a particular research question, hypothesis, or theme. A computer program was used to manage information and to assist in coding, retrieving, and clustering data.

Perceptions of school board chairpersons, district clerks, and past and current superintendents from each case were analyzed using idiosyncratic analysis. This type of analysis consists of analyzing patterns within each case and within each group of informants. Secondly, cross-case analysis was used between and across perceptions of those cases and groups using nomothetic analysis. Nomothetic analysis involved looking for patterns common to the cases and groups studied.

The results of this study are not to be generalized to other schools in the state of Montana, nor are they meant to be globally generalized. The findings of this study are site specific. Findings of qualitative studies have "inter-subjective" meanings to the reader. Intersubjectivity means understanding the existence of similar states in others and engaging with them in ways that are informed by that understanding (Wagner, 1970). In this manner, findings of a qualitative study can be termed as reader or user generalizable.

The Rural Community

Sociologists have studied rural communities extensively. Theories found in rural sociological research were not included in the literature review of this study, because they were unanticipated as associated to the study. Theories from rural sociological research were not present in

any of the topics found in the literature on superintendent turnover. It should be noted that relatively little research has been done on the superintendent in small, rural schools. The qualitative design of the study allowed for further investigation of theories unanticipated at the outset of research. As the study progressed it became clear that more was needed to explain the complex interactions of rural communities and the phenomenon of superintendent turnover in these communities. The two could not be analyzed separately. In this section major findings from rural sociological research on the unique culture found in the rural community and how it transmits that culture through its school is explored and related to major findings from this study.

Transmission of Culture and Solidarity

According to Flora, Flora, Spears, & Swanson (1992) solidarity is the extent to which a community offers us a place in which to belong. "[Communities] offer us a place in which to belong, an arena in which we feel we can make a difference, and a sense of security." (Flora et al., p. 63). Solidarity emerges when communities have a clearly defined set of values, beliefs, or goals. The authors assert rural communities maintain their solidarity through their culture. One method of doing this is by the extent the community shares a common identity. This common identity is reflected by symbols.

Tonnies (1887) made comparisons between two types of communities: urban and rural (Loomis, 1963). Rural is described as *Gemeinschaf*: communities where human relationships are personal, citizens' worth is based more on who they are than what they do, the culture is relatively homogenous, and people have a strong attachment to each other and to the countryside. Urban communities are described as *Gesellschaf*: communities where most people do not know each other well, worth is based on what people do and not who they are, the culture is heterogeneous, and people have relatively little attachment to each other or to the country.

"In communities dominated by a single economic base, people not only know one another socially but typically know each other's daily routine" (Flora et al., 1992, p. 65). This works to strengthen solidarity between members of rural communities. In this study, all five sites researched shared a common economic base of agriculture. The majority of people who lived in these communities were either farmers or ranchers. All but one of the school board chairperson informants were either farmers or ranchers. The exception was self employed, but dependent upon agriculture for his business.

Everyone knows everyone and everyone's business in small communities. Informants in this study often used this to describe life in

their communities. This is defined as an intimate social context. In transmitting the community's culture Flora et al. (1992) writes,

> "[The] intimate social context makes it more likely that values such a honesty and neighborliness will be embraced. Behavior reflecting that your word is as good as a written contract responds to the ideal of honesty. In a practical way, however, honesty becomes even more compelling when both your actions and your words can be known by others. . . Being known alters the way in which people behave toward one another. (p. 65)

Another aspect of this intimate social context in small communities is the overlap of groups of friends and institutions. Most members see their small communities as a whole, rather than separate parts. "In rural communities, the school and community are part of the same social fabric" (p. 65). Informants commonly described the school as the center of their communities. Glenda, board chairperson from Sherton described her community,

> It's a very small, small town. And I don't mean population wise. Small towns are known for everyone knowing everyone's business. I think that's a real difficult thing for new people [who] come into a small community. Their privacy is very different than it can be in a larger community. Your circle of friends is smaller. There are . . . a lot of people who have been here for generations. . . .It's a wonderful town in a lot of ways. They really do band together in times of need, help each other out. But the school is the center of the town and everyone kind of takes what happens there pretty personally.

Sacred Symbols

Symbols reflect a rural community's most strongly held values. They do not emerge unless the solidarity of the community is strong. Clearly, the school in the five sites studied was a sacred symbol to each community. High school athletics, basketball most importantly, was another sacred symbol to the communities studied.

Quite often problems between superintendents and school boards and communities were blamed on the superintendent who was not interested in high school athletics. Often this superintendent did not attend basketball games. Their lack of attendance and involvement at these events was interpreted by the community as a threat against the community's sacred symbol. Anyone who violates sacred symbols offers communities opportunities to strengthen their solidarity at his or her expense.

People in small communities build a sense of solidarity through interactions with each other. In small communities these interactions occur frequently and in many different settings. Rural sociologists refer to density of acquaintanceship as the extent to which community members interact with each other on a regular, informal, and relatively personal basis. They use the term role homogeneity to refer to the extent to which people interact with one another across a wide variety of settings.

Small communities are more likely to induce involvement from their members, because there are many tasks to perform by few people. This heightened participation and involvement, may increase members' sense of accomplishment and satisfaction with their lives in rural communities (Childs & Melton, 1983). Because of the many tasks to be done, the authors explain that rural communities are less likely to let new residents remain in anonymity. Not surprisingly, in this study informants said ideal superintendents would be involved in many activities outside of the school setting. Otto, board chairperson from Casterbridge gave examples of types of involvement,

> We have a Lion's club here, and three or four churches; there are various community get-togethers, community picnics in the summertime. We have card clubs and certainly all of the school functions: basketball games, school dances, all of the things that involve the community and the school. We have had superintendents here that just don't show up to those kinds of things. And we have some who will travel 150 miles to watch [Casterbridge] play a basketball game. People notice that. That is the type of community involvement that I'm talking about.

As Otto illustrated, informants expressed the importance of community involvement of superintendents and how this was connected to the success of the superintendent. It was important to informants that the superintendent be "visible" in the community, attending community events, visiting local businesses, and being seen around the community.

Darlene, board chairperson from Melchester described an ideal superintendent,

> For a small area like this [we want a superintendent] who's not afraid to be outside a little bit and go where the community members work. In a community like this, well in any of them, I think the superintendent has to attend the extracurricular activities and be visible. . . .In a small district they have to be willing to get out and be with the community.

Claudia, clerk from Sherton explained how important it is for a superintendent to be visible in the community, "Being visible in the community is a very strong thing. You need to buy things locally, eat out once in awhile. Buy your tires here. Go to the annual firemen pancake event. Make sure you attend the events at the school."

Board chairperson Clive from Melchester explained the ideal superintendent would be one who,

> . . .likes to participate, and likes the community. He's a member of the community. He is probably going to join the fire department or something like that. If you don't want to go to the sporting events, because that's our community affair, most of these small communities pull together on those kinds of things. But if you're an outsider and stand away from that, pretty soon you're isolated.

Boundary Maintenance

Flora et al. (1992) describe when the solidarity of a community is strong, community members differentiate between those people who are in the group and those who are outside it, and explain rural communities

do this in several ways. Sanctions are imposed on those who violate sacred symbols in a rural community. In doing so, the rural community maintains its boundary. These activities can be interpreted by newcomers as making them feel like outsiders. Small, rural communities may be described as caring and intimate to some, but newcomers may find them judgmental and stifling. Additionally, the close ties between the school and community can put pressure on teachers, administrators, and students. Often times community cliques, gossip, and small town talk alienate these individuals (Sher, 1977).

The term "outsiders" surfaced frequently in informants' descriptions of superintendents. This term was used by all three groups of informants: school board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents. Being an outsider was often described as not being involved in the community, and perceived as distancing oneself from these events. Athletic events at the high school were most typically described. Otto, board chairperson from Casterbridge explained,

> In a small community the superintendent must be willing to be part of the community. I think that's very, very important. If you get a superintendent who is kind of aloof and they don't want to be part of the community, then that draws a line between the people's faith or confidence in that individual and him. . . .In this community all it takes not to be an outsider is the willingness to participate, to be involved. I'm not saying you have to be involved in everything. . . .Just the little things, like ball games. . . .As you know, it's the key function during the winter time. There's nothing else to do.

Board chairperson Victor from Marygreen said,

> In small communities most everybody feels real close to the school. This is our center of activities in the community. That's why sports are so big. That's our social event. So if they get an outside superintendent who comes from [somewhere else in] Montana and he has a new idea and they happen not to like it, they make it difficult for him because he is an outsider and this is our school type thing. The community can be tough on a superintendent. But some of these brought it [on] themselves too.

Informants sometimes used the metaphor "fishbowl" to describe life in their communities for outsiders. This referred to being seen by others, which can feel like a lack of privacy. Others knew what they were doing: their personal business, and routines. Gabe, superintendent from Melchester, explained what the school board told him, "When they say, 'We hope you stay, but we don't think this is right or that's right.' That's what you're going to have when everybody in town knows what everybody else is doing and thinking."

One superintendent viewed the "fishbowl" as a positive. Helen, from Casterbridge explained,

> I had a situation where the light in my house was on at 5:30 in the morning, and I had people calling me up and saying, "What were you doing up at 5 o'clock in the morning? What's happening at your house at 5 o'clock in the morning?" So I told them that I leave at 6 o'clock. A lot of [superintendents] have said that's a fishbowl, and they wouldn't put up with it. And I say I don't mind that, that doesn't bother me. I understand that goes with small schools. They care enough about me and what I do. . . so

> you can turn that around to be almost a helping aspect. I've always felt ideally that I want to be part of the community. I want the community support. I want the community to feel that they can come to me, talk to me.

Board chairpersons typically described the "fishbowl" metaphor as a negative. Trevor, board chairperson from Marygreen explained, "[There are] too many people watching. It's such a small area that no matter what [the superintendent] does everybody knows what's going on." Stewart, board chairperson also from Marygreen added, "If something goes on everybody knows it. If you make a wrong decision it gets compounded and everybody knows it." Darlene, board chairperson from Melchester, provided this description,

> I think the main level of dissatisfaction with the superintendents on their part is maybe feeling like they can't go any place, particularly in the small community, without somebody confronting them about something that's going on at the school. That's a problem. That's one of the comments that one of the [superintendent] candidates made this year. They never felt that they were off the job. And to a point that's true. You have to expect that. As a board member I try to avoid confronting the superintendent about something when they're out of their office, just as a courtesy, if it's not a crisis. But sometimes when they're out, that's the only time that other people see them. So that's when they're going to bring things up. That should be something that [superintendents] should expect. People tell you things when they see you, not necessarily when it's convenient to you.

Flora et al. (1992) said how maintenance of solidarity makes it easier for communities to unite against outside threats than to acknowl-

edge internal problems. Intimate social networks cause more community controls over individuals. It is much easier to see problems as being externally caused, rather than internally caused. Rural communities may often unite against suspicious newcomers.

In this research, superintendents were often referred to as suspicious newcomers. They were not trusted because they were an "outsider" who often tried to initiate changes. Changes became targeted as conflicts when focused on sacred symbols of the community. Frequently superintendents were distanced from the rest of the community by their high salaries. Clerk Olivia from Marygreen explained, "I feel in the community our size when we are paying someone 40 or 45 thousand dollars that's a lot to us. I think they have to feel that responsibility, rather than delegate so many things, knowing they are the person earning the most money."

Not only were superintendents distanced, but also school employees. Informants referred to a difference in worth between being employed by a public institution and being self employed as either a farmer or rancher. Board chairperson Otto from Casterbridge explained,

> [We expect to have a superintendent who] makes [teachers] do a day's work for a day's pay. I say that because we are a conservative community and that's the way we live our life. That's the way we expect our money to be spent. There are some times you have to step on people a little bit or give

> them a kick in the behind, and say, "Hey, this is not quite what we expect. You're going to have to do a little bit better."

Claudia, clerk from Sherton, described public scrutiny of school employees,

> I notice it because I work in the school. I work for taxpayers' money. You are always scrutinized and under the magnifying glass. And it seems like if somebody is having financial hard times they don't want anybody else—They are good people though. If something tragic happens we all come together. But then it's amazing how mean they can be over some things.

The school was often referred to as "up there" or "that place" when employees' descriptions were given about communities studied. Again, Claudia explained,

> The perception I see, [the community] really [does] feel that the people up here that work up here, we have it so easy. We make so much money, but yet we don't do enough. The perception is the teachers get three months off in the summer. We got a new vehicle. It was seven years old. But I'm sure the joke is, "I wish I worked up there at that school so I could afford something like that."

Legacy and Culture

Legacy is what parents have achieved for themselves and what they see possible for their children to achieve (Flora et al., 1992). In rural communities where people's incomes are tied to the land they own, the connection between legacy and place is strong. People in rural communities seek their fulfillment through their personal businesses and by

social interactions through involvement in the local communities. In small, rural communities the school is the primary social institution that transmits legacy from one generation to another. The character of the school is impacted by the types of legacies parents have for their children.

A strong work ethic and emphasis on basic education were two characteristics of legacies found in this research. Informants used these two descriptors in portraying their communities and schools. Exemplifying this, board chairperson Jerome described the curriculum at the Glaston school,

> The philosophy that I had was give the kids a good basic education and don't go off on tangents. . .I don't believe that agricultural sciences such as welding and things like that are needed. I don't think it's a responsibility of the school district to prepare a student for life after high school. It's the objective of the school district to give him the opportunity to decide after he's out of high school which direction he wants to go. He or she. If they want to go to college so much the better. But there are a lot of vo-tech schools that. . . give those students--it's not the responsibilities of a high school. The high school has to give that basic education so they can do it themselves.

The Rural School

It is important to look first at the historical beginning of farming in America, and how important the school was to the farmer's goal of progress. From its advent, farming in rural communities in America has

been an undertaking intended for financial profit. Unlike their European ancestors, the ultimate aim was not subsistence, but progress. Therefore, it became in part a culture that looked outward "to the state for land and local improvements, to the law for the protection of property and the advancement of development schemes, to speculators, banks, lawyers, and school teachers as a literate elite who could advance it in wealth" (Blum, 1982, p. 195).

The rural school was and still is an extension of its community. Rural schools throughout time have provided communities with high levels of accountability. Rural teachers and administrators are in daily contact with individuals from the community. Traditionally, people in rural communities have wanted their children to be taught moral training as well as academic pursuits. This is so since rural communities tend to be homogenous and share a common set of values and expectations for their children. Traditionally, the rural school teacher was expected to share the same background and common set of values. The same expectation exists for superintendents in rural communities today.

Rural schools often are proud of the academic program offered to their students, and cite the low student to teacher ratio as one of the strengths of their schools, which helps to improve their academic programs. This strength was frequently noted by informants in this study.

Not only does small class size help to enhance instruction, it positively affects intragroup solidarity and morale (Sher, 1997). In small schools students are recognized as individuals. Furthermore, teachers know each student as an individual. Students interact frequently and informally, just as adults do in the rural community. Board chairperson Raymond explained the curriculum and strengths at Casterbridge school,

> Basically I feel [the curriculum is] pretty sound. We try to do the best we can to offer the widest curriculum as possible. We do have, with the number of teachers and the number of students, the personal attention. In general, I think pretty much everybody has wanted to maintain a good staff, a staff that is willing to help the kids. So you roll them both together you can get a pretty good education, even if you don't get the variety that you can in the larger places.

And Lucy, board chairperson from Glaston, explained,

> [A lack of course offerings] is a little bit of a drawback, but most students go on to college. I think where we lack in the variety we gain in the strength of the basics. . .You don't slip through the cracks. It's pretty hard to have someone go through that's not doing the work that is expected of them. A lot more one-on-one.

Smaller groups of students in rural schools offer a variety of opportunities for participation, as often described by informants in this study. They explain students could participate wherever they chose to, something which they would be unable to do in larger schools. These increased opportunities for participation raise self-esteem levels in stu-

dents, and are an important educative tool (Sher, 1977). A greater sense of participation also translates into a greater sense of responsibility for the school, and a heightened personal sense of competence and belonging (Childs & Melton, 1983). Informants did explain that the low enrollment of their schools limits the choices of activities, however. Trevor, board chairperson from Marygreen, explained, "The bigger schools have a lot more extracurricular activities, but we are limited here to drama and speech. There's not a lot of individual activities. In a small school you're limited to a team. That ain't good in a way, but what outweighs that is your student to teacher ratio."

Even though rural communities tend to be homogenous, their schools are heterogeneous in the fact that social classes are mixed. Low population requires everyone to go to school together, and allows them to get to know each other on an equal basis from an early age. This cements the traditional belief that the entire community is involved in the school, and increases their sense of solidarity. Sher (1977) states this "contributes to the stability of the rural community and its remarkable internal communications network" (p. 98).

Problems Faced by Rural Schools

Historically, educational policy makers have attempted to rescue the poor-performing and inefficient rural school by forcing consolidation.

The urban school was the model of progress; increased financial efficiency and academic achievement. However, consolidation worked to eliminate small schools' unique rural character and heritage (Sher, 1977).

Informants in this study described regulatory and funding problems that made it increasingly more difficult each year to maintain a quality educational program at their schools. Some informants believed these increased controls and decreases in funding were because of pressures from the state which was trying to do away with what they assumed was the inefficient small, rural school. Informants commonly stated that if they lost their schools they would loose their communities as well. Many accreditation standards imposed by the office of public instruction in Montana are difficult for small schools to meet. Flora et al. (1992) argue that although the educational system has become more standardized, some believe it has become less responsive to local needs and resources.

Typically rural agricultural areas have a low-tax ideology. This is because rural people who make their livings by ranching or farming are land-rich but cash-poor. Their assets are tied to land and are not readily available. Informants in this study commonly referred to the community's support of the school as being high and explained mill levies were

consistently passed in their school districts. This, too, exemplifies communities' strong desire to hold on to their schools. However, informants often spoke of how, as school board members, they tried to keep taxes down and how important it was to be responsible in using taxpayers' money. They were concerned with how money was spent in their schools and kept a close eye on the budget. These informants described their communities as conservative, and typically referred to the low-tax ideology. A superintendent's skill in budget areas was often one of the areas of concern before hiring. Lucy, board chairperson from Glaston, illustrated this,

> We always come in under budget, that's a big expectation [of the superintendent]. You have to always watch our budget because we don't feel like we have a lot of room in our budget for disasters. We don't watch our dollars, we watch our dimes around here.

Board chairperson, Trevor, from Marygreen described his perceptions of the role of a school board member and his experiences,

> We are supposed to be just guiding the superintendent in which direction we want the school run in. Keep an eye on the budget, see that it's set right. See that it's run right and the school is run right. That's the role of the school board member but in the smaller school district you come out of that a little bit because you've got more people calling you.

Conflicts in Rural Schools

The intimate social contexts of small rural communities and boundary maintenance combine and can cause difficulties in resolution of conflicts. Schools are bureaucracies. Bureaucracies and their inherent structures often conflict with the informal structure found in rural communities. Rural communities are accustomed to communicating with each other through informal, face-to-face meetings. Structures set up in bureaucracies, which are important to people in them, are often times not seen as important or effective to people who live in rural communities.

One of those structures for handling complaints from community members in schools is called a "chain of command" policy. Typically community members with complaints are to go first to the school employee directly involved in the complaint. If not resolved at this level, community members are to go to the superintendent, and if still not resolved, to the school board. In this study, across all communities and groups of people studied, informants indicated that the chain of command policy was not followed. Community members went directly to the school board with problems.

Chain of command was not followed for various reasons. One is related to the intimate social context found in rural communities. Be-

cause individuals from rural communities interact with each other in various informal settings and contexts, they feel comfortable expressing their complaints directly with each other. Superintendents often were seen as outsiders and not accessible to community member's concerns. In this study superintendents were commonly described as not taking part in social events, not seen in the community, or not involved. Frequently, informants stated that rural community members had relationship problems with superintendents, and viewed them as threats. This boundary maintenance and the intimate social contexts of small rural communities conflict with the bureaucratic procedure for handling community complaints against schools.

Superintendent informants described how important it was for a "good" school board to let them "run the school" and not to interfere with micro-managing. Micro-managing was used to describe when school board members were too involved in the daily operations of the school. Superintendents felt that they were hired to "run the school" and expected school boards to trust them to do their jobs well. School board chairpersons also described their role as not micro-managing the school district. They said it was the superintendent's job to run the school on a day-to-day basis. However, school board chairpersons said many times superintendents failed to fulfill their responsibilities. Therefore, school

board chairpersons felt forced to micro-manage their schools and compensate for the superintendent's lack of leadership.

District clerks were caught in dilemmas when confronting problems in the schools studied. Because they were raised in the communities studied, grew up with people on the school board, felt comfortable with them, and were sometimes related to them, district clerks felt a certain sense of responsibility to inform school board chairpersons of school problems. District clerks in Montana are also caught in an additional dilemma of working for the school board but with the superintendent on a day-to-day basis. Informants described going to superintendents with problems, but then going to school board chairpersons when they perceived that superintendents were not doing anything to solve problems.

Reasons for Superintendent Turnover—
The School Board Chairperson and District Clerk Perspective

School board chairpersons and district clerks described different reasons for why specific superintendents left and why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover in their districts over the last 21 years. School board chairpersons explained the most common reason specific superintendents left their school districts was for career moves, moving up to a larger school with higher salary and less job responsibili-

ties due to additional administrative assistance. However, when asked to explain why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover in their school districts over the last 21 years, they most commonly said that conflicts over time between the superintendent and the board or community, or problems with superintendent themselves were the cause.

District clerks stated that specific superintendents left because of problems they had, such as being dishonest, just wanting to build retirement and not doing the job, being hard to get along with, not being visible, or resigning when others started asking questions of the superintendent. However, when asked to describe reasons for the high rate of superintendent turnover in their districts over the last 21 years, they most commonly stated that superintendents generally left for career moves.

Satisfaction With Superintendents. Conflicts over time and problems with superintendents themselves were related topics. A superintendent's problems were exposed over time, which in turn caused conflicts. Board chairpersons and district clerks commonly explained that the first year the superintendent was employed, things generally went smoothly. The community, staff, and school board were satisfied. However, these satisfaction levels began to drop the second year, and often led to superintendent turnover in either the second or third year.

Waller's (1965) thesis of community satisfaction with superintendents fits with these findings. He explains the typical life history of the rural superintendent and the vulnerability of the position. It is a story that repeats itself time and time again. The new superintendent enters the community with support from nearly everyone, except in the case of his/her predecessor who has left behind a cadre of well-organized individuals who are in support of the previous superintendent. This support continues until an incident or conflict occurs that pits him or her against an individual or group in the community. Perhaps the superintendent enacts a new policy, enforces a disciplinary action that is unpopular with parents, supports an unpopular teacher, or refuses to support a certain group's program, any of which could cause a conflict to occur. In the role of superintendent, the making of more enemies than friends is unavoidable. At the end of the first year, the majority of the community are still in support of the superintendent. Enemies do exist, but are not yet able to possess the amount of power to usurp the superintendent's position. These enemies continue to harass the superintendent throughout the second year on the job. The group becomes increasingly more organized. In the following year the group manages to get one of their members elected to the school board. Waller explains that if the superintendent manages to hang on to the position at the end of the second

year, then the third year will find more struggles to maintain the position and so on, until the fifth year. If the superintendent manages to maintain his/her position until this time, chances are that the superintendent will be seen as a local and as part of the group. Overall, Waller sees the school in the small community doomed to frequent changes of superintendents.

In describing their level of satisfaction with superintendents in this research, informants most commonly explained that either communities were split, meaning some were satisfied and some were not satisfied, or overall were not satisfied with superintendents who served in their districts. Two of the five districts described school staff as not satisfied with superintendents. Informants perceived the majority of superintendents were satisfied with their job performances in the specific school districts studied.

Critical Incidents. Grady and Bryant's (1990) research of "critical incidents" as the cause of superintendent turnover was explored in this study. Critical incidents were defined as experiences that caused tension between superintendents and school boards, which ultimately led to superintendent turnover, specifically in small, rural schools. In this study, informants were asked whether or not they could point to specific incidents that caused superintendent turnover in their districts. None of the

school board chairpersons or district clerks could provide specific "critical incidents", but referred to conflicts that built up over time or problems with superintendents themselves. Two of the seventeen superintendent informants could point to a specific incident which ultimately was the cause of their decisions to leave specific districts studied.

Relations. Another area investigated was the "political variable" (Berger, 1983), or measure of relationships between the superintendent and the school board, staff, and community. School board chairpersons and district clerks described both levels of community and staff satisfaction with superintendents over the last 21 years were split. Some of the time they were satisfied and some of the time they were not satisfied with superintendents. School board chairpersons commonly described the year of the superintendent's stay in their district impacted these levels of satisfaction, this being the first or second year. Informants were also asked to describe the type of relations that existed between superintendents and school boards, and between superintendents and clerks. The majority of the time school board chairpersons and district clerks noted relationship problems more often than noting good relationships. Both groups explained there were often problems between superintendents and clerks. Berger cautioned that superintendent turnover may be caused by totally unrelated causes, specifically originating with superin-

tendents themselves rather than with the community or school board. Recent research does point to school board/superintendent relationships and community pressure groups being related to superintendent turnover (Leitch, 1997).

In this research, while relationship problems do seem to be related to superintendent turnover in some cases, after further analysis these problems with relationship appeared to be more of a result of other problems. Superintendents said most frequently that they decided to leave the specific school districts studied because of reasons related to their own families, yet perceived community or school board problems, or problems with the job itself, were to blame for all the other superintendents who left these specific school districts.

Superintendent Selection in Rural Schools

Processes. Knowledge of the way rural communities interact with each other provides an explanation of superintendent selection processes commonly used in rural schools. This research found the school board was primarily in control of hiring superintendents, and did so through informal interviews with superintendent candidates and calling all references themselves. School board chairpersons explained that they could sense within a short amount of time if the candidate was the right person or not for the job. Whether the superintendent candidate fit into the

community was frequently described as a primary concern. One district relied on the Montana Schools Boards Association as professional search consultants to select superintendents. The remaining districts studied often expressed pride in the fact that they did superintendent searches themselves, without having to pay a lot of money to the Montana School Boards Association (MSBA). They expressed the opinion that they often chose the same candidates that MSBA would have chosen for them, and believed that making reference checks themselves was important. Informants also related that current superintendents often played a vital role in selecting their successors. Typically, current superintendents screened applicants for the school board. School boards stated that they depended on the current superintendent to use personal knowledge to judge applicants, primarily based on applicants' reputations. Superintendent informants explained that they were often recruited by current superintendents in the school districts studied, or recruited a specific superintendent to apply for their job when they were leaving.

Rural communities are known for their more trusting attitude and behaviors (Childs & Melton, 1983). Informal, face-to-face contacts with others is most comfortable to individuals in rural communities. Therefore, it is not surprising that rural school districts want to maintain control of superintendent selection processes, nor are the kinds of informal

processes they use to select superintendents surprising. This study confirms findings discussed in previous research on superintendent selection processes used in rural school districts (Houck, 1986; Hetlinger, 1986; Blankenship, 1995). Findings from past research found small school districts used informal superintendent search processes. They did not tend to use professional search consultants, and thus generally used a less objective approach. Small school districts used information which was informal, internal, and incomplete.

Criteria Used in Selection. School board chairpersons and district clerks described the ideal superintendent to serve in their schools. These informants most commonly indicated that the rural background of the superintendent would be important, along with being involved in the community, and possession of general public relation skills. Most commonly informants emphasized the importance of the ideal superintendent fitting into their communities. The profile of the ideal superintendent combined rural background experiences, ability to be involved and seen in the variety of community events, and accessible to community members at such events, along with communicating effectively with community members.

When asked to explain why specific superintendents were hired in their school districts, informants most commonly explained that deciding

factors were that the candidates interviewed well or had good references. School board chairpersons most commonly described problems with the pool of applicants available. Few applicants applied for vacancies or the quality of applicants was poor. They stated that they hired the best candidate they could from this pool, and frequently had difficulties filling superintendent vacancies.

These findings do not agree totally with previous research (Fenili, 1985; Colvard, 1986; Horkman, 1986; Gerla, 1988; Mattocks, 1987), which described a range of criteria important to board members when selecting superintendents. What did match were informal criteria important to the selection of superintendents, ability to relate well with the public, and the importance of communication and people-centered skills.

Superintendent Career Paths. Criteria used by rural school boards to select superintendents were often found to conflict with superintendents' career aspirations. While informants described wanting a superintendent who would fit into the community and involve themselves in community events, they explained their perceptions of superintendent aspirations as starting in small schools to get experience, and then moving up to larger school districts for higher salary and less job responsibilities. They indicated that their rural school districts were used as "stepping stones" in the career aspirations of many superintendents.

The ideal length of time a superintendent should stay in their school districts, according to school board chairpersons, was seven years. District clerks and superintendents believed five years was an ideal length of stay. School board chairpersons and district clerks were split on whether superintendents had stayed as long as they expected them to in their schools.

Previous research described in the literature review mirrored these findings (Carlson, 1969; Burlingame, 1977; Bevan, 1988; Eaton, 1990). This research explained superintendents in small districts were most often "career-bound", aspiring to make career moves strategically and often in hopes of ending up in prestigious positions. These strategic career moves were often described as "stepping stones". The length of stay, or tenure, of each superintendency was related to superintendents' expectations of tenure.

Role Perceptions and Expectations. Previous research in differences of roles and expectations between superintendents and school boards has been linked to superintendent turnover (Kinn, 1980; Littleton, 1983; Maschal, 1985; Sweet, 1987; Seybert, 1993). Understanding one's role as superintendent would lead to less conflict between school boards, and thus to less superintendent turnover. Previous research found school size was related to board expectations and levels of in-

volvement granted by school boards to superintendents. Larger school districts were more concerned about improving the financial status of the district and granted more involvement to the superintendent. Generally, previous research recommended superintendents should have their roles clearly defined by school boards and agreed upon annually.

Findings from this study can not be used to conclude that consensus of roles and expectations could decrease the likelihood of superintendent turnover. However, roles and expectations were not found to be clearly defined in any of the rural school districts studied. School board chairpersons, district clerks, and superintendents described expectations of new superintendents were general, rather than specific. These general expectations were most commonly described as "running the school smoothly".

Rural cultures often think of members in their communities as "just plain folks" (Flora, et. al, 1992). When school boards hire superintendents they may want to reinforce their ideal of superintendents matching, or fitting in with rural communities. In order to identify with the community, school board members may tend to treat the new superintendent as socially equal, and not rely on a formal set of expectations. School board chairpersons in this study spoke of the trusting and honest nature of people in their rural community, and were hopeful

these qualities would be reflected in prospective superintendents. Honesty becomes even more important as one's actions and words are known by others. Frequently, school board chairpersons and district clerks described superintendent turnover as being caused by a breach of promises made by superintendents or dishonest actions of superintendents.

Importantly, school board members and district clerks described how they and the community came to expect superintendent turnover after they began to see a pattern of it in their communities. School board members and district clerks additionally described a "we are not good enough" expectation. They perceived "good" superintendents would move up to a "better" position than their school districts, and did not want them to stay. These expectations impacted superintendent selection processes and criteria, the manner in which conflicts were resolved, and levels of trust. These levels of trust impacted the development of relationships between superintendents and school boards, school staff, and communities. It can be interpreted that ultimately superintendent turnover was affected by these expectations.

The School Board in Rural Schools

Wilkinson (1991) proposes there are fields of social interactions in rural communities and offers an interactional approach to studying rural communities and their social interactions. He focuses on the community

field and defines it as "processes of interrelated actions through which residents express their common interest in the local society" (p. 2). There are several fields of interaction within this community field that pursue or express particular interests. However, the community field cuts across organized groups and other interactional fields in a rural population. Wilkinson stated that the community field combines the locality-relevant aspects of the special interest fields and integrates other fields into a generalized whole (p. 36). Linkages are created and maintained among fields that are driven by limited interests. The community field impacts special interests fields and emphasizes the community's interests in the diverse realms of rural social interactions. The school board is a special interest field in rural communities.

Individuals in rural communities share a particular legacy for their children and view the school as the primary way this legacy is transmitted to their children. Their sense of place is strong and so is their sense of responsibility to place. They live in an intimate social context with each other, and their groups of friends and institutions overlap. The school and the community are frequently woven tightly together, making it difficult to distinguish the two. In rural communities people share a sense of responsibility in fulfilling civic duties. Roles are often times shared. A person's worth is based more on who they are rather than

what they do. As previously discussed, people in rural areas tend to communicate in an informal fashion. Likewise school boards tend to operate informally. Rural school boards typically involve themselves in decisions about the daily operation of their schools. They frequently involve themselves in teacher interviewing, curriculum decisions, and decisions about how students are grouped.

In this study, informants provided descriptions of school boards. They most commonly indicated informal ways of operating. Most commonly boards were described as making decisions by discussing issues at board meetings and then supporting those decisions once they were made. Information was typically shared informally over the telephone, or by face-to-face meetings with each other at community events, or when they came in contact with each other. Information was dependent upon what superintendents shared with school boards, mainly through packets sent out before board meetings. Information was also shared with each other by use of the telephone or by face-to-face meetings. School board members expressed reliance on the superintendent for the quality of their boards. They explained a good superintendent would make their jobs as board members easier.

Informants were split in their descriptions of the rate of school board member turnover. It was school board members, not superinten-

dents, that most commonly discussed how board member turnover could cause problems in running a school. Superintendents sometimes described school boards as being "good at first", but this change was not necessarily attributed to board member turnover. This finding did not fit with those found in previous research (Pruis, 1986; Fritz, 1988; Loasching, 1988), which found school board member turnover was an influential internal factor in affecting superintendent turnover. Previous studies of incumbent school board member defeat and its relationship to superintendent turnover tended not to find relationships between the two variables (Sullivan, 1990; Kitchens, 1994; Bracket, 1995).

Carlson (1972) explained when a school board is dissatisfied with a previous superintendent and a new one is hired, the board will often give the new superintendent a mandate to fulfill. He further described this new superintendent as "career-bound", aspiring to make career moves strategically and frequently in hopes of ending up in prestigious positions. This study found expectations of new superintendents were often related to weaknesses of previous superintendents. Informants said new superintendents often had to compensate for these weaknesses.

Effects of Superintendent Turnover on Rural Schools

Carlson's theory (1972) about career-bound superintendents also includes impacts on school staff. The new superintendent comes into an

organization with a clean slate, usually with the staff having no knowledge of the superintendent's past. However, those staff having a high stake in the organization may resent the new career-bound superintendent. These staff may be anxious about anticipated changes in their jobs, which may cause them to retrench as an initial manifestation of resentment. Carlson does add that at times a new person from the outside may revitalize an organization, spurring organizational improvement. This goal of improvement is usually tied to a mandate given to the new superintendent from the school board, which was tied to dissatisfaction with the previous superintendent.

Previous research has shown detrimental effects of frequent superintendent turnover on rural schools where the responsibilities of superintendents are broadened (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1989; Grady & Bryant, 1990; Miller & Hull; 1991). Superintendent turnover affects school climate, growth, continuity of programs, and the extent of community satisfaction with their schools. School climate is directly affected by impacts on long-time staff and their trust levels toward superintendents. They frequently develop pessimistic attitudes toward change. This lack of trust hinders renewal and improvement efforts in small schools.

This study's findings support previous research. In this study the most commonly described effect of frequent superintendent turnover on

specific schools studied was related to the staff. Informants described negative effects of frequent superintendent turnover on school staff, including the adjustments staff must make to new superintendents, and effects on staff morale, trust, and attitude. Secondly, changes made by new superintendents were hard on the staff. New superintendents were commonly described as coming into schools with their own ideas on how things ought to run and making changes to procedures and programs that had been set up by previous superintendents.

The Superintendent in the Rural School

The role of superintendent in a small rural school is unspecialized, due to the variety of responsibilities of the job. The job requires a superintendent who is a competent generalist, rather than a specialist. Transmission of rural communities' standards and values remains an important aspect of their job responsibilities and expectations, though this expectation is often left unstated. Typically, rural schools emphasize basic skills and behavior training (Sher, 1977).

Career Paths of Superintendents

From a pilot study done on superintendent mobility patterns from 1977 to 1997 in Montana (Carson, 1998), superintendents in the smallest school districts tended to stay in those small districts and not move

to larger districts. However, this did not mean superintendents stayed in specific small districts. The turnover rate for small districts was found to be the highest among three classifications of districts. The superintendent turnover rate for small school districts (Class III) was 27%, for medium-sized districts (Class II) it was 17%, and for the largest districts (Class I) the turnover rate was 14% (Appendix A).

Erdie's work (1987) was augmented in order to compile these statistics. He compiled a ten year database of superintendent mobility in Montana from 1977 to 1988. Erdie concluded within this time period 32% of superintendents from the smallest-sized (Class III) school districts moved into superintendencies in medium-sized (Class II) school districts. Although the number of small, medium, and large districts had changed slightly in Montana as reflected in the 1990 census report since the time of Erdie's work, Carson found less movement of superintendents from Class III schools to Class II schools. In fact, a slightly higher number of superintendents from Class II school districts moved into superintendencies in Class III school districts in Montana (Table 4).

Table 4. Superintendent Mobility in Montana

Moved into a job from. . .	**1977/78 - 1986/87**	**1987/88 - 1997/988**	**1977 - 1997**
Class I District to Class I	2%	1%	1%
Class II District to Class I	0%	0%	0%
Class III District to Class I	0%	0.40%	0.20%
Class I District to Class II	1%	1%	1%
Class II District to Class II	2%	3%	3%
Class III District to Class II	1%	2%	1%
Class I District to Class III	0.39%	1%	0.20%
Class II District to Class III	6%	7%	6%
Class III District to Class III	4%	6%	5%

Thomas (1985) found superintendents tended to move to districts of the same size or those with slightly larger enrollments. Superintendents from Thomas' study that changed jobs were typically older than 45 years, held an advanced degree beyond a masters, and had less than 10 years of experience.

In this study, superintendents' average age was 51, and they had spent an average of 10 years as superintendent. Only 2 of the 17 informants held a degree beyond a masters. Five informants followed the typically assumed career path of superintendents from a small school superintendency to a middle-sized school and then on to a larger school superintendency. Ten of the informants did not follow the typical career path of superintendents. These informants followed one of two paths: (a) five went from a small school superintendency to a medium or large

school superintendency and then back to a small school superintendency; (b) and five superintendents had stayed in small schools.

The majority of superintendents in this study could be classified as "career-bound". Additionally, they could be described as *hoppers* (Carlson, 1972). *Hoppers* earn the title from frequent moves from one school district to another. They typically move between districts of the same size and similar in character to the one before. While employed in one district *hoppers* are always on the search for the next superintendency.

Informants stated that they often took a superintendency for the experience it would provide, knowing they would not stay long in the position, and using it as a "stepping stone". They commonly said that they took the first job offered to them and did not care about the job's location. Superintendent Howard, from Marygreen, gave this description,

> A lot of us work our way up through, from smaller schools to bigger schools. There aren't that many openings in the bigger schools. So most of us have to come up through the small schools. To an extent that's why [Marygreen] and a lot of the other small schools have a lot of turnover, because people like myself used that as a training ground. It may not be fair to that system.

Superintendent informants most commonly explained that salary was the motivating factor to become a superintendent. Informants said that they believed they could be a better superintendent than the one

they worked under. Also, they stated that the superintendency provided a challenge for them. When asked if they stayed as long as expected to in specific districts studied half responded they had, while half responded they had not stayed as long as they expected, adding they "could have" or "would have" stayed longer. Their descriptions of the typical career path of superintendents in Montana was to start in a small school district and move on to a larger one, which held a salary increase and additional administrative assistance. Ted, superintendent from Glaston, described the assumed typical career path of superintendents in Montana, "I think typically [superintendents] are probably looking to get started in a small school. That gets them some experience and into a larger school."

Although all groups of informants believed this was the typical career path of superintendents in Montana, statistics do not fully support this assumption. The majority of superintendent turnover has taken place in the smallest-sized school districts, however, the majority of superintendents did not tend to move up to larger schools, but rather stayed in the same-sized schools. Salary increases, which would not necessarily be related to the size of the school district, could be a motivating factor for superintendent turnover.

Role Perceptions and Expectations

Seybert (1993) recommended further research is needed to find out why superintendents in Montana think they are doing a good job in certain competency areas important to them, while they are not focusing on competencies their boards of education think most worthy of superintendent attention.

This study found certain discrepancies and commonalities between expectations of school board chairpersons and superintendents. School board chairpersons said that an ideal superintendent would be involved and visible in the community and at school events. They also stressed the importance of general public relation skills of this ideal superintendent. When asked what expectations were of specific superintendents, school board chairpersons most often said there were "general expectations", which were commonly described as "running the school smoothly". A less common pattern was the expectation of community involvement. Superintendent informants most commonly stated that there were no expectations of them upon being hired. They also described expectations as being to compensate for weaknesses of previous superintendents, or that expectations were "general". These general expectations were described as "running the school smoothly", just as board chairpersons described them. Superintendent Luke explained what he

perceived the school board's expectations were when he was hired in Sherton,

> They didn't want any drastic changes. They felt that their school district was moving in the direction they wanted it to move. So, in the interview I could read that it was a job of maintaining and improving as you go along. It was not a position that I was coming into [where], "We want some drastic changes made."

Expectations of new superintendents were most commonly informal, unwritten, and unspoken. Superintendents commonly stated that they perceived school boards hired them because they were looking for a body to fill a vacancy, therefore, school boards had no expectations. However, superintendents also commonly described taking the first job offered to them and did not care about the location of the job. Their aim for taking this job was for the experience it would provide them.

Superintendent Turnover— The Superintendent Perspective

The majority of superintendent informants' reasons for superintendent turnover in Montana were different than their descriptions of reasons why they left specific districts, and why specific districts had experienced a high rate of turnover. One reason that was common to each question was the description of superintendents leaving for "career moves".

Their general reasons for superintendent turnover in small rural schools were described as either "community problems", "board problems", or problems with the job itself. They also described "money" problems, meaning the school's budget was not adequate, or a "philosophy clash" with the school board or community, increased "regulation problems", or "career moves" as general reasons for superintendent turnover in small schools.

Their most common description of why they decided to leave specific school districts was because of "family reasons". These were described as reasons within the superintendent's own family. The second most common reason for leaving a specific superintendency was because of "career moves".

Lastly, superintendents' perceptions of why there had been a high rate of superintendent turnover in specific districts most commonly were described as "career moves", specifically explaining that the district was a "stepping stone" on the career path of the superintendent.

Additional insights about reasons for superintendent turnover are provided in following sections and are linked to the study's findings.

Political Climate. The majority of previous research in superintendent turnover has been grounded in the theory that community politics had a direct effect on superintendent turnover. Iannaccone and Lutz's

(1978) theory of community dissatisfaction is a conceptual framework often used in research of superintendent turnover. Simply put, when community values are in line with board membership, school policy, and superintendent, the political conditions within a district are stable. When dissatisfied with their school, the societal group manages to garner political clout necessary to create an upheaval of the political structure of the school board. This upheaval from within the community creates a counterbalance to government by a few. This group then has elected to the school board one or more of its members, who in turn chooses a superintendent whose values are congruent with those of the community. The cycle repeats itself when, and if, in time the community again becomes dissatisfied with the school, or when the community perceives an intolerable gap between their values and those of the school. Chmara (1989) found support for Iannaccone and Lutz's theory of community dissatisfaction when analyzing the complex set of interactions superintendents described occurred in their school districts. Rada and Carlson's modified theory of dissatisfaction (1985) is based on identifying the community's source, or focus of attention of dissatisfaction in their schools, as a means to describe sources of superintendent turnover. These focuses of community dissatisfaction were either on the school board or superintendent.

These theories were found to be inadequate in fully describing conditions surrounding superintendent turnover in rural school districts studied in this research. The political effect of rural communities upon superintendents needs to be considered within the cultural context of rural communities themselves. A sensitive portrayal of the various cultural contexts that influence and are influenced by superintendents was advocated by Sergiovanni et al. (1987).

The realms of the rural community and school share a symbiotic relationship, as demonstrated in this study's findings. Most commonly informants described their communities in terms of its support for the school. This was explained most often as the community passing mill levies for the school and involvement in high school athletic events. The other pattern commonly found was descriptions of community divisions caused over events at schools, namely high school athletic events.

Superintendent informants most commonly cited these community divisions in describing the political climates of specific districts. Superintendent Jerry explained his perception of causes of community divisions in Marygreen,

> The community is split right in two. Right now this section has the board. They are just families. One side pits against the other side. I'll bet you in four years the other side will have the power. I have heard such things as, "Tell those blankety-blanks up north that we run the school now."

Superintendents also said specific communities were concerned about taxes, inter-related, and conservative. Other patterns found were superintendents described themselves as "outsiders", community members would not run for the school board, or the school district had a "bad reputation" according to information passed along by other superintendents. Superintendents commonly described school boards of specific districts as having "problems". These were described as board chairpersons who "ran the district", board members with "agendas", "hidden politics" at board meetings, or board members with an "ax to grind".

Superintendent informants referred to some of these problems when describing their perceptions of general reasons for superintendent turnover in Montana. However, these reasons were not found as major patterns in superintendent informants' descriptions of reasons for leaving specific districts, or in their descriptions of why so many superintendents left specific school districts over the last 21 years.

Gaps in understanding between the unique cultural contexts of rural communities and its relationship to their schools was evident in most of these superintendents' perceptions. These gaps in understanding were in the solidarity that exists in rural communities, sacred symbols, density of acquaintanceship, expectations for increased community involvement, boundary maintenance, and legacies imparted to children of

the community. These gaps in understanding contribute to the myth of the rural community as a politically volatile environment for rural superintendents.

Job Satisfaction. Informants in this study were asked to describe their perceptions of how satisfied others were with their job performance, how satisfied superintendents were with their own job performance, and superintendent evaluation processes and lengths of contracts issued. It was theorized in previous research that an understanding of variables impacting a superintendent's job satisfaction could lead to understanding reasons for turnover. Lindstrom (1989) did find that superintendents who changed jobs frequently had a different set of job satisfiers than those who remained in their positions. Regarding contract length, it was found that smaller districts preferred shorter contracts with superintendents (Yock et al., 1990).

Superintendent informants in this research said others were satisfied or moderately satisfied with their performances in specific districts. "Others" included the school board, staff, and community. Superintendents commonly listed reasons why these groups were satisfied with the job they did in specific districts. Superintendent informants most frequently said they were satisfied with the job they did at specific school districts and again listed their accomplishments at those districts.

Superintendents commonly said they "loved the job" as superintendent in specific districts. One-year contracts for superintendents were issued most commonly, because of school boards' reluctance to issue longer contracts. School board chairpersons explained contracts longer than one year limited their flexibility.

Relations. Explanations for superintendent turnover in previous research has been associated with the theory that a superintendent's relationship with the school board affected superintendent turnover.

Overall, superintendent informants described school boards from specific districts as "micro-managers". Micro-managing was explained as school boards that did not let the superintendent "run the school" but involved themselves in the day-to-day operations of the school district. Superintendent Bill from Melchester said,

> I've been fortunate in the school districts that I've been in, that I've even had trustees tell me, "We're too busy running our ranch. We hired you to run the school. So run it and we'll back you up." And they have done that. But you also get into situations in small communities where some trustees want to micro-manage. It just doesn't work, pretty soon you get cross ways with your trustees.

When superintendent informants described the type of relationships they had with school boards, district clerks, staff, and community, most often they described these relationships as positive. Superintendents spoke of how important it was to have a "good" clerk, and how this

was tied to their success. Often this description involved a clerk who would keep confidentiality between the superintendent and clerk. The district clerk was often described as the only person in the community and school with whom the superintendent could discuss issues openly.

Density of acquaintanceship and increased levels of involvement, which are typical of rural communities, impacted the quality of relationships superintendents in rural communities had with the school board, district clerk, and community. Superintendents' quality of relationships was also affected by whether or not the rural community perceived the superintendent as a threat. If this was so, the rural community worked to maintain a boundary, and frequently related to the superintendent as an "outsider". Although noting problems with school boards, superintendent informants most often described their relationships with people on school boards, in the school, and in the rural community in a positive manner. This challenges assumptions often voiced by superintendents in Montana who predict negative experiences for their colleagues who take superintendencies in rural communities.

Previous Superintendent Effects. An area of inquiry found in the theoretical construct for this research was prearrival and arrival factors present for the new superintendent. Effects on the new superintendent of actions of the previous superintendent were investigated. Current re-

search has found conditions under which the previous superintendent left proved to be the key circumstance in successful transition from the previous to new superintendent (Kasper, 1997).

Informants' descriptions in this study varied, depending on the type of transition that occurred from the previous superintendent to the new superintendent. Most often informants described negative effects of previous superintendents. These included "cleaning up messes" left by previous superintendents, being "compared" to previous superintendents, and compensating for the weaknesses of previous superintendents. Superintendent informants more often than not explained it was "good to follow a weak" superintendent. Superintendent Lawrence from Casterbridge explained, "I mean, to make it easier on you, you have got to follow a place where you probably will do more than a previous [superintendent]."

Effects of Superintendent Turnover on the Rural School.

Grady (1992) explained a negative effect on students in rural schools caused by frequent superintendent turnover. She said ultimately it is the children who suffer due to a lack of educational leadership in their schools, which in turn leads to a decay of community spirit. In previous discussions on this topic, the negative effects on the school staff were described, which were found both in the literature and in this re-

search. Informants said that the changes made by the "career-bound" superintendent affected the staff.

Superintendent informants also most commonly described these negative effects of superintendent turnover on the staff. These descriptions included how superintendent turnover affected staff "morale" and "trust". They also indicated that superintendent turnover was "difficult" for staff, and staff developed "negative attitudes" because of superintendent turnover. Superintendent informants said superintendent turnover affected "continuity". This included continuity of leadership and programs. A few informants stated there were "no effects" on the school's stability caused from superintendent turnover. Informants explained this was so because there were other members of the school staff who filled the leadership role and became the stability of the school district.

Implications

In this section, findings of the study are connected to implications for aspiring superintendents, preparation programs for school administrators, and small rural school boards in Montana. Although the findings of this study are site specific, findings of qualitative studies have "inter-subjective" meanings to the reader. Intersubjectivity means understanding the existence of similar states in others and engaging with

them in ways that are informed by that understanding, making findings reader or user generalizable (Wagner, 1970).

Implications for Aspiring Superintendents

Leadership in Rural Schools. In this study, superintendent informants described the primary motivating factor for them to move into the superintendency was because of the salary increase the position offered. Informants stated that the salary of a superintendent was considerably higher than that of a principal or teacher. Superintendent informants most commonly described reasons why they took specific superintendencies as not being concerned about where the job was, but taking the job for the experience, which would enhance their chances of being hired in a bigger school district, which offered a higher salary and less responsibilities as a result of additional administrative assistance. Informants' descriptions of career aspirations correspond with Carlson's (1972) descriptions of the "career-bound hopper" superintendent, who uses superintendent positions to achieve strategic career aspirations.

Unfortunately, superintendents today find themselves caught in an entirely different role with different purposes than were initially intended when the role of superintendent first began. Callahan (1962) explained the initial role of the superintendent was close to that of a schoolmaster, supervisor of teachers and students, with the school board making all

the major decisions. The superintendent's role evolved into one that required a person having a certain amount of specialization in professional skill and knowledge. According to Callahan, this evolution was a result of the emergent "scientific management" push in the early part of the 21st century. Attributes of scientific management were highly centralized, bureaucratic and hierarchical school organizations, which were formed to transform schools along the lines of the industrial model. Scientific management promised highly efficient organizations with increased "production" levels. Superintendents took over many of the decisions school boards had made. The superintendent changed to being seen as the educational expert who operated independently of the political turmoil around him. Many, if not most, of our schools in the United States still function under the guiding philosophy of scientific management. Unfortunately, this model of a superintendent put in the context of a rural community does not always result in a positive combination.

This study may point to an exploration of different career orientations for superintendents aspiring to work in rural schools, and may point to a redefinition of the role of superintendent in those rural schools and communities. Findings from this study may hold implications for aspiring superintendents when examining their own career goals, levels

of commitment, and potential effects of those goals and commitments on the rural schools and students in which they aspire to work.

In this study, informants' perceptions of the "typical" career path of superintendents in Montana were not supported by statistics of superintendent mobility patterns in Montana (Carson, 1998). Each group of informants described superintendents beginning their careers in small schools in order to gain experience that would enable them to obtain jobs in larger schools with higher salaries and less administrative responsibilities. Informants perceived this as a reason for high superintendent turnover in small schools. Statistics describe a different career path. Superintendents of small schools have tended to take jobs in other small schools, rather than moving to larger schools. Aspiring superintendents should be informed of this assumption and its effect on perceptions of reasons for superintendent turnover in small schools.

The findings of this study reveal that reasons for superintendent turnover in the five small rural schools studied were intertwined and complex. No one reason could account for frequent superintendent turnover. Reasons for turnover originated in both the superintendents themselves and the communities. Knowledge about these events could lead aspiring superintendents to a better understanding of their potential

experiences in rural communities and schools, and the role they play in the phenomenon.

In this study, informants' profiles of the ideal superintendent combined rural background experiences, ability to be involved and seen in a variety of community events, being accessible to community members at such events, and communicating effectively with community members. Both the study's findings and the literature support a description of the aspiring rural superintendent as a competent generalist, rather than a specialist. Implications for successful leadership in rural schools would be for more utilization of a participatory approach rather than an autocratic approach. A successful leader would respect the primacy of the rural community's local context, understand the assumptions of its members, and how these assumptions affect the quality of relationships between the superintendent and the school board, district clerk, and community. This leader would also need to be one who understood the school's role in transmission of the culture unique to the rural community, what the legacies are that community members hope to pass on to their children, and the intertwining of those goals with the purposes and expectations of the rural school.

Effects of Superintendent Turnover. School districts studied in this research often revealed that frequent superintendent turnover

caused negative effects on the school staff and continuity of programs. Previous research on this topic also discussed these findings. These findings have implications for aspiring superintendents.

Aspiring superintendents should understand they may go into a rural school which has experienced frequent superintendent turnover and find staff who may have developed resistance to, or distrust of, the new superintendent. Other staff members or even the school board may have assumed the day-to-day leadership role, which had been left vacant by frequent superintendent turnover, or by an ineffective previous superintendent. Long-time staff, which have seen a number of superintendents come and leave, may continue to carry out their own priorities, since they have witnessed changes that have come and gone with each superintendent. Aspiring superintendents may be asked to assume responsibility for implementing program goals that are not necessarily important to them, but that are important to the school board, community and staff, and perhaps were goals of primary concern to the previous administrator. Aspiring superintendents may also take positions in rural communities that have come to expect superintendents to leave within a short period of time. They may find rural communities who expect "good" superintendents will aspire to move "up the career ladder". These rural communities may operate under the assumption that their com-

munity is not "good enough" for a "good" superintendent to want to stay, thus fueling the cyclical pattern of superintendent turnover in their schools.

Implications for Preparatory Programs for School Administrators

The Rural Community and School. There may be a need for superintendents prepared to understand the rural context and its effects on the role of superintendent. Possibly, programs should be designed that explicitly prepare school administrators for the variety of roles and responsibilities they will encounter in rural communities. Past and current research calls for educating competent generalists, rather than specialists to be superintendents in rural schools. Perhaps the best individuals to serve in the role of superintendent should be recruited by preparatory programs. Specifically, these individuals might be more successful in the role of rural superintendent if they were recruited from the rural community, or a similar setting, to which they aspire to return in a leadership position.

Career Orientations of Rural Superintendents. Informants in this study and other education professionals allude to the fact that school administrators and teachers generally use positions in small schools to make a living until more attractive positions become available. Sher

(1977) calls this a self-fulfilling negative prophecy, and equates it to the same effect teachers can have in the classroom on their students. In this study, informants commonly referred to using positions in small rural schools as "stepping stones", spurred on by "career moves".

Preparatory programs that inform aspiring superintendents of the effects of frequent superintendent turnover on rural schools, could cause aspiring superintendents to understand the relationship between their career orientations and effects on rural schools. This research may point to a redefinition of roles and responsibilities of the rural superintendent, initiated by preparatory programs in joint effort with rural school boards. Such a redefinition of the rural superintendent's role could cause an examination of assumed career orientations of rural superintendents. This could work to dispel the assumption that the superintendent in a rural school is a "career-bound hopper" stuck in a bureaucratic mind set, spurred on by "career-moves". The rural superintendent's reputation could be changed to one who was "place-bound" by a commitment to excellence of leadership in rural schools and communities.

Implications for the Rural School Board

Expectations of Superintendents in Rural Communities.

Rural school boards should understand their unique cultural contexts, its relationship to the school, and effects

on superintendents. An understanding of the conflict between their unique cultural context and the historically bureaucratic role of a superintendent could result in a better understanding for rural school boards of the cyclical nature of superintendent turnover in their school districts. This conflict appears to have resulted in a different set of expectations of the role of superintendent by rural school boards and by rural superintendents. It has also appeared to have resulted in a difference of interpretations of actions taken by school boards and superintendents in rural communities.

In order to work for a resolution of this conflict, which is caused by a gap in understanding of roles and responsibilities between superintendents and school board members, perhaps special consideration should be given to the superintendent selection processes used in rural school districts. When selecting superintendents and at annual evaluations, roles and expectations of superintendents should be clearly defined. These roles and expectations must be specific, with school board members describing accurate expectations of superintendents. These include expectations in the rural school and in the rural community, and should explicitly describe the often unspoken assumptions of expectations found in their rural contexts.

One of the unspoken expectations of superintendents uncovered in this research was that school board chairpersons and district clerks expected "good" superintendents not to stay in their rural school districts. The "good" superintendent would have the ambition to move up to a school district "better" than theirs. The assumption "we are not good enough" could be one of the factors that contributes to the cyclical nature of superintendent turnover in rural school districts. This implies that rural school boards should examine these assumptions when selecting, setting expectations, and solving conflicts with superintendents.

Exploring Alternatives. This research points to a redefinition of the role of rural superintendent, moving away from the bureaucrat in the role of educational expert, to a leader bonded to rural schools through a *gemeinschaft* relationship, being more of a competent generalist than educational expert. This leader would respect the primacy of the rural community's local context, understand the assumptions of its members, and how these assumptions affect the quality of relationships between the superintendent and the school board, district clerk, and community.

Rural school boards could work jointly with preparatory programs for school administrators to redefine the role of rural superintendent by exploring possible alternatives to the superintendent position. They could engage in dialogue with the state department of education in order

to work toward modification of credentialling, accreditation standards, and regulations, which would better serve the rural school district.

There are several possibilities to explore. Superintendents are being shared currently among several small, rural school districts in Montana. One possibility is for rural school districts to employ one of these "circuit-rider" superintendents and also employ a building principal or administrator, which would be available to handle the every-day needs of the school, and be visible and involved in the community. Another possibility is to redistribute certain superintendent paper work responsibilities to the County Superintendent, while employing a building administrator. Probably the most promising alternative would be the choosing of this building administrator. Perhaps school boards should think of "raising their own" building administrator. This person need not be locally raised, but one sensitive to the rural context and committed to providing quality education to the rural community.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. A study similar to this, which focuses on Class III school districts, is recommended using medium sized schools in Montana. These would be Class II schools with a district population of 1,000 or more but less than 6,500. In the 1990 census there were 101 of these school dis-

tricts, compared to 71 Class III districts, which had populations of under 1,000.

2. A study similar to this is recommended for Class III school districts in Montana who have not had frequent superintendent turnover. Findings from such a study could be compared to this study's findings.

3. Additional study is recommended on salary discrepancies across different sized school districts in Montana, and in the area of salary as a motivating factor in superintendent turnover in Montana.

4. Further research is recommended on the rural community's impacts on the role of the school administrator in order to improve educational opportunities for children in small, rural communities.

5. Superintendent selection processes in small, rural schools should be researched further. The scope of this study did not allow for an in-depth exploration of assumptions, issues, and effects of superintendent selection processes and community expectations on superintendent success. Related to this, expectations of new superintendents upon being hired, from perspectives of school board members and superintendents should be investigated. This includes written, unwritten, spoken, or unspoken expectations and the assumptions behind them.

6. Alternatives to employing superintendents in small, rural schools should be explored and researched, due to the dwindling number

of school administrators to fill these positions. Currently in Montana, several rural school districts share superintendents. This alternative to employing a full-time superintendent should be researched, along with other alternatives which redefine the current assumptions of roles and responsibilities of rural superintendents.

REFERENCES

References Cited

Anderson, S. L. (1989a). How to predict success in the superintendency. The School Administrator. 46(7), 22, 24, 26.

Anderson, S. L. (1989b). Prediction of a school superintendent's tenure using regression and Bayesian analyses. Dissertation Abstracts International, 49(7), 1626A.

Anonymous (1916). Why superintendents lose their jobs. The American School Board Journal. 52, 18-19.

Berger, M. A. (1983). Predicting succession under conditions of enrollment decline. (Report). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 234 470).

Bevan, J. K. (1989). Superintendent turnover in Illinois: A study of board member and superintendent expectations. (Doctoral dissertation: Northern Illinois University, 1988). Dissertation Abstracts International, 50(3), 578A.

Blankenship, M. T. (1995). A study of the information sources used by Wyoming school board members in initiating the superintendent selection process. Dissertation Abstracts International, 57(5), 1920A.

Blum, J. (1982). Our forgotten past: Seven centuries of life on the land. New York: Thames and Hudson.

Bogdan, R., & Bilkin, S. (1992). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Brackett, J. D. (1995). Superintendent turnover in relationship to incumbent school board member defeat in Alabama from 1984-1994. Dissertation Abstracts International, 57(6), 2284A.

Burlingame, M. (1977). An exploratory study of turnover and career mobility of public school district superintendents in the state of Illinois from 1960-1976. (Report). Springfield, IL: Illinois Office of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 152 462).

Burlingame, M. (1979). Win some, lose some: Small rural district superintendents. (Report). San Francisco: American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 168 776).

Callahan, R. E. (1962). Education and the cult of efficiency: A study of the social forces that have shaped the administration of the public schools. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Capps, J. L. (1992). Superintendent instability in small/rural schools: The school board's perspective. (Doctoral dissertation: University of Oklahoma, 1992). Dissertation Abstracts International, 57(6), 2284A.

Carlson, R. O. (1969). Career and place bound school superintendents: Some sociological differences. A project report (Report). Eugene, OR: Oregon University, Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 031 782).

Carlson, R. O. (1972). School superintendents: Careers and performance. Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing Company.

Carlson, R. O. (1979). Orderly career opportunities. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, Center for Educational Policy and Management. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 196 129).

Carson, A. (1998, March). Superintendent turnover and mobility in Montana: A look back at 21 years of superintendent history. Montana School Boards Association Bulletin, 5.

Chance, E. W., & Capps, J. L. (1992). Superintendent instability in small/rural schools: The school board perspective (Report). Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 350 121).

Childs, A., & Melton, G. (Eds.). (1983). Rural psychology. New York: Plenum Press.

Chmara, P. N. (1989). Factors affecting superintendent turnover. Dissertation Abstracts International, 50(6), 1495A.

Cokendolpher, F. W. (1959). Employment patterns in the school superintendency in Texas. Dissertation Abstracts, 20(5), 1654A.

Colvard, F. L. (1986). Most important criteria for public school superintendent selection as perceived by school board presidents in six selected north central plains states. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(5), 1543A.

Copeland, M. E. (1993). A descriptive study of superintendent stability in rural Oklahoma schools. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1993). Dissertation Abstracts International, 54(11), 3938A-3939A.

Cowles, J. A. (1991). Factors affecting board of education selection and satisfaction with a superintendent. Dissertation Abstracts International, 52(6), 1957A.

Cronbach, L. (1975). Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. In Merriam, S. Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cuban, L. (1976). Urban school chiefs under fire. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cubberley, E. P. (1927). State school administration. Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press.

Czarnecki, E. H. (1996). Factors influencing voluntary superintendent exiting in New York (turnover). Dissertation Abstracts International, 57(4), 1407A.

Directory of Montana Schools. (Published annually). Helena, MT: Montana Office of Public Instruction.

Eaton, W. E. (Ed.). (1990). Shaping the superintendency: A reexamination of Callahan and the cult of efficiency. New York: Teachers College Press.

Erdie, J. J. (1987). Montana public school superintendents: A demographic study and a forecast for the future. Dissertation. Montana State University, Bozeman.

Evans, M. A. (1974). Causes relating to the non-reemployment of school district superintendents in the state of California as viewed by the governing board. Dissertation Abstracts International, 35(1), 4067A.

Feistritzer, C. E.. (1988). Profile of school administrators in the U.S.Washington, DC: National Center for Education Information.

Fenili, L. J. (1985). The selection process of superintendents in Oregon: Three case studies of superintendent selection. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46(11), 3261A.

Flora, C., Flora, J., Spears, J., & Swanson, L. (1992) Rural communities: Legacy & change. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Fritz, N. J. (1988). Variables associated with Illinois superintendent turnover, 1980-86. Dissertation Abstracts International, 49(8), 2041A.

Gaertner, K. N. (1980). The structure of organizational careers. Sociology of Education, 53, 7-20.

Geertz, C. (1973). The interpretation of cultures. BasicBooks.

Gerla, S. E. (May, 1987). Examination of the conditions and expectations surrounding superintendent selection in Washington school districts. (Report). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 300 913).

Gerla, S., E. (1988). Examination of the factors surrounding superintendent selection in public school districts in Washington State. Dissertation Abstracts International, 49(11), 3215A.

Giles, D., E., & Giles, S. (1990). Where do all the superintendents go? (Report). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 326 938).

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine Publishing.

Glass, T. E. (1992). The 1992 study of the American school superintendency: America's education leaders in a time of reform.

(Report). Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 370229).

Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1984). Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research. In Merriam, S., Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Grady, M. L. (1992). A rural school district in decay. (Report). Norman, OK: The Annual Conference of Small/Rural Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 345 905).

Grady, M. L., & Bryant, M. (1988). Superintendent turnover in rural school districts. (Report). Bismarck, ND: National Rural Education Research Forum. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 308 032).

Grady, M. L., & Bryant, M. (1990). Critical incidents between superintendents and school administrators: Implications for practice. (Report). Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 318 144)

Haugland, M. M. (1986). A comparative analysis of the professional competencies needed by superintendents of public schools perceived to be most desirable for successful employment by school board members and superintendents in South Dakota. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(5), 1548A.

Hetlinger, J. S. (1986). An analysis of the procedures utilized by Kansas school boards in the recruitment and selection of the superintendent of schools, 1985-1986. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(6), 1951A.

Hills, P. (Ed.). (1982). A dictionary of education. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Hitchcock, G., & Hughes, D. (1995). Research and the teacher: A qualitative introduction to school-based research. (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Horkan, M. A. (1986). Criteria used by school boards in the selection of a superintendent. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(12), 4253A.

Houck, D. M. (1986). A survey of superintendent recruitment and selection procedures utilized in Kansas and Missouri in 1984. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(8), 2826A.

Hudgens, J. W. (1991). A descriptive study of superintendent perceptions concerning turnover in Illinois, 1988-1989. Dissertation Abstracts International, 53(2), 360A.

Iannaccone, L., & Lutz, F. W. (1970). Politics, power, and policy: The governing of local school districts. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.

Iannaccone, L., & Lutz, F. W. (1978). Public participation in local school districts: The dissatisfaction theory of democracy. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Iannaccone, L. (1981). Superintendents make a difference. The School Administrator. 38,(8), 16-17.

Kaspar, D. (1997). Superintendent succession: An imperative for transition planning. Dissertation Abstracts International, 58(4), 1164A.

Kerlinger, F. (1992). Foundations of behavioral research. (3rd ed.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace and Company.

Kerr, R. P. (1986). Long term leadership in public schools: Some unanswered questions. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(8), 2828A.

Kinn, C. J. (1980). Superintendent and board member role perceptions in selected Minnesota school districts. Dissertation Abstracts International, 41(1), 40A-41A.

Kitchens, S. K. (1994). Superintendent turnover in relationship to incumbent school board member defeat in Louisiana from 1980-1992. Dissertation Abstracts International, 55(4), 819A.

Knisely, W. N. (1980). School board conflict behavior and superintendent survival: A field study of a school board. Dissertation Abstracts International, 41(1), 41A.

Leitch, J. (1997). An analysis of school superintendent turnover in Nassau and Suffolk counties, New York and the educational impact of this phenomenon. Dissertation Abstracts International, 58,(8), 2934A.

Light, R. L. (1985). Superintendent turnover in South Dakota between 1970 and 1980. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(1), 39A.

Lindstrom, D. E. (1989). A study of superintendent job satisfaction and board of trustees satisfaction and how they affect superintendent turnover. Dissertation Abstracts International, 50(5), 1160A.

Littleton, D. M. (1983). A descriptive study of the role of the superintendent as viewed by school board members in Texas. Dissertation Abstracts International, 44(12), 3561A.

Loasching, W. G. (1988). The effects of school board instability on superintendent turnover. Dissertation Abstracts International, 49(12), 3573A.

Logsdon, P. E. L. (1987). Case studies of superintendent turnover in two Oklahoma school districts. (Doctoral dissertation: University of Tulsa, 1987). Dissertation Abstracts International, 48(7), 1604A.

Loomis, C. (Ed. and Trans.). (1963). Community and society. (Tonnies, F., 1873). New York: Harper & Row.

Loomis, F. J. (1995). An investigation of the relationship between turnover of incumbent board members and the turnover of the district's superintendent. Dissertation Abstracts International, 56(5), 1605A.

Lutz, F. W., & Merz, C. (1992). The politics of school/community relations. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Maschal, N. (1985). The relationship between selected personal and demographic characteristics of Virginia school board members and their expectations for superintendents. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(6), 1956A.

Mattocks, C. T. (1987). Superintendent hiring policies of Montana school board members. Dissertation. Montana State University, Bozeman.

Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. In Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Merriam, S. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (1994). An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Miller, B. A., & Hull, J. L. (1991). Overcoming professional isolation in small rural schools. (Report). Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 344 707).

Milkos, E. (Ed.). (1988). Administrator selection, career patterns, succession, and socialization. In N. J. Boyan (Ed.), Handbook of research on educational administration. (pp. 53-76). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Miskel, C. & Cosgrove, D. (1985). Leader succession in school settings. Review of Educational Research. 55, 87-105.

Mundy, L. H. (1988). Colorado superintendency attrition and its effects on school districts, 1961-1986. Dissertation Abstracts International, 49(3), 398A.

Nachtigal, P. (Ed.). (1982). Rural education: In search of a better way. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. (2nd ed.). Newberry Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Pruis, D. L. (1986). A study of factors affecting the mobility of superintendents as reported by Indiana public school superintendents. Dissertation Abstracts International; 47(3), 742A.

Psathas, G. (Ed.). (1973). Phenomenological sociology. In Bogdan, R., & Bilkin, S. Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Rada, R. D., & Carlson, R. O. (1985). Community dissatisfaction and school governance. (Report). Chicago: The American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 263 684).

Roeder, G. C. (1987). A study of the reasons why Michigan school superintendents were dismissed or encouraged to leave their positions between 1980 and 1985. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46(7), 1612A.

Sabatino, R. J. (1993). A descriptive and comparative analysis of superintendents of small school districts. Dissertation Abstracts International, 54(12), 4326A.

Schoenefeld, S. O. (1986). Comparison of the predictability rates of the Iannaccone-Lutz and Lutz models of local school district politics in selected Oklahoma school districts, 1971-1986. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(6), 1968A.

Schmuck, R., & Schmuck, P. (1989). Being superintendent of a small-town district. (Report). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 316 380).

School laws of Montana. (1993). Section 20-3-235. [As authorized by subsection (5) of Section 20-3-105, Montana Code Annotated]. Helena, MT: Montana Legislative Council.

Sher, J. (Ed.). (1977). Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Sergiovanni, T., Burlingame, M., Coombs, F., & Thurston, P. (1987). Educational governance and administration. (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Seybert, F. T. (1993). Analysis of superintendent and board chairperson perceptions of superintendent competencies necessary for successful employment or dismissal in Montana. Dissertation. Gonzaga University, Spokane.

Spiropulos, G. G. (1996). Superintendent turnover in Idaho, 1986-1994. Dissertation Abstracts International, 57(2).

Stake, R. (1978). The case study method in social inquiry. In Merriam, S. Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Steinle, L. G. (1974). Comparisons of the perceived reasons for involuntary turnovers of superintendents as given by respondents in varying role positions in selected Kansas unified school districts. Dissertation Abstracts International, 35(3), 5748A.

Sullivan, P., M. (1990). The relationship between incumbent school board member replacement and superintendent turnover for selected South Carolina school districts from 1978-1988. Dissertation Abstracts International, 52(1), 50A.

Sweet, J. M. (1987). The role of the public school superintendent as perceived by public school board presidents and school superintendents in South Dakota. Dissertation Abstracts International, 48(4), 801A.

Theobald, P. (1995). Call school: Rural education in the Midwest to 1918. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Thomas, G. I. (1985). Factors contributing to school superintendent turnover in Illinois, 1981-1984. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(3), 747A-748A.

Thomas Hardy Biography. (1998). Dorset County, United Kingdom. [On-line]. Available: http://www.dorset-cc.gov.uk/hardbio.htm

Wagner, H. (Ed.). (1970). Alfred Schutz on phenomenology and social realtions. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Waller, W. (1965). The sociology of teaching. New York: Science Editions, Russell & Russell.

Weeks, W. V. (1993). Perceptions of twelve recently hired superintendents in Washington State of the reasons for superintendent turnover in their districts. Dissertation Abstracts International, 54(4), 1193A.

Wheeler, W. V. (1988). A study of the reasons for the separation of superintendents from Wyoming public schools as perceived by board of trustees chairmen and separated superintendents. Dissertation Abstracts International, 49(8), 2066A.

Wilkinson, K. (1991). The community in rural America. [Published by The Rural Sociological Society]. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Wirt, F. M., & Kirst, M. W. (1989). The politics of education: Schools in conflict. Berkley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

Vidich, A., & Bensman, J. (1968). Small town in mass society: Class power and religion in a rural community. (Rev. ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Yin, R. K. (1994). Case study research: Design and methods. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Yock, C., Keogh, K., Underwood, K., & Fortune, J. (1990). Happily ever after. The American School Board Journal. 177(1), 28-34.

Zickfoose, S. D. (1979). Successful and unsuccessful school superintendents. Dissertation Abstracts International, 40(12), 6105A-6106A.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MONTANA SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER STATISTICS

SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER IN MONTANA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

			TOTALS		Total years (77-97)	
Pop.	Class	District Name	% of turnover	Pattern of Tenure	in Database	Av. tenure (years)
9852	1	Anaconda	10%	*8.9.4.*	21	**7.00**
8040	1	Beaverhead HS	5%	*9.12.*	21	**10.50**
6542	1	Belgrade	5%	*2.19.*	21	**10.50**
85875	1	Billings	24%	*1.5.4.3.5.3.*	21	**3.50**
32764	1	Bozeman	10%	*5.8.8.*	21	**7.00**
6745	1	Browning	38%	*2.1.4.3.4.3.1.1.2.*	21	**2.33**
32846	1	Butte	29%	*1.6.3.3.1.3.4.*	21	**3.00**
10364	1	Columbia Falls	19%	*4.1.4.9.3.*	21	**4.20**
8864	1	Dawson County HS	10%	*4.9.8.*	21	**7.00**
6947	1	Dillon Elem.	5%	*15.6.*	21	**10.50**
7962	1	Glendive (Elem.)	14%	*1.4.8.8.*	21	**5.25**
69255	1	Great Falls	14%	*7.5.8.1.*	21	**5.25**
7993	1	Hamilton	10%	*14.4.3.*	21	**7.00**
7776	1	Hardin	5%	*6.15.*	21	**10.50**
13689	1	Havre	14%	*1.8.10.2.*	21	**5.25**
45668	1	Helena	33%	*3.7.2.2.5.1.1.*	21	**2.63**
18913	1	Kalispell	10%	*7.13.1.*	21	**7.00**
8578	1	Laurel	14%	*2.9.7.3.*	21	**5.25**
8407	1	Lewistown	10%	*8.4.9.*	21	**7.00**
9978	1	Libby	14%	*3.4.3.2.9.*	21	**5.25**
9370	1	Livingston	14%	*6.5.3.7.*	21	**5.25**
9869	1	Miles City	5%	*10.11.*	21	**10.50**
73920	1	Missoula Co. HS	10%	*5.11.5.*	21	**7.00**
54522	1	Missoula Elem.	10%	*2.15.4.*	21	**7.00**
7088	1	Polson	10%	*9.9.3.*	21	**7.00**
6978	1	Powell Co HS	14%	*2.7.3.9.*	21	**5.25**
7306	1	Sidney	14%	*3.8.7.3.*	21	**5.25**
9607	1	Whitefish	14%	*5.3.5.8.*	21	**5.25**
28		**TOTALS FOR CLASS I**				**6.37**
		78/79 - 97/98	% Turnover			
			14%			
Pop.	**Class**	**District Name**	**% of turnover**	**Pattern of Tenure**	**in Database**	**Av. tenure (years)**
1192	2	Alberton	29%	*1.5.1.3.8.3.*	21	**3.00**
1650	2	Arlee	24%	*2.4.4.4.3.4.*	21	**3.50**
2396	2	Baker	5%	*3.18.*	21	**10.50**
1835	2	Belt	33%	*1.5.4.2.3.3.3.*	21	**3.50**
1372	2	Big Sandy	14%	*9.3.5.4.*	21	**5.25**
2280	2	Big Timber	19%	*3.16.1.1.*	21	**4.20**
4054	2	Bigfork	19%	*6.2.6.2.5.*	21	**4.20**
2709	2	Bonner	19%	*12.3.2.3.1.*	21	**4.20**
1819	2	Boulder	10%	*10.7.4.*	21	**7.00**

Pop.	Class	District Name	% of turnover	Pattern of Tenure	in Database	Av. tenure (years)
1144	2	Bridger	24%	*7.1.6.2.2.3.*	21	**3.50**
1157	2	Broadus	29%	*2.8.2.4.2.2.1.*	21	**3.00**
3257	2	Broadwater Co. HS (Townsend)	10%	*14.4.3.*	21	**7.00**
1761	2	Canyon Creek Elem.	14%	*2.5.*	7	**3.50**
1631	2	Cascade	14%	*6.10.3.2.*	21	**5.25**
1293	2	Centerville	19%	*4.7.2.6.2.*	21	**4.20**
1656	2	Charlo	19%	*4.2.4.10.1.*	21	**4.20**
1646	2	Chester	14%	*8.6.6.1.*	21	**5.25**
2088	2	Chinook	10%	*10.8.3.*	21	**7.00**
2530	2	Choteau	10%	*2.13.6.*	21	**7.00**
1279	2	Circle	19%	*3.1.7.7.3.*	21	**4.20**
1950	2	Clancy	14%	*9.2.2.8.*	21	**5.25**
2531	2	Columbus	19%	*7.5.4.3.2.*	21	**4.20**
3714	2	Conrad	14%	*2.7.10.2.*	21	**5.25**
4052	2	Corvallis	19%	*3.4.2.3.9.*	21	**4.20**
1127	2	Culbertson	10%	*1.5.15.*	21	**7.00**
4923	2	Cut Bank	19%	*1.2.10.4.4.*	21	**4.20**
3164	2	Darby	14%	*1.8.5.7.*	21	**5.25**
5810	2	Deer Lodge Elem.	5%	*6.15.*	21	**10.50**
5608	2	East Helena Elem.	19%	*4.8.3.4.2.*	21	**4.20**
1177	2	Elder Grove Elem.	0%	**5*	5	**5.00**
2262	2	Ennis(Mad.Val. Cons. Pub.)	10%	*13.4.4.*	21	**7.00**
3287	2	Eureka Elem.	14%	*1.1.15.4.*	21	**5.25**
4992	2	Evergreen Elem.	14%	*3.6.11.1.*	21	**5.25**
1184	2	Fairfield	14%	*11.8.2.*	21	**5.25**
1429	2	Fairview	5%	*3.18.*	21	**10.50**
2648	2	Florence-Carlton	14%	*5.6.8.1.1.*	21	**5.25**
2990	2	Forsyth	14%	*7.8.5.1.*	21	**5.25**
2051	2	Fort Benton	14%	*5.8.6.2.*	21	**5.25**
2994	2	Fort Shaw-Simms	10%	*3.7.*	10	**5.00**
3021	2	Frenchtown	14%	*12.6.3.*	21	**5.25**
1831	2	Gardiner	14%	*4.3.14.*	21	**5.25**
5126	2	Glasgow	0%	*21*	21	**21.00**
2421	2	Harlem	33%	*3.4.1.3.2.4.2.2.*	21	**2.63**
1460	2	Harlowton	19%	*1.8.5.3.4.*	21	**4.20**
1072	2	Hays Lodgepole	48%	*1.2.1.3.4.2.2.1.1.2.2.*	21	**1.91**
5319	2	Hellgate Elem.	14%	*1.3.9.8.*	21	**5.25**
1068	2	Hot Springs	24%	*3.2.2.4.4.6.*	21	**3.50**
2982	2	Huntley Project (Wordon)	9%	*8.3.*	11	**5.50**
1047	2	Independent Elem.	0%	**5*	5	**5.00**
1262	2	Joliet	24%	*3.2.2.1.7.6.*	21	**3.50**
2123	2	Lame Deer	19%	*10.1.3.4.3.*	21	**4.20**
4184	2	Lincoln Co. HS	20%	*6.2.2.*	10	**3.33**
1051	2	Lincoln Public	19%	*5.3.6.2.5.*	21	**4.20**

Pop.	Class	District Name	% of turnover	Pattern of Tenure	in Database	Av. tenure (years)
5906	2	Lockwood	10%	*8.10.3.*	21	**7.00**
1778	2	Lodge Grass	24%	*3.7.2.2.4.3.*	21	**3.50**
3211	2	Lolo Elem.	25%	*3.4.1.2.5.5.*	20	**3.33**
1508	2	Lone Rock Elem.	33%	*1.1.3.5.2.4.2.3.*	21	**2.63**
3586	2	Malta	10%	*7.11.3.*	21	**7.00**
1777	2	Manhattan	14%	*5.7.6.3.*	21	**5.25**
1692	2	Monforton Elem.		**1.1.*	2	
1423	2	Montana City	14%	*2.1.2.16.*	21	**5.25**
1112	2	Noxon	19%	*2.8.7.3.1.*	21	**4.20**
1412	2	Park City	10%	*5.8.8.*	21	**7.00**
1539	2	Philipsburg	25%	*8.3.4.4.1.*	20	**3.33**
2135	2	Plains	29%	*2.4.1.4.2.3.5.*	21	**3.00**
2906	2	Plentywood	19%	*3.7.6.2.3.*	21	**4.20**
3876	2	Poplar	14%	*7.3.8.3.*	21	**5.25**
2814	2	Red Lodge	10%	*4.9.8.*	21	**7.00**
1727	2	Rocky Boy	14%	*1.5.7.8.*	21	**5.25**
6277	2	Ronan	19%	*5.3.8.4.1.*	21	**4.20**
3583	2	Roundup	5%	*10.11.*	21	**10.50**
1643	2	Scobey	24%	*1.4.4.2.2.8.*	21	**3.50**
1375	2	Seeley Lake Elem.	10%	*2.7.12.*	21	**7.00**
3060	2	Shelby	14%	*1.15.4.1.*	21	**5.25**
2425	2	Shepherd	5%	*9.12.*	21	**10.50**
1481	2	Shields Valley Elem.	25%	*2.2.4.*	8	**2.67**
2767	2	Somers	24%	*1.1.4.3.4.8.*	21	**3.50**
2558	2	St. Ignatius	33%	*1.4.2.4.1.2.3.4.*	21	**2.63**
1082	2	Stanford	5%	*20.1.*	21	**10.50**
4044	2	Stevensville	10%	*3.17.1.*	21	**7.00**
2053	2	Sun River	38%	*4.1.1.2.1.2.3.5.2.*	21	**2.33**
1294	2	Sunburst	5%	*17.4.*	21	**10.50**
1804	2	Superior	14%	*4.8.7.2.*	21	**5.25**
3127	2	Sweet Grass Co HS	5%	*7.14.*	21	**10.50**
2806	2	Target Range	14%	*10.6.4.1.*	21	**5.25**
1071	2	Terry	29%	*6.2.2.4.3.3.1.*	21	**3.00**
2714	2	Thompson Falls	10%	*2.14.5.*	21	**7.00**
1682	2	Three Forks	5%	*17.4.*	21	**10.50**
2576	2	Troy	19%	*2.2.8.6.3.*	21	**4.20**
1500	2	Twin Bridges	14%	*7.3.3.8.*	21	**5.25**
1138	2	Valier	5%	*12.9.*	21	**10.50**
2127	2	Victor	29%	*4.1.3.1.4.7.1.*	21	**3.00**
1284	2	West Valley Elem.	0%	*11*	11	**11.00**
1849	2	West Yellowstone	27%	*3.5.2.1.*	11	**2.75**
1645	2	White Sulpher Springs	19%	*7.6.2.4.2.*	21	**4.20**
2336	2	Whitehall	10%	*9.11.1.*	21	**7.00**
1191	2	Wibeaux	14%	*7.5.7.2.*	21	**5.25**
4258	2	Wolf Point	24%	*1.3.10.3.2.2.*	21	**3.50**

101		TOTALS FOR CLASS II				5.5
		78/79 - 97/98	% Turnover			
			17%			
Pop.	Class	District Name	% of turnover	Pattern of Tenure	in Database	Average tenure (years)
704	3	Augusta	33%	*2.1.2.3.8.3.1.1.*	21	**2.63**
312	3	Bainville	14%	*1.11.7.2.*	21	**5.25**
403	3	Belfry	29%	*1.2.2.2.2.4.8.*	21	**3.00**
824	3	Blue Sky	12%	*5.9.3.*	17	**5.67**
361	3	Box Elder	38%	*4.5.1.2.4.1.2.1.1.*	21	**2.33**
469	3	Brady	29%	*2.7.2.1.2.5.2.*	21	**3.00**
566	3	Broadview	33%	*2.5.3.3.4.2.1.1.*	21	**2.63**
664	3	Brockton	29%	*2.2.2.3.3.7.2.*	21	**3.00**
878	3	Carter Co. HS (Ekalaka)	29%	*2.8.2.3.2.3.1.*	21	**3.00**
759	3	Cayuse Prairie Elm.	0%	*11*	11	**11.00**
823	3	Clinton (Elem.)	10%	*17.3.1.*	21	**7.00**
699	3	Clyde Park	23%	*3.1.3.6.*	13	**3.25**
369	3	Custer	19%	*2.2.5.4.8.*	21	**4.20**
698	3	Denton	24%	*1.5.3.4.1.7.*	21	**3.50**
502	3	Dodson	38%	*1.1.1.1.5.3.6.2.1.*	21	**2.33**
770	3	Drummond	14%	*2.7.11.1.*	21	**5.25**
744	3	Dutton	19%	*6.6.4.1.4.*	21	**4.20**
401	3	Flaxville	24%	*1.6.2.4.1.7.*	21	**3.50**
360	3	Fort Peck	0%	*10*	10	**10.00**
747	3	Frazer	38%	*2.2.3.2.3.2.3.2.2.*	21	**2.33**
435	3	Froid	29%	*3.2.2.6.5.2.1.*	21	**3.00**
698	3	Fromberg	24%	*2.3.5.4.4.3.*	21	**3.50**
448	3	Frontier	10%	*12.4.5.*	21	**7.00**
531	3	Gallatin Gateway Elem.	0%	*6*	6	**6.00**
894	3	Garfield Co. HS &Elem.	33%	*2.1.1.2.4.4.2.5.*	21	**2.63**
739	3	Geraldine	14%	*5.4.8.4.*	21	**5.25**
601	3	Grass Range	33%	*3.4.3.4.1.3.1.2.*	21	**2.63**
605	3	Harrison	24%	*5.2.5.5.3.1.*	21	**3.50**
646	3	Heart Butte	52%	*1.1.1.2.4.1.1.3.1.4.1.1.*	21	**1.75**
496	3	Highwood	14%	*9.3.2.7.*	21	**5.25**
527	3	Hindsale	29%	*7.4.1.4.1.2.2.*	21	**3.00**
735	3	Hobson	14%	*10.2.5.4.*	21	**5.25**
874	3	Hysham	24%	*4.3.2.1.2.9.*	21	**3.50**
585	3	Joplin-Inverness	24%	*2.3.3.5.2.6.*	21	**3.50**
311	3	Judith Gap	14%	*2.2.6.11.*	21	**5.25**
640	3	Kremlin-Gildford	5%	*17.4.*	21	**10.50**
524	3	Lambert	38%	*3.2.2.3.4.2.2.1.2.*	21	**2.33**
328	3	Lavina	19%	*1.2.11.5.2.*	21	**4.20**
522	3	Lima	38%	*1.1.3.3.2.4.3.1.3.*	21	**2.33**
610	3	Marion Elementary		**1.1.*	2	
966	3	Medicine Lake	5%	*6.15.*	21	**10.50**

Pop.	Class	District Name	% of turnover	Pattern of Tenure	in Database	Av. tenure (years)
294	3	Melstone	24%	*3.5.5.3.2.3.*	21	**3.50**
38	3	Moore	14%	*12.1.4.4.*	21	**5.25**
694	3	Nashua	24%	*1.3.9.1.1.6.*	21	**3.50**
522	3	Opeim	24%	*4.4.6.3.3.1.*	21	**3.50**
354	3	Outlook	24%	*5.1.4.5.2.4.*	21	**3.50**
222	3	Peerless	24%	*1.1.3.4.3.9.*	21	**3.50**
438	3	Plevna	19%	*1.8.3.3.6.*	21	**4.20**
470	3	Power	14%	*12.3.2.4.*	21	**5.25**
778	3	Pryor	24%	*2.4.2.2.3.8.*	21	**3.50**
224	3	Rapelje	33%	*2.1.1.5.2.4.5.1.*	21	**2.63**
423	3	Reedpoint	48%	*1.1.3.1.2.2.1.1.5.2.2.*	21	**1.91**
541	3	Richey	38%	*3.1.4.2.3.4.1.1.2.*	21	**2.33**
536	3	Roberts	24%	*1.5.12.1.1.1.*	21	**3.50**
580	3	Rosebud	33%	*1.2.3.3.3.4.3.2.*	21	**2.63**
364	3	Roy	71%	*1.2.1.1.3.1.2.2.1.1.1.1. 1.2.1.*	21	**1.31**
584	3	Ryegate	14%	*4.1.10.6.*	21	**5.25**
644	3	Saco	14%	*7.3.8.3.*	21	**5.25**
633	3	Savage	14%	*1.1.1.18.*	21	**5.25**
938	3	St. Regis	29%	*3.1.3.1.5.7.1.*	21	**3.00**
392	3	Turner	38%	*4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.1.*	21	**2.33**
939	3	Vaughn	24%	*7.2.2.4.3.3.*	21	**3.50**
493	3	Westby	14%	*1.7.10.3.*	21	**5.25**
273	3	Whitewater	24%	*1.2.9.1.1.7.*	21	**3.50**
265	3	Willow Creek	24%	*10.3.2.1.3.2.*	21	**3.50**
782	3	Wilsall	23%	*3.3.1.6.*	13	**3.25**
586	3	Winifred	19%	*6.1.8.3.3.*	21	**4.20**
519	3	Winnett	38%	*1.1.2.1.4.4.2.4.2.*	21	**2.33**
264	3	Wyola	65%	*1.1.1.1.1.1.4.1.1.3.1.1.*	17	**1.42**
71		**TOTALS FOR CLASS III**	**27%**			**4.0**

STATEWIDE TOTALS

78/79 - 97/98 TURNOVER	**20%**	78/79 - 97/98 TENURE	**5.1 YEARS**

*** Schools with five or less years are deleted from database**

MONTANA SUPERINTENDENTS MOBILITY PATTERNS AND TURNOVER

1978/79-1997/98								
Totals			Totals			Totals		
560	**Class 1**		1896	**Class 2**		1332	**Class 3**	
81	Turnover	**14%**	322	Turnover	**17%**	356	Turnover	**27%**
479	Stayers	**86%**	1572	Stayers	**83%**	977	Stayers	**73%**
72	Exiters	**13%**	192	Exiters	**10%**	158	Exiters	**12%**
0								
8	From Class 1 Districts	**1%**	16	From Class 1 Districts	**1%**	3	From Class 1 Districts	**0.23%**
0	From Class 2 Districts	**0%**	48	From Class 2 Districts	**3%**	85	From Class 2 Districts	**6%**
1	From Class 3 Districts	**0.18%**	22	From Class 3 Districts	**1%**	70	From Class 3 Districts	**5%**
2	on Hiatus	**0.36%**	45	on Hiatus	**2%**	39	on Hiatus	**3%**
43	New	**8%**	158	New	**8%**	202	New	**15%**
	Back from hiatus from			*Back from hiatus from*			*Back from hiatus from*	
1	Class 1 to 1 District	**0.18%**	0	Class 1 to 2 District	**0%**	1	Class 1 to 3 District	**0.08%**
6	Class 2 to 1 District	**1%**	19	Class 2 to 2 District	**1%**	17	Class 2 to 3 District	**1%**
1	Class 3 to 1 District	**0.18%**	13	Class 3 to 2 District	**1%**	22	Class 3 to 3 District	**2%**

1978/79-1997/98

Totals	Turnovers
3788	759
	20%

Terms used:

- *Exiters* refers to superintendents whose names did not appear again in the database.
- *Stayers* refers to superintendents who took another superintendency the following year.
- *New* refers to the first time a superintendent's name appears in the database.
- *Hiatus* refers to superintendents whose names did not appear the following year, but did show up in later years in the database.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE FORMS

CONSENT FORM

**SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER IN MONTANA:
CASE STUDIES OF SMALL, RURAL SCHOOLS**

1. ***What is the aim of the study?*** The aims of this study are to investigate conditions and reveal patterns surrounding superintendent turnover in selected small, rural K-12 school districts in Montana. Five small rural school districts with excessive superintendent turnover will be selected for study which have shown an historical pattern of volatility for superintendents. Historical volatility will be defined as having less than four years of average superintendent tenure from 1977 to 1997. Perceptions of turnover will be gathered from superintendents, school board chairpersons, and school district clerks. This research hopes to inform small, rural school district boards, aspiring superintendents, professional superintendent search consultants, and preparatory programs for school administrators about the complex interactions of various factors which surround superintendent turnover in small school districts.

2. ***How was I chosen?*** You were chosen because of your association with a small, rural K-12 school district in Montana which has displayed a pattern of superintendent turnover from 1977 to 1997. Five small, rural school districts will be chosen for study. Approximately 40 individuals will be chosen for an interview.

3. ***What will be involved in participating?*** You will be asked questions surrounding reasons for superintendent turnover, effects of turnover on the school district, and questions regarding the selection of superintendents during a tape recorded interview. This interview will last approximately one to one and a half hours and will take place at the district school.

4. ***Who will know what I say?*** Only the researcher, Annette Carson, will have access to the information which will be tape recorded. Aliases will be used in place of your name and school location throughout the study in order to assure confidentiality. Pertinent parts of these tapes will be transcribed and used in the research report. After the research report is completed, the tapes will be destroyed by the researcher.

5. ***What risks and benefits are associated with my participation?*** No risks are foreseen to you other than a possible breach of confidentiality. To guard against this risk, aliases will be used for your name and location, and only the researcher will transcribe pertinent parts of the taped interview. Interview tapes will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home until they are destroyed at the completion of the research project. No other person will have access to these tapes. Regarding the possible benefits to participating in the study, sometimes people find participating in an interview to be beneficial because it gives them a chance to talk about things that matter to them.

6. ***What are my rights as a respondent?*** You may ask any questions about the research and they will be answered fully. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation is voluntary.

7. ***What will be published?*** Findings will be reported in a research report in the form of a dissertation for Montana State University in Bozeman. The findings will also be shared with the School Administrators Association of Montana and the Montana School Boards Association. Findings may also be submitted for publication.

8. ***If I want more information, who can I contact about the study?*** This study has been approved by Montana State University, Department of Education, Program of School Administration. It has also been approved by the Human Subjects Committee of Montana State University, Bozeman. The chairperson of the researcher's doctoral committee is Dr. Keith Chambers. He can be reached at (406)994-5794 for questions regarding the study.

_____
Annette Carson, researcher

_____ _____
Respondent Date

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

FIRST CONTACT WITH INFORMANT

March 25, 1998

Return address of informant

Dear «First_Name»:

Superintendent turnover in small rural school districts is a problem in Montana. In these small rural school districts the rate of superintendent turnover is higher than other sized school districts in Montana. I am a doctoral student at Montana State University in Bozeman and this is the topic of my research. Would you be willing to share your experiences in small, rural schools with me? I chose you for this study because of your involvement in the «District_Name» school district as «Position». Along with the school district you have experiences in, I will also be studying four other small, rural school districts in Montana. About eight people from each district will be interviewed: school board chairpersons, current and past superintendents and district clerks. Through this study, I hope to find out what sorts of things impact superintendent turnover in small, rural schools in Montana. Your experiences are vital to the worth of my study.

I will be traveling to your community to conduct the interviews within the next couple of months. This interview will last approximately one hour. I promise you confidentiality. Neither your name nor the community's name will be used in the research report. I would like to tape record the interview so I don't miss any important parts. No one but myself will listen to the tapes. I will destroy the tapes after the pertinent parts of them have been transcribed. Information gained from the interviews will be used in my dissertation. This study has been approved by the MSU Department of Education. Major findings from the study will be shared with the Montana School Boards Association and the School Administrators of Montana.

I would like to call you to schedule an interview time. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and consider how valuable your participation is in my study. If you have any questions and would like to talk to me before I contact you, you can reach me at 406-587-6065 anytime.

If you have access to the Internet I have set up a web site that gives you more information about the study and myself. You can find it at: http://home.switchboard.com/acarson. You can also email me from that site or at: acarson@mcn.net. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Very truly,

Annette Carson

Interview Protocol
School Board Chairperson

Question	*Follow Up*	Notes
B1. Let's begin with you giving me a description of your community.	*Economic conditions* *Political environment* *Level of support for school*	
B2. What prompted you to run for the school board?		
B3. How would you describe the role of a school board member?		
B4. Would you please describe your school district?	*Staff* *Curriculum* *Community involvement* *Strengths* *Problems*	
B5. Describe the type of school board you worked on.	*How decisions are made* *Typical make up of members* *Ways info was shared* *Admin. chain of command* *Has this been the traditional type of school board in your school district or not?*	
B6. Let's assume you could speak for the community, school board and school district staff. If your school district could find the "ideal" superintendent, what would this person be like?	*Background* *Work experience* *Training* *Competency areas* *Career aspirations* *Length of stay* *Has this been the traditional description of the ideal superintendent or not?*	
B7. Would you describe for me the processes used in selecting a superintendent when you were on the board?	*Could you talk about its successfulness?* *How would you change things next time?*	
B8. Describe superintendent evaluation processes you typically use in your district.		
B9. What was the typical length of contract issued to superintendents?	*Why was this?*	

B10. Describe effects of the previous superintendent on the next superintendent hired.		
B11. How has the school district been affected by frequent superintendent turnover?	*What could be done to improve this situation?*	
B12. In your opinion, would you describe what affected superintendent turnover while you were on the board?		
B13. Why do you think so many superintendents have come and gone in this school district?		
(Questions about specific	**superintendents)**	
B12. Would you explain why the board hired _____?	*What were the board's expectations of the superintendent?*	
B13. Did the board have an agenda of expectations for this superintendent (written or unwritten) when hired?	*Please describe.*	
B14. Describe the level of consensus between the superintendent and the board regarding roles and job competency skill areas upon hiring.		
B15. Did this superintendent stay as long as you expected? Why or why not?		
B16. Would you please describe the relationship between the superintendent and the board during the superintendent's stay?	*What kinds of things affected this relationship?*	
B17. Describe the levels of satisfaction with the superintendent from the points of view of the • community • staff • board		

B18. In your opinion, how satisfied do you think the superintendent was while at his/her job in your school district?		
B19. Would you describe your perceptions of what lead up to this superintendent leaving the district?		
Do you have any other additional comments or insights I haven't given you a chance to talk about in the interview that you would like to share?		

Interview Protocol
School District Clerk

Question	*Follow Up*	Notes
C1. Let's begin with you giving me a description of your community.	*Economic conditions* *Political environment* *Level of support for school*	
C2. Describe what your job is like as school district clerk.		
C3. Would you please describe your school district?	*Staff* *Curriculum* *Strengths* *Problems*	
C4. Describe the type of school board you worked for.	*How it made decisions.* *Typical make up of members* *Ways info. was shared* *Admin. chain of command* *Has this been the traditional type of school board in your school district or not?*	
C5. Let's assume you could speak for the community, school board and school district staff. If your school district could find the "ideal" superintendent, what would this person be like?	*Background* *Work experience* *Training* *Competency areas* *Career aspirations* *Length of stay* *Has this been the traditional description of the ideal superintendent or not?*	
C6. Would you describe for me the processes used in selecting a superintendent when you were the district clerk?	*Could you talk about its successfulness?* *What suggestions do you have for next time?*	
C7. Describe superintendent evaluation processes typically used in your district.		
C8. What was the typical length of contract issued to superintendents?	*Why was this?*	
C9. In your opinion, would you describe what has affected superintendent turnover while you were a clerk?		

C10. Why do you think so many superintendents have come and gone in this school district?		
(Questions about specific	**superintendents)**	
C11. Would you explain why the board hired _____?		
C12. When this superintendent was hired, did the board give him/her an agenda of expectations (written or unwritten)?	*Please describe.*	
C13. Describe the level of consensus between the superintendent and the board regarding roles and job competency skill areas upon hiring.		
C14. Did this superintendent stay as long as you expected? Why or why not?		
C15. Would you please describe the relationship between the superintendent and the board during the superintendent's stay?	*What kinds of things affected this relationship?*	
C16. Describe the levels of satisfaction with the superintendent from the points of view of the • community • staff • board		
C17. In your opinion, how satisfied do you think the superintendent was while at his/her job in your school district?		
C18. Would you describe your perceptions of what lead up to this superintendent leaving the district?		
Do you have any other additional comments or insights I haven't given you a chance to talk about in the interview that you would like to share?		

Interview Protocol
Superintendents

Question	*Follow Up*	Notes
S1. Would you please describe the career path you've taken that has led you to the superintendency, including superintendencies you've held?		
S2. Why did you choose this path?		
S3. How would others describe the type of superintendent you are?		
S4. Describe how you communicate with a school board.		
S5. Would you describe for me a picture of the "ideal" superintendency in a small school district?	*Type of community* *Type of board* *Relationship with board* *Type of school* *Length of stay*	
S6. From your experiences, what have been the effects of frequent superintendent turnover on the schools in which you've worked?		
S7. From your experiences, when you were newly hired, how did the previous superintendent whom you replaced, affect your job?		
(School district site	**specific questions)**	
S8. Describe the selection processes used when you were hired in _____.	*Please describe.*	
S9. Describe superintendent evaluation processes used by the school board.		
S10. What was the length of contract issued to you each year?		
S11. Describe the level of consensus between you and the board regarding roles and job competency skill areas upon being hired.		
S12. Did you stay as long as you expected? Why or why not?		

S13. Describe the type of board you worked for in _____.	*Decision making processes* *Make up of members* *Ways info. was shared* *Admin. Chain of command*	
S14. Describe the relationship between you and the board during your superintendency at _____.		
S15. Would you please give me a description of the political climate of the school district throughout your superintendency at _____?	*What was the most important thing to this community?*	
S16. Describe the levels of satisfaction with your job performance from the point of views of the • community • staff • school board		
S17. Describe your own level of satisfaction with the job throughout your superintendency.		
S18. What influenced you to decide to leave the superintendency at _____?		
S19. In your opinion, why have so many superintendents come and gone in this school district?		
S20. How has frequent superintendent turnover affected this school district?	*What could be done to improve this situation?*	
Do you have any other additional comments or insights I haven't given you a chance to talk about in the interview that you would like to share?		

APPENDIX C

SCHOOL DISTRICTS' ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

Casterbridge Organizational History 1977-1997

Year	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
77/78	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
78/79		New Board Chair	
79/80		New Board Chair	
80/81			
81/82	New Superintendent	*New Board Chair* (same as 1989-90 Chair)	
82/83		New Board Chair	*New Clerk*
83/84	New Superintendent	New Board Chair	
84/85		New Board Chair	
85/86	New Superintendent	*New Board Chair* (same as 1989-90 Chair)	
86/87			
87/88	New Superintendent		
88/89		New Board Chair	
89/90	*New Superintendent*	*New Board Chair*	
90/91			
91/92			
92/93	*New Superintendent		
93/94		*New Board Chair*	
94/95			
95/96	*New Superintendent*	*New Board Chair*	
96/97			*New Clerk*
97/98	*New Superintendent*		

Italics denotes informant.

* Denotes informant contacted for interview but did not participate in the study.

Glaston Organizational History 1977-1997

Year	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
77/78	Superintendent	Board Chair	*Clerk*
78/79		New Board Chair	
79/80		New Board Chair	
80/81	New Superintendent	New Board Chair	
81/82		*New Board Chair* *(same as 91-92 Chair)*	
82/83			
83/84	New Superintendent		
84/85			
85/86			
86/87			
87/88	New Superintendent	*New Board Chair*	
88/89			
89/90			
90/91			
91/92	New Superintendent	*New Board Chair*	
92/93	*New Superintendent*		*New Clerk*
93/94			
94/95			
95/96	*New Superintendent*		
96/97			
97/98	*New Superintendent*		

Italics denotes informant.

Marygreen Organizational History 1977-1997

Year	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
77/78	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
78/79			
79/80			
80/81	New Superintendent	New Board Chair	
81/82			
82/83	New Superintendent		
83/84		New Board Chair	
84/85	New Superintendent		*New Clerk*
85/86			
86/87			
87/88	*New Superintendent*	New Board Chair	
88/89		New Board Chair	
89/90		New Board Chair	
90/91		*New Board Chair*	
91/92	*New Superintendent*		
92/93		*New Board Chair*	
93/94	*New Superintendent*		
94/95		*New Board Chair*	
95/96	New Superintendent		
96/97	*New Superintendent*		
97/98		*New Board Chair*	

Italics denotes informant.

Melchester Organizational History 1977-1997

Year	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
77/78	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
78/79	New Superintendent	New Board Chair	
79/80	New Superintendent	New Board Chair	
80/81			
81/82			
82/83	New Superintendent		
83/84			
84/85		New Board Chair	
85/86	*New Superintendent*		New Clerk
86/87		*New Board Chair*	
87/88	*New Superintendent*	*New Board Chair*	*New Clerk*
88/89			
89/90			
90/91			
91/92	*New Superintendent*		
92/93			
93/94			
94/95	New Superintendent		
95/96	*New Superintendent*		
96/97			
97/98			

Italics denotes informant.

Sherton Organizational History 1977-1997

Year	Superintendent	Board Chair	Clerk
77/78	Superintendent	*Board Chair* *(same as 88-89 Board Chair)*	Clerk
78/79			
79/80		New Board Chair	
80/81	New Superintendent	*Board Chair* *(same as 88-89 Chair)*	
81/82		New Board Chair	
82/83			New Clerk
83/84			New Clerk
84/85			
85/86	New Superintendent	New Board Chair	New Clerk
86/87			*New Clerk
87/88		New Board Chair	
88/89		*New Board Chair*	
89/90		*New Board Chair* *(same as 1995-96 Chair)*	
90/91	*New Superintendent*		*New Clerk*
91/92			
92/93			
93/94	*New Superintendent*	*New Board Chair	
94/95		*New Board Chair*	
95/96	*New Superintendent*	*New Board Chair*	
96/97			
97/98			

Italics denotes informant.

* Denotes informant contacted for interview but did not participate in the study.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY - BOZEMAN
3 1762 10421355 6